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Erving Goffman

Exploring the Interaction Order

Edited by

PAUL DREW and ANTHONY WOOTTON

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1 See for example Hymes (1984), Lofland (1984) and a series of papers in *Theory Culture and Society*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1983).
2 See Goffman (1981a).
3 An excellent and detailed treatment of the relationship between Goffman and Simmel can be found in Smith (in press). See also Frisby (1981) on Simmel.
4 Phil Strong's paper in this volume deals with these issues better than I am able.
5 Goffman was very good at that. Susan Jane Birrell, writing on Goffman in 1980, took the trouble to make out a separate index card for each concept which he had explicitly defined and utilized as part of this project – she needed more than 900 index cards.
6 See Williams (1980).

5

Goffman and the Analysis of Conversation

EMANUEL A. SCHEGLOFF

> Last night there was a debate in the Arts Club on a political question. I was for a moment tempted to use arguments merely to answer something said, but did not do so, and noticed that every argument I had been tempted to use was used by somebody or other. Logic is a machine, one can leave it to itself; unhelped it will force those present to exhaust the subject, the fool is as likely as the sage to speak the appropriate answer to any statement, and if any answer is forgotten somebody will go home miserable. You throw your money on the table and you receive so much change.
>
> William Butler Yeats (1926)[1]

I

In this essay I mean not to canonize or celebrate Goffman. Rather I mean to continue a fight with him, and thereby to keep alive a tension with his legacy that may continue to yield dividends. For we have undoubtedly not yet finished learning from the work which he has left us.

The critical stance which I shall take up is, then, not for lack of appreciation of his contributions, both to social science in general, and to conversation(al) analysis (henceforth CA) in particular.

There is, for one, his contribution, almost single-handed, to sketching and warranting analytically the boundaries and subject matter of a coherent domain of inquiry – that of 'face-to-face interaction'. Although explicitly taken up largely in his prefaces (and, most decisively, on special occasions: cf. 1964b, 1983b), it seems to be an underlying theme of much of his work. Although there are not many, even among his students, who have pursued this path and

taken up this study, it is especially in point for this essay, for CA can be seen, variously, as following that path, or further developing it, or exploring what it might entail and how, or transforming it.

There are his observations, which some might think are more successful than his prefaces and other theoretical discussions in establishing a field of inquiry. In registering certain events and aspects of events as worthy of notice and available to acute and penetrating interpretation, Goffman materialized almost out of thin air the realization that there was a subject matter there to study. One is tempted to say that he rehabilitated a field, except that he seemed actually to have habilitated it.

It is easy to forget how startling and novel Goffman's work was in 1956*/1959 when *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was published. That he habilitated this field initially through a dramaturgic metaphor is not surprising, for if anyone had seen this vision before it was the dramatist, for whom the most telling way of getting at the human and the social was to put several people on stage and have them talk together, and otherwise conduct themselves, for the observation of others. But it was not only dramaturgic imagery which Goffman made accessible to sociology. It was often he who first understood the harvests to be reaped for sociology in other fields – the environmental psychology of Roger Barker and Herbert Wright (1954), the game theory of Thomas Schelling (1960), the work of the ethologists (before there was a socio-biology), what could be read as ethnographic literatures on the handicapped and disfigured, pickpockets and prisoners and other persons in special circumstances – and introduced them in his writing (e.g. *Stigma, Asylums, Strategic Interaction*) or through his teaching.

Goffman's observations habilitated a domain of inquiry not so much via the analytic and conceptual apparatus which they prompted him to develop; its fate seems to me more uncertain than the domain of inquiry itself. That domain Goffman helped constitute by noticing, and by knowing how to provide the first line of descriptive grasp of what he had noticed. He risked what his critics would call 'mere description'; he saw how important it was, and how hard it was, to get ordinary behaviour descriptively right. He let us see – those who *would* see – that there were investigable things here, and important ones; and that it was possible to get an uncanny grasp of the head and the heart of sociality by examining

* Editors' note: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was first published in 1956 as Monograph no. 2, University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.

these occurrences. How many readers, and hearers, felt revealed and exposed, gave out embarrassed giggles at the sense of being found out by his accounts.

And there are, of course, the several sets of analytic resources which Goffman introduced for the understanding of the organization of interaction – whether of dramaturgy, stigma, interaction ethology, frame analysis, or others in his corpus of work.

So the fight I take up with Goffman here is not for lack of appreciation of the contribution of his work; it presupposes it.

If I may introduce a somewhat personal note, there is something metaphorically oedipal in this 'fight'. Goffman was one of the most consequential of my teachers. It was from him that I, then a classically trained graduate student interested in social theory, the sociology of knowledge and culture and deviant behaviour, first understood about the viability of studying events on the scale with which he was preoccupied. In that sense, he could be seen as at least partially the progenitor of the work I came to do. But, as in the life of families, offspring find a way of being both in the vicinity of what the parents stood for and sharply divergent from it, so sometimes in the life of the mind. Sacks and I, who studied with Goffman together, both appreciated his achievement and meant our own efforts to build on it in some respects, though not in others. But we never set ourselves in opposition to it – not in the way we set ourselves in opposition to much of mainstream professional sociology. So that is not what is oedipal here – not some patricidal impulse.

It was Sacks, actually, who remarked once that we nowadays think of the Oedipus story as a story about patricide, but that it was in the first instance, of course, a case of intended infanticide. Prophesies and oracles aside, it was his father who first left Oedipus to die, and not the other way around. Although it had a non- or semi-public history going back some 10 years earlier, the fight with Goffman which I take up here came publicly to a head with the 1976 publication of 'Replies and responses', and then flickered intermittently, alternating with receptivity and approbation, through the posthumous 'Felicity's condition'. By the time of 'Replies and responses' Sacks was already dead, and we had decided early on that there was little use in public responses to attacks. So it was left to lie unanswered, together with Goffman's other critiques, overt or tacit, loving or nasty, phrased by him or by his students.

Invited now to reflect on matters of concern common to Goffman's enterprise and CA, some replies and responses to 'Replies and responses' make one claim on my next turn in the

dialogue with Goffman. Much in that critique is based on misunderstanding which needs to be set right. But there are other themes to be addressed as well, ones which capture some of the more general issues and commitments on which Goffman's undertaking and CA's differ. One of these can be captured by the distinction which Goffman draws between 'system' and 'ritual' requirements, constraints or considerations (1981b [1976a]). Involved here are the sorts of analytic and theoretical issues which we should take as the central preoccupations of this domain of inquiry. Another of these more general themes, not unrelated to the first, concerns the sort of data which will be needed to address the central questions in this area, and the modes of analysis which we should bring to bear on such data on behalf of these issues, and leads to a review of this aspect of Goffman's work.

More of this comparative treatment than I like takes the form of discursive writing which is the common idiom of theoretical *responsa* in the contemporary social sciences. What matters in the end, by contrast, are the analytic practices which emerge as the stock-in-hand of practitioners. It is the way we do our work and thereby shape our product, our contribution to the stock of knowledge, that should provide the assessment of this discussion. So, at the end, I examine an episode of interaction chosen for its similarity to a vignette treated by Goffman. I prefer to think of the following sections of this essay as a series of discursive preparations for the empirical analysis which follows. Indeed, many of the matters raised discursively in earlier sections of the discussion were originally prompted by, and must finally be understood by reference to, the differing ways Goffman and CA go about noticing, capturing, formulating, analysing, and understanding the organization and import of what they take to be the significant detail of ordinary interaction.

What I called at the start 'a fight', is, of course, a kind of dialogue, with one voice stilled; actually with two voices stilled, for Sacks is a party to this dialogue as well. It is an eristic dialogue – one in which the parties mean to convince not one another, but a third party who will serve as judge – you, the readers, others who will work in this area.

Such a mode of discourse is not meant to be 'balanced'. I will be addressing Goffman from one CA position; there are others. And I will of necessity be ignoring some of the several Goffmans, for example, the dramaturgic Goffman. But the Goffman I am addressing is the Goffman that Goffman pushed in his later years. That

Goffman was increasingly preoccupied with talk-in-interaction (a term which I shall prefer to 'conversation') and with the analytic stance toward it taken up by 'conversation analysis' (a term which, having become a name, I can do less about). These increasing preoccupations are expressed through the topics of his last half-dozen papers, their citations, and more revealingly, their tacit incorporation of terms and topics from CA work. If the Goffman I address is not the only one, he is the one he came to.

Nor do I mean this to be an overall assessment of Goffman and CA's relation to him and his work. It is a partial, but strategic, joining of some issues. Because his vision was fresh and original and pointed to new territory, it is still alive. Because it pointed to something beyond itself, it is no longer the cutting edge; in my judgement, it is no longer the way to work in this area. This essay is concerned to sharpen our understanding of the difference between what Goffman did and what he (among others) made possible. It is partial and polemical, rather than balanced and judicious. It is meant not to close the books, but to keep them open.

II

In one of his most telling aphoristic *dicta*, Goffman declared at the end of his preface to *Interaction Ritual* (1967: 3), in which he had sketched a proper focus for the study of interaction, 'Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men.' That declaration resonates voices from the past. It can be seen to recommit inquiry to the view of the ancient Greek tragedies. They, the classicist John Jones (1962) reminded us some years ago, did *not* treat the tragic hero as decisive, though western culture has come to think of them that way, probably under the influence of Christianity. Rather, the key for the Greeks was the tragic *situation*. Central was not the figure of Oedipus, or some tragic flaw in his character; central was the situation in which he was enmeshed. Oedipus figured only to underscore that if a son of kings could be so inescapably ground up by the situation, how much more so an ordinary person. The structure of a situation, not the individuals who happened to be caught up in it on any given occasion, was what was of enduring import for man's fate. Not, then, men and their moments; rather, moments and their men.

Although in various respects engaged in distinct undertakings, in the commitment to this position there is some initial common

ground for Goffman and CA. Earlier in the same preface (1967: 2), Goffman had written: 'I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another.' And the 1973 Schegloff/Sacks paper 'Opening up closings' described the programme of work from which it drew as concerned 'to explore the possibility of achieving a naturalistic observational discipline that could deal with the details of social action(s) rigorously, empirically and formally'. Neither enterprise was focused on talk particularly; indeed, the CA enterprise did not insist on *interaction* particularly. For both, talk-in-interaction became a convenient and attractive research site.

But Goffman himself recognized (in the same preface) that the papers collected in *Interaction Ritual* (and, I would argue, in much of his work) did not conform to his declaration. Accordingly, he defended the need for a psychology of the individual to support the study of interaction. 'What minimal model of the actor is needed', he asked (ibid.: 3), 'if we are to wind him up, stick him in amongst his fellows, and have an orderly traffic of behavior emerge?'. But he surely recognized that such a traffic is the product not only of the drivers, but of the properties of the vehicles, the roadways, the fuel, the traffic system, etc.

Yet, despite his explicit commitment, it seems to me that too often, perhaps even on the whole, Goffman did not escape the study of the drivers and their psychology to focus on the traffic of behaviour or the syntactical relationship between the acts. There are parts of *Encounters* (1961a), of *Behavior in Public Places* (1963), and others (especially 1964b) in which the traffic, the syntax, the moments, get the spotlight. But, it seems to me, the perduring entanglement with 'ritual' and 'face' kept him in the psychology. It was the programme of *Frame Analysis* (1974) which began to free him. Perhaps the clearest emergence is the paper on 'Footing' (1979), from which ritual has virtually disappeared, and which may fairly be said to be concerned with the syntactical relations between acts. But that was almost the last substantive thing he wrote.

From his earliest writing on interaction, Goffman's focus on patterns of talk and action was tied to ritual and face, and resisted 'secularization' to the syntax of action. As early as 1955, in introducing the 'interchange' as an object for description in 'On face-work', he treated it not as a formal unit in the organization of acts, but as 'the sequence of acts set in motion by an acknowledged threat to face, and terminating in the re-establishment of ritual equilibrium'

(1967[1955]: 19). Goffman was indeed bracketing for description a particular sequence found naturalistically in ordinary human interaction.[2] He wrote of the unit (ibid.: 20) as a 'basic concrete unit of social activity' which 'provides one natural empirical way to study interaction of all kinds'. But in his actual analysis, it remained tied to a particular job, a job defined by the contingencies of ritual organization and face preservation. It was not treated as the more formal, generic unit implied by the 'syntactical relations among acts'.

Goffman's continuing identification of this unit, under whatever name, with ritual work is made manifest in its reappearance in two of the essays in *Relations in Public* (1971), 'Supportive interchanges' and 'Remedial interchanges'. There is here a differentiation of the earlier notion, but both specifications are still focused on the maintenance and restoration of actors' 'right relation to the rules', or ritual propriety. It is manifest in 'Replies and responses', which finally is an overt attack on the effort to develop, or recognize, a formal unit of the organization of action *per se*, in this case turns at talk doing various actions.

On this reading, the greatest obstacle to Goffman's achievement of a general enterprise addressed to the syntactical relationship between acts was his own commitment to 'ritual', and his unwillingness to detach such 'syntactic' units from a functionally specific commitment to ritual organization and the maintenance of face.

The focus on ritual and face provides for the analytic pursuit of talk or action in the direction of an emphasis on *individuals* and their *psychology*.[3] Although this is a very different psychology than the conventional ones, it is a psychology of individuals nonetheless. 'Face' occupies the same theoretical niche in Goffman's work as individual 'material' interest does in utilitarian social theory; it is its ritual or 'expressive' (see below) counterpart.

To claim this of so great an admirer as Goffman was of the anti-utilitarian Durkheim of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* may appear quixotic. Still, putting 'face' at the centre of interaction drives Goffman's account toward the individual and the psychological at two levels. On the one hand is the recurrently invoked direct account for, and understanding of, conduct by reference to a concern for preservation or demeaning of face (either own or other's). On the other hand is the depiction of an organization of interaction which is driven by, whose *raison d'être* is, the individual and his/her interest – namely 'face'. Interaction is seen, to be sure, to be organized, but to be organized to secure the individual's ritual

needs. It is in this sense that Goffman's emphasis is persistently on the individual and the psychological.[4]

We can discern this theme of contrasting theoretical and analytic commitments when we track the usage of the term 'ritual' to contrast with others, as for example in the essay 'Replies and responses' (1981[1976]), where it is contrasted with 'system', as in the contrast between 'system requirements' and 'ritual requirements' in talk-in-interaction.

Goffman offered (ibid.: 14–15) some eight classes of such system requirements and system constraints, saw these as 'what would appear to be the sheer physical constraints of any communication system' (ibid.: 15), and considered work on this to be 'dealing with talk as a communications engineer might, someone optimistic about the possibility of culture-free formulations' (ibid.: 14). Many CA concerns are included here, concerns with the distribution of turns, with evidence that messages are getting through, devices for attracting, retaining and displaying attention, for participant identification, forms for dealing with trouble in the talk – all these are described in a dismissive idiom as of no special interest, and as the subject matter for some other discipline than sociology or anthropology. In the same early portion of this essay, where he is purportedly making the case *for* 'dialogic analysis', he sets beside these system requirements a concern for ritual requirements, which he illustrates largely from his own work, including the earlier-mentioned account of ritual interchanges.

A similar contrast informs his paper on 'Radio talk' (1981c), which is his version of dealing with the phenomena of 'trouble' and 'repair' in talk. In discussing the consequences of an individual's competence or breakdown thereof, he discriminates between two sorts, which he terms 'substantive' and 'expressive'. The former concerns the contribution of the actor to some ongoing activity, presumably including talking; it concerns the *actions* the individual is performing. The latter concerns the consequent judgements concerning 'the *individual's* competency and *his moral character* as a claimant to competency' (1981c: 198–9). This contrast echoes the one between system and ritual: on the one side, the environment for and organization of action; on the other, the individual and his psychology. Although working with a collection of bloopers – major troubles in talking, Goffman largely eschews treating these themselves, and with them the underlying systematic organization for dealing with trouble, and focuses primarily on the forms of ritual restoration of face. Again, and now very late in his career, the

'ritual' leads Goffman to the psychological and keeps him from the 'traffic'.

But this is no mere theoretical accident. That Goffman was persistently more interested in the individual than in the structure of interaction and its syntax can be seen in his choice of these very data. Though the talk is 'recipient-designed' or audience-sensitive, it is not interactional in another sense; there is obviously no provision for interaction between speaker and audience (a fact which Goffman remarks on several times but makes nothing of). In fact, ordinary conversational data, or data on other forms of talk-*in*-interaction, do not have (in my experience) the elaborate apparatus of ritual face restoration in the aftermath of troubled talk which is the main focus of Goffman's treatment.

But it is such ritual restoration that Goffman is interested in. Given the choice between studying trouble in *ordinary* talk-in-interaction *without* this ritual work, or highly specialized, *non*-interactive talk which *includes* it, Goffman opts for the latter. Could it not be argued that the need to go to idiosyncratic materials for this ritual talk suggests that, from the point of view of ordinary interaction, the ritual concerns attached to trouble in the talk are an occasional, context-specific overlay or lamination, to use Goffman's term? Whereas the restoration of *the talk itself*, the *repair* proper, what is the '*substance*' in Goffman's term, what is a *system* requirement (however much it can be made a vehicle for ritual concerns) – that is somehow more central to the viability of talk-in-interaction as a context for human action.

This is, I think, a central point. For Goffman, what he calls 'ritual' is the heart of the sociology in studying interaction; the 'system' is somehow pre-sociological, engineering, biological, whatever. Here I think him seriously mistaken. There are other ways, various ways, of allocating opportunities to participate in interaction, and to constrain the length of those opportunities. There are various ways of making distinct parts of the talk cohere with one another into sequences. There are various ways of dealing with, or ignoring, trouble in the talk. Some of these are embodied in various 'speech-exchange systems' (Sacks Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 729ff.). Others are readily imaginable. If there are 'uniform engineering requirements' for 'communication systems' involved here, there are in principle various ways of meeting them. The organization of turn-taking, of sequences, of repair, to take three kinds of organization which I believe are generic to talk in interaction – i.e. which will have some version in operation whenever talk is going on – these

organizations are *social organizations* of talk-in-interaction. They constitute as fundamental a social organization as there is: the one that underlies the very constitution and co-ordination of social action, arguably anterior to concepts such as 'propriety' and 'ritual' as components of serious social theorizing about talk-in-interaction. Let me suggest only one way in which such an argument might be specified.

There is a notion that turn-taking – the provision of a single speaker at a time, with minimization of gap or overlap, has to do with politeness, etiquette or civility. In part this view is related to our treatment in western culture, and in particular in Anglo-Saxon culture, of violations of ordinary turn-taking practices as impoliteness or lack of civility.

But there are serious difficulties in proceeding in this way. Such notions as imploliteness or rudeness need to be recognized as parts of the *vernacular culture* which is the mark of competent membership in the society. They are parts of the apparatus of social control, used for the treatment of occasional violations, lapses, violators, the prospects of which are used to socialize new members to avoid the behaviour which will earn them, and their families or social groups, such epithets.

But the vernacular culture's proper business concerns the *running* of the society, not the building of a discipline for its rigorous description. 'Impoliteness' and 'incivility' may work as vernacular accounts of *occasional lapses* in the turn-taking order (and other orders), but do not serve as an account for the existence and character of *the orders themselves*. The fact that violations of some normative structure may be labelled in some fashion does not account for why there was a normative structure there in the first place, or why *that* normative structure.

If, in a *gedankenexperiment*, one imagines a society with *no* turn-taking system, it would not be one that was especially impolite or uncivil. It would be one in which *the very possibility – the assured possibility – of co-ordinated action through talk had been lost*, for example, the sense of one action as *responsive* to another.

Our sense of civil society, in the Hobbesian or other social-contract sense, is in contrast to a state of nature. That state of nature, it seems clear, presumes the existence of already constituted, or constitutable and recognizable, action (as in Hobbes' 'fraud'); what is at issue is the security of persons in such a world, the propriety of various deployments of these already constitutable and recognizable actions.

But the constitution and recognizability of action are, or ought to be, no less problematic for social theory. And it is this domain of

problems to which turn-taking, and other generic organizations in talk-in-interaction, should be seen as relevant. Goffman may have been correct in understanding them to be discriminated from the domain he addressed under the term 'ritual', but not in what he made of that discrimination. That the problems of security and propriety were central for him seems hardly to be doubted; a quick perusal of *Behavior in Public Places* and *Relations in Public* might nonetheless surprise the reader for the frequency of the imagery of the problem of security. But these problems are foundational for the *political* problem of order, however much it plays itself out ultimately in scenes of interaction. There is another, one could argue *anterior*, problem of order, for which the *constitution and recognition of courses of action per se* are the central problems. In his last writings, Goffman came to recognize them and increasingly to address himself to them, but somehow always with the suspicion that they were not his, not sociology's, business.

At a crucial point in the posthumous 'Felicity's condition' (1983a: 32) Goffman writes, 'Here, clearly, philosophy and linguistics must give way to sociology'. Here, at the end, is the same split between system and ritual. Goffman has assigned the constitution of action to philosophy, its implementation in talk to linguistics, and the proprieties of its expression to sociology. But these assignments are arbitrary. No, worse. They do not recognize that the constitution of some form of talk as some recognizable action can involve its sequential placement, its selection of words by reference to recipient design considerations or its correction mid-course (Jefferson 1974). What could be more social than the constitution of social action, and its implementation in interaction?

What is made of these contrasts between system and ritual, between substantive and expressive, between cognitive and normative can be the source of much mischief. They go back to a root distinction which Goffman (in common with others, e.g. Parsons 1951, or Bales 1950) inherited from the past, which underlies all these and other elements of his work, between the 'instrumental' and 'expressive'. In his own work it informs such useful, if not always discriminatable, distinctions as the one between 'giving' and 'giving off' information. Goffman leaned heavily on the side of the expressive. The giving of information may have seemed to him straightforward enough; it was the more piquant (because officially 'unintentional'?) giving *off* of information, and other forms of 'expressive' behaviour, which were his special penchant.

This imbalance needs redressing. To do that, we must focus not only on the face which individuals cultivate by doing what they do;

we must focus on *what they are doing*, on *how they are doing it*, on the *demonstrable uptake of that doing by co-participants*, and on *how the participants together shape the trajectory of the interaction thereby*, and *vice versa*, that is, how the trajectory of the interaction shapes the participants. These, it seems to me, are some of the issues inescapable in addressing the syntax of actions across participants, the traffic of behaviour in interaction – the moments, not the men.

III

For the questions which I have suggested need to be taken up to address the structure of interaction as the focal topic, different data and different ways of dealing with data in analysis may be needed than were characteristic of Goffman's enterprise. For example, if the trajectory of interaction is to be at issue, a single act or utterance in putative context will not be much help. We need then to reflect further on these aspects (data and analytic method) of Goffman's way of working, in part informed by CA ways of working as a contrast. Here, and in the next several sections, these reflections take the form of discussions of Goffman's texts; then the contrast in ways of working is exemplified in a sample of comparative analysis.

It is common now to refer to the sort of work Goffman did, and that CA does, as 'microsociology', and to remark about the level of empirical detail characteristic of the analysis. Indeed, Goffman himself often referred to 'microsociology' and 'microanalysis'. It is worth remarking, however, that although there is an understandable comparative basis for these terms, both of them imply a reference to entities smaller than the norm in their domain. With respect to interaction, however, if the direction pursued in common by Goffman and CA is correct, then relative to their domain they are *not* 'micro', and the elements of conduct taken up in their analyses are not 'details', i.e. small relative to the normal size of objects in that domain. They are just the sorts of building blocks out of which talk-in-interaction is fashioned by the parties to it; they are the ordinary size.

But it is crucial to keep in mind that for social scientists concerned with other domains of the social and cultural, and for those who bring a vernacular sensibility to this work, it continues to be appreciated for its level of empirical detail, for its subtlety, etc. And indeed it was a singular achievement of Goffman's to see the

relevance of this world of events, to hone an analytic sensibility for it, and build it up as a legitimate field of inquiry. Still, we must step back and see to what degree analysis trades on the wonderment of the vernacular appreciation of objects which are analytically, technically, much more prosaic.

One has the sense after reading Goffman that, if one grants him his sense of 'empirical', (that is, if one does not insist on quantitative or other standard social-science senses of that term), his work is densely empirical. But really it is not. There are many observations, and interpretations of them; but there are many conceptual distinctions as well – perhaps as many. But one always suspects that the observations are drawn from a much more densely empirical work elsewhere. For example, he refers intermittently to his field work in Shetland Isle, reported in his dissertation (1953); surely that is the densely empirical ethnography elsewhere drawn on. But it is not. It has much the same texture, and most of the same topics, as his later corpus. Nor is the field work in St Elizabeth's hospital anywhere written up in dense detail. It is drawn on interpretively in *Behavior in Public Places, Asylums, Stigma*, and elsewhere, but nowhere described more densely than that. So how do we readers come to treat the work as so empirical?

Goffman is the master of the darting observation, in a kind of analytical pointillism. His method seems to involve 'sociology by epitome'. It is a powerful method; it yokes the reader to its purposes; it impresses the reader's mind and experience into its service. It works in something like the following way.

His observations achieve their sense of typicality, however exotic their scenes may actually be, by using but a stroke or two, an observation or two, a detail or two, to indicate the scene which we as readers are to call up from memory, personal experience or imagination. If he succeeds, that is if *we* succeed in calling such a scene to mind, our very ability to do so from his detail or two is 'proof' of its typicality. The typicality of the scene or action has not only been 'shown', but has been enlisted and exploited, and the adequacy of his description, the bit or two of characterization, has *ipso facto* been demonstrated.

If he, and we, should fail, not much is lost. Any 'case' is likely to be no more than a sentence or two; anyway, it's probably *we* who got it wrong, for we know how subtle an observer he is; anyway, there are lots of other cases in point, clippings, instances, illustrations. It is both the plethora of cases, and our getting access to much more 'detail' than he ever mentions when we bring to mind the scenes he

ordered up by his typifying detail, that provide Goffman's work with its sense of being chock full of detail.

Take, as a case in point, Goffman's exercise in illustrating the various ways some '"same" event' (1981b [1976]: 68) such as a particular utterance could be taken – an object lesson in the relevance of context. At the end of 'Replies and responses' he presents a catalogue of some 12 or more different ways of taking the utterance 'Do you have the time?', illustrated by some 30 distinct imagined next turns. Indeed, apart from a quite abstract and technical characterization of the several 'reinterpretation schemas' involved, these putative next turns are all we are given as a basis for conjuring up the setting. Thus, 'Do you have the time?' 'Stop worrying. They'll be here'. Or 'Do you have the time?' 'Why the formality, love?'. Or 'Do you have the time?' 'Bitte, ich kann nur Deutsch sprechen'. Or 'Do you have the time?' 'What dime'. Each of these mandates us to fill in the scene, and we do. We think, 'Yeah, there's another one I wouldn't have thought of'.

There is perhaps no more striking demonstration in the literature of the ways in which an utterance can invoke and in that sense 'determine' its relevant context, rather than *vice versa*. For here the contexts are summoned up exclusively by citing what was putatively said. Goffman uses this single feature to invoke a whole scene, with its congeries of aspects supplied by the reader. The method I described before is in full operation here.[5]

What is most striking is not how many and how varied are the classes of uptakes that Goffman suggests, and how fertile and acute the imagination which conjures them, but how transparent and plausible, how 'acceptable' in the linguists' sense, they all are. What is *most* striking is that there are *no implausible* ones, as if implausible uptakes do not occur, or do not need to be dealt with. And as if plausible uptakes need to be dealt with (and can be taken to discredit other people's work) even if they do not actually occur. This is sociology by epitome with a vengeance. It will not deliver the field which Goffman has helped bring us to the verge of, both because analysis proposed about such material is of equivocal relevance when confronted with hard empirical detail, and because of the sorts of occurrences which never come up for analysis at all when proceeding in Goffman's way.

First, when we capture on tape scenes such as he summoned up with a telling detail or two, and we ask what is to be said about them, it is not clear that his detail or two *can* be said, or are in point. For example, in 'Felicity's condition' (1983a: 33), Goffman calls to mind

(sic!) the following scene: one sees some dramatic event in a public place in the presence of a stranger, and says, 'Oh God!', '. . . to which the other properly responds by displaying that they have not been improperly addressed . . .', for example, they shake their head or say 'Fantastic'. Now if we had a videotape of such a scene, with such actions and utterances, it is not clear to me that one would properly analyse these bits of response as 'displays that one was not improperly addressed'. From the instance as described, it is unclear what basis there would be for such an analysis, aside from a Goffmanian stipulation of its relevance.

On the other hand, when addressing a scene as recorded, we encounter stubborn, recalcitrant, puzzling details that will not go away, which we must entertain as possibly relevant without quite, or at all, knowing how, but which never arise in a world whose scenes are summoned up by invocations of typical, and therefore usually transparent, details. In Goffman's texts we rarely get puzzling data, actions which have not been solved. For them to get into his text, he has to have seen in them some resonance with a point or theme in the analysis he is building. They only present themselves in his text as 'domesticated'.

Most problematic of all is the import of some initially anomalous appearing material in Goffman's analytic modality. When encountering some 'non-standard' strip of conduct in a recorded scene (as in the utterance 'I know. I decided that my body didn't need it.', which occurs in the data fragment examined later in this paper), one can work at it with the aspiration that a 'solution' will contribute to our grasp of the ways of interaction, conversation, language – some generally operative natural/cultural formation we are out to understand. When we encounter something apparently strange that has been invented (such as the utterance 'Oh. That. Not that I know of.', avowedly invented by Goffman to complement a real exchange reported by Shuy, and discussed in the next section), we do not know what we are investigating. About the former we can ask, what might its speaker have been doing in talking that way. About the latter we cannot, for we do not know what underlies 'that way': an arbitrary decision by the analyst on how to represent an intuited utterance type? a decision to put the utterance just that way for purposes of the analyst's argument? a way someone actually talked? a misremembered version of the latter? what *are* we investigating, and what type and level of account is in order?[6]

This state of affairs may be quite acceptable if what is wanted is a rough indication and justification for a field of study, and for

some sense of the immense capacities which ordinary persons bring to ordinary interaction. This job it has done extraordinarily well. It is the materializing of a potential field which we all celebrate.

But if what is wanted is an empirical account of how it is in interaction actually, there must be some reservations. For then what is needed must include the capacity to analyse particular spates of talk, and, in principle, any such spate. For this, Goffman is of equivocal help. He rarely, if ever, shows us a spate of real talk, he does so only in respects which illustrate some point he is making in a larger argument uncontrolled by that data, and he generally makes only that point about it.

Here, the tendentious juxtaposition with CA cannot be avoided. CA work is applicable, in principle, to any spate of talk in interaction, and a variety of aspects of any such talk are accessible in principle to such analysis. Furthermore, the data being analysed are made available in a form which allows the reader independent access and thereby the possibility of independent competitive reanalysis. It provides as well unsolved puzzles, and even materials on independent problems. In some measure, this is the case because of the technology of recording. In some measure it is because the 'system requirements', the generic sequential organizations of talk-in-interaction, are (if they *are* generic) present and analysable whenever talk is.

When we 'revisit' Goffman's scenes and contexts with this technology – both material and analytic, and with the constraints it now allows us to impose on analysis and meet, his observations are often elusive, and, to skeptics, illusory.

IV

Clearly, the differences between Goffman's 'data' and CA's are decisive rather than marginal, however indiscriminably 'detailed' they may appear to those who work on differently sized worlds. Although he is reported to have, in private conversation, endorsed recording as now the way to work, he never did so publicly, and never systematically incorporated recorded data into his own work.

Goffman's attitude toward 'real data', in the sense of actual observed occasions, whether taped or not, was equivocal at best, and has not been fully appreciated. Consider, for example, that in 1971 he could write in *Relations in Public* the following striking footnote to

the first appearance in his text of something which looked like a transcript (p. 140, fn. 31):

> The interchanges in this paper are drawn from notes taken on actual interaction, except where quite stereotyped or apocryphal interplay is cited. I have done this because it is easier to record interactions or cull them than to make them up. In all cases, however, *their intended value is not as records of what actually happened, but as illustrations of what would be easily understandable if they had happened and had happened with the interpretive significance I give them.* (emphasis supplied)

The last sentence is uncharacteristically convoluted and difficult to interpret. I make it out to say, 'If events happened with the sense I describe, then my description would be correct'.

Nor was this view merely the consequence of concerns about prosody, physical movement, facial expression, unspoken aspects of social situation, biographical context, and the dangers of retroactive resolution of the indeterminacy and contingency of utterances (1981b [1976]: passim). When, in 'Radio talk', he worked with recordings which arguably present all of what made those events what they were, he did not use the detail thereby made accessible in a markedly different way than previous references to data.

Still, by the time of 'Felicity's condition', he could write as one conclusion (1983a: 23–4) that 'certainly discourse can be taped, the occasion of its production filmed, and the whole result subjected to repeated close examination. But the record itself will not always be enough.' Presumably, then, one might have thought, sometimes it *will* be, perhaps for *some purposes* it will *generally* be, perhaps the burden should ordinarily be on the one who wishes to claim that it is not enough. Presumably, if it is an empirical discipline being built, this record will give us more, even if it is not always enough, than its absence will.

Nowhere is Goffman's discomfort with actual observations, recorded in detail, more evident than in a brief discussion in 'Replies and responses' which is as stunning in its way as the footnote quoted above from *Relations in Public* is in its. He provides in the text (1981b [1976]: 55) a four-utterance exchange:

Doctor	Have you ever had a history of cardiac arrest in your family?
Patient	We never had no trouble with the police.
Doctor	No. Did you have any heart trouble in your family?
Patient	Oh, that, Not that I know of.

About this exchange he remarks in a footnote, 'The first two lines are drawn from Shuy, and are real; the second two I have added myself, and aren't'.[7]

This is one of the few places in Goffman's corpus of which I am aware that he undertakes a sustained analysis of a single fragment of interaction, real or imagined (where by 'sustained' I mean more than an observation or two on several consecutive moves in a spate of interaction). What is so striking is that the 'detailed' analysis which he undertakes is not of the claimedly real utterances taken from Shuy, but of the additions which he made up.

Two different causes for concern are presented. First, his renderings are empirically not accurate. For example, he remarks about turns which are addressed to misunderstandings, such as the third in the excerpt above, that 'misunderstandings lead to a two-move turn, its first part signalling that trouble has occurred, and its second providing a rerun' (ibid.), and he goes on to treat such a turn as an 'elision and contraction' of a sequence.

As it happens, work on turns like this one (in which 'third position repair' is done; cf. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977; Schegloff 1979a) shows that, although such two-part formats *do* occur, the full format of such turns has *four* components. The parts Goffman does not discuss do important jobs, and contribute to our understanding of the parts Goffman does discuss. For example, in one recurrent part the speaker of the misunderstood talk rejects the incorrect understanding, in a usage of the form 'I don't/didn't mean X'. In certain sequential environments, omission of this component can specifically decline to withdraw the understanding which the speaker is trying to replace (in a kind of 'be that as it may' operation). Further, the last parts of turns such as this, in contexts like this, are almost always framed by the phrase 'I mean'. Surely, one may think, this is beside the point, a quibbling over details, picking a fight. But how is that known? Why is it that most misunderstanding repairs have the 'I mean', even though Goffman's version seems as viable? And if we already know what makes a difference and what does not, why study this domain at all?[8]

Note, first, then, that Goffman offers as a claim about the world, as a theorizing about conversation, something which is warranted entirely by a bit of talk which he invented to allow that claim, and, secondly, invented not quite right. And this analysis, in detail, of hypothetical utterances whose detail he invented, is extended to the fourth utterance in the excerpt, with a component by component

'gloss' (his term) of 'Oh', 'that', and 'not that I know of', which are, after all, entirely stipulated bits of utterance.

Surely these were strategic slips on Goffman's part. He ought not to have risked this kind of somewhat extended and detailed analysis of invented data. But, first, as far as I know, no one has challenged him on this before; the scholarly community has been willing to accept both his stipulations about how the talk is done, and then the theorizing from it. And second, there is no reason to think that more *abbreviated* analyses are empirically more on the mark, or that bits of talk which are only *characterized* are more solid foundations for analysis than ones whose weaknesses are revealed by being explicated in verbatim form.

Just as Goffman's focus on ritual and face was no accident, but reflected a special *metier*, so were his choice of data and method of work. He did not exploit the details of real events when he had them in the 'Radio talk' data, he pointedly avoided them in the Shuy data, his sustained 'detailed' analysis is not on target.

Why does that matter? One way it matters is that it may have seriously undercut any chance of Goffman coming sustainedly to focus on the moments, not the men. I suggested earlier certain questions which seem unavoidable if one is to take up the syntactical relationship between acts. I want to return first to a brief discussion of those questions, and then to a consideration of one way of providing answers, and Goffman's objections to it.

V

One common tack in Goffman's writing is the presentation of some putative utterance or other move, with an account of what its producer might be doing with it, and then suggesting that it can be done in some 'keying' which radically transforms it, for example into a mock act of that type, and then adds another lamination, yet again metamorphosing the action we are to imagine and understand.

Although there are exceptions, ordinarily two matters remain unaddressed in such treatments, and in important ways they are critical for understanding how interaction comes to have the trajectory it does. In important ways, they *are* the analysis.

First, do other participants in the interaction understand the utterance in the manner which Goffman proposes – as a mock

version? as a serious deployment of an apparently mock version? For example, he writes (1981b [1979]: 153),

> Innuendo is also a common candidate for playful transformation, the target of the slight *meant to understand* that a form is being used unseriously – a practice sometimes employed to convey an opinion that could not safely be conveyed through actual innuendo, let alone direct statement. (emphasis supplied)

Only '*meant* to understand'? What grounds are there for asserting that other participants have so understood the utterance or move? How is it revealed in the interaction? This is, of course, hard to address if the materials being discussed are imagined, and one also imagines the responses. But it is crucial, for if it is only Goffman and his readers who appreciate the subtle analysis, how can the utterance so understood be, or have been, consequential for the sequel in some actual interaction?

Second, how does the speaker (whether animator, author or principal) *do* it? That is, how does a speaker bring off (to draw for examples on 'Replies and responses', 1981b [1976]: 54–7) 'How much did you say?' as a 'standard rerun signal' as compared to a remark that the price is out of line? And, if the putative speaker is doing the latter, how is s/he doing it differently with this utterance as compared to 'You gotta be kidding'? How does 'you forgot', an apparent 'assertion of fact', get to be 'understood as blame-giving' (ibid.: 58, and the data analysis section below)? What is it about the conduct of a participant in interaction that brings off these actions in these understandings, or that opens them to such understandings? Are not these among the basic practices by which actions in interaction are achieved? And are they not what underlies the actual trajectory in which courses of interaction are progressively realized? For it is by recognizing what someone is doing from how they are conducting themselves (e.g. talking), and acting on the basis of that understanding, that the several participants, one after the other, build the actual development of the course of interaction.

For these questions, one needs real data, for we do not know in advance in what ways these, or other, effects will show up. Or in what hitherto unnoticed or unsuspected detail some recipient understanding is made manifest, or some speaker project procedurally enacted.

These questions – does the analysis capture what the participants were demonstrably up to for/with one another? How are such courses

of action and interaction achieved? How are they combined temporally and sequentially? – are close to the core analytical differences between Goffman and CA. For CA (or at least this practitioner), the interest in findings about such things as adjacency pairs is not just in having extracted a general practice, or organizing format, or domain of such practices or phenomena from a swarm of unique episodes. There is the further payoff, and constraint, that the results afford us the capacity to return to singular cases, singular strips of talk and other conduct, and be able to explicate what is going on there, and how, and be able to do so better with the use of these tools, because what are the analytic tools for us were for them – the participants – the actual practices of conduct.

It is to deal with questions such as these, on data such as these, that notions like the 'adjacency pair' were introduced. Goffman found much to object to, both in this unit of sequential organization and in the mode of analysis from which it developed. Before using that notion in the analysis of an interactional episode, it is appropriate to examine some of those objections.

VI

Although the term 'adjacency pair' is now sometimes used in the literature without explication, some readers may not be familiar with it. The basic notion was this (Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 295–6):

> Briefly, then, adjacency pairs consist of sequences which properly have the following features: (1) two utterance length, (2) adjacent positioning of component utterances, (3) different speakers producing each utterance.
>
> The component utterances of such sequences have an achieved relatedness beyond that which may otherwise obtain between adjacent utterances. That relatedness is partially the product of the operation of a typology in the speakers' production of the sequences. The typology operates in two ways: it partitions utterance types into 'first pair parts' (i.e. first parts of pairs) and second pair parts; and it affiliates a first pair part and a second pair part to form a 'pair type'. 'Question–answer', 'greeting—greeting', 'offer–acceptance/refusal' are instances of pair types. A given sequence will thus be composed of an utterance that is a first pair part produced by one speaker directly followed by the production by a different speaker of an utterance which is (a) a second pair part, and (b) is from the same pair type as the first utterance in the sequence is a member of. Adjacency pair

sequences, then, exhibit the further features (4) relative ordering of parts (i.e. first pair parts precede second pair parts) and (5) discriminative relations (i.e. the pair type of which a first pair part is a member is relevant to the selection among second pair parts).

Lectures by Sacks (1965–72) and papers by Jefferson (1972) and Schegloff (1968, 1972) had already shown that larger sequences could be built from adjacency pairs, for example, by prefacing the first pair part with a preparatory sequence, or by inserting talk between the first and second pair parts. Subsequent papers (e.g. Schegloff 1980; Davidson 1984; Jefferson and Schenkein 1977) describe additional expansions.

Goffman's evaluation of this analytic unit is rendered equivocal by his casting of it in different moulds from the very outset of his discussion (in 1981b [1976]). Thus, he begins by taking as prototypic of adjacency pairs 'question–answer' sequences. He finds this formulation inadequate on various grounds, and it is transmuted into the presumably more adequate 'statement–reply' format. But then various second utterances in such sequences are seen not to fit well to the notion 'reply', this being seen as a defect of *adjacency pairs*, and not of Goffman's adoption of the term 'reply' earlier in the same essay. The problem is fixed by replacing 'reply' by 'response'. And then various problems are found with the notion 'statement', once again serving to undercut the viability of adjacency-pair analysis, rather than the 'set up job' in replacing 'first pair parts' with 'question' and then 'statement' in the first place. The solution to the problems with 'statement' as a formulation of the first parts of such sequences is to continue the metamorphoses: from 'first pair part' to 'question' (though Goffman never does this one explicitly), to 'statement', and finally to 'reference', leaving us with 'reference–response sequences', which have their own vulnerabilities. Having thus dismembered the caricature he constructed in the first place, he triumphantly declares the enterprise futile.

But, if anything here is futile, it is the enterprise which Goffman originated in trying to treat question–answer sequences as prototypic. The point of introducing the notion of 'adjacency pairs' is, in part, to circumvent the problem of treating some particular type of sequence unit as a serious prototype. In offering question–answer, greeting–greeting and offer–acceptance/refusal as three instances of pair types, three quite different types of relationship between first and second pair parts were included. 'Greeting–greeting' involves an exchange of cognate objects (even the same

greeting term). 'Question–answer' involves complementary turn types, but relatively unspecified ones (i.e. it is compatible with a considerable range of relationships between the two utterances). Offer–acceptance/refusal involves a limited number of determinate, alternative response types. Nor do these three instances necessarily exhaust the sorts of relationship which can obtain between first and second pair parts. In declining to privilege any one of these sequence types over the others, a claim was being made about the presence of certain robust sequential relationships that operate across such differences between sequence types, and which characterize the more abstract or formal unit being introduced as the 'adjacency pair'.

Now this claim may be wrong; there may not be such sequential relationships which transcend differences between particular types of sequences. But arguments to this effect should be made directly, and ideally should be supported by analyses which exemplify the differences which render the more generally formulated unit problematic. The argument should not be made implicitly, by identifying all adjacency pairs with a single type, and finding problems in treating that type as generic. By proceeding in this fashion, Goffman has indirectly offered some of the arguments *for* developing an analysis of a more generic unit of sequence organization instead of working with more specific types, rather than the argument against which he seems to have been pressing.

Setting aside the equivocality introduced into Goffman's discussion by this rhetorical strategy, one major misunderstanding appears to underlie a whole host of consequent confusions in his treatment of the adjacency pair and of CA more generally. This misunderstanding is expressed in two forms or at two levels: First, it appears as a confusion of the *relationship of adjacency* between successive turns at talk on the one hand, with *adjacency pairs* as units of sequence organization on the other. This, in turn, reflects a more general failure to distinguish between the organization of turn-taking and the organization of sequences. Here I can only address a few of the misunderstandings manifested in 'Replies and responses' (and in occasional writings by others) which appear to result from not insisting upon these distinctions (surprising for Goffman, so much of whose writing is preoccupied with making distinctions between different levels and domains of analysis).

1 Recurrently Goffman's text shows him to believe that use of the notion of adjacency pair commits the user to the view that every

utterance is either a first pair part or a second pair part. Thus, he formulates a 'deep complaint' about the 'statement–reply formula' (1981b [1976]: 29): 'Although many moves seem either to call for a replying move or to contribute such a move, we must now admit that not all do.' Reccurently, he announces with apparent relish some kind of turn that is neither a first nor a second – a back-channel response, an aside or 'bracket marker' (ibid.: 49–50), 'elbow room to provide at no sequence cost an evaluative expression of what they take to be occurring' (ibid.: 29), or the third turn in three-part sequences reported in classrooms or medical interviews. He seems to feel that even the several parts of multi-unit turns should be understood as the answers to some reconstructable putative questions (ibid.: 9, following Stubbs).

This is all quite beside the point.

First, no serious CA worker has suggested that all turns were either first or second pair parts of adjacency pairs. This is patently not the case, and it is unclear why any such claim should be taken seriously.

Second, no serious claim has been made that all sequences are adjacency pairs or based on adjacency pairs. In fact, there are accounts within CA work of sequential units larger than turns which are not adjacency pair-based, for example, storytelling sequences (Sacks 1974; Jefferson 1978; Goodwin 1984).

Third, as noted above, there is much work within the CA corpus concerned with the ways in which much more extensive spates of talk can be understood as expansions of adjacency pairs. There are pre-expansions before a sequence's main first pair part (Schegloff 1980), insert expansions between the two parts of the core sequence (Schegloff 1972; Goffman's discussion of pp. 7–8 hardly recognizes the scope of such expansions), and post-expansions after the second part (Davidson 1984). Many of these expansions are themselves organized as adjacency pairs, but some (especially in post-expansion position) are not. Third turns which register receipt and/or acceptance of second pairs parts, or which offer assessments, are minimal expansions of adjacency pairs.[9] They are not embarrassments for them.

As for the treatment of each part, or clause, of a multi-unit utterance as some version of an answer to a question, it is unclear what warrant there is for such a view, or what theoretical urgency seemed to Goffman to compel it. The same can be said for his apparent view (1981b [1976]: 48) that 'non-verbal' moves, or expressions responsive to talk, cannot be accommodated within the adjacency-pair format.

2 Goffman makes much of the ways in which adjacency pairs facilitate 'effective transmission.' This is part of his general treatment of dialogic analysis/CA as a kind of communications engineering. In this framework, adjacency pairs are seen as most important for their capacity to reassure speakers that they have been understood.

> Given a speaker's need to know whether his message has been received, and if so, whether or not it has been passably understood, and given a recipient's need to show that he has received the message and correctly – given these very fundamental requirements of talk as a communication system – we have the essential rationale for the very existence of adjacency pairs, that is, for the organization of talk into two-part exchanges.
>
> (ibid.: 12)

This claim reveals clearly the misunderstanding underlying Goffman's discussion. For what Goffman is here discussing is not adjacency pairs, but a weaker, more generic organizational feature, the *adjacency relationship*. The effects which Goffman discusses – of showing that a turn at talk was heard and how it was understood –are most generally the by-products of the construction of a next turn. Next turns show understanding of prior turns, act with respect to prior turns so understood, etc. (unless marked as addressing some other turn than the prior one) *independently of whether they are components of adjacency pairs or not.* The adjacency-pair relationship is a *further organization of turns*, over and above the effects which sequential organization otherwise invests in adjacency, as is made quite clear in the text cited earlier from 'Opening up closing' ('The component utterances of such sequences have an achieved relatedness beyond that which may otherwise obtain between adjacent utterances.')

The *adjacency relationship* operates most powerfully backwards, with next turns displaying their speaker's understanding of prior turn. *Adjacency pairs* have in addition a powerful *prospective* operation, first pair parts making a limited set of second pair parts relevant next. If such second pair part turns are forthcoming, they are seen as specifically responsive. If not, they are ordinarily replaced by turn types which show that the sequentially implicated response has been deferred but is still oriented to and 'is in the works'. Failing such a turn next, the sequentially implicated response is notably absent; its absence is accountable, and may, in fact, be replaced or followed by an account. There are other such features of *adjacency-pair organization which are not features of the adjacency relationship.*

Again, turns which are adjacent – one after the other – regularly have certain properties by virtue of that relationship. Other turns, *not always adjacent to each other* (e.g. if a sequence is expanded internally), constitute a unit of sequence organization and sequence construction of a different order. Adjacency pairs may do especially powerfully some/many of the things which merely adjacent turns do, but they are still quite distinct phenomena.

Note: mere temporal succession (as the product of the turn-taking organization's 'one speaker at a time' feature) produces an *acoustic* fact. The investing of temporal succession with sequential organization is an independent fact, a fact of *social* organization, and not an artefact of engineering contingencies. Adjacency as a sequential relationship is a conversational, an interactional, a social fact. It invests mere seriality with social and interactional import. Adjacency pairs add a prospective, multi-turn, multi-action course of conduct to these other layers.

Obviously, the fact of *adjacent positioning* of turns is virtually omnipresent in conversation. It may be this omnipresence of the *adjacency relationship*, left undiscriminated from the *adjacency pair*, which has led Goffman (and others) to the mistaken belief that CA claims that everything is a first or second pair part. Most turns are next to other turns; most turns display some understanding of the turn they are after (though some may be constructed to show themselves otherwise addressed). But it should now be clear that this does *not* entail that most turns are first pair parts or second pair parts.

It should also now be clear that the needs of 'effective transmission' to which Goffman refers (if, indeed, there are such functional needs, and if functional needs can account for anything in any case) are satisfied by aspects of the adjacency relationship between successive turns and what that relationship is treated by participants as requiring. These needs do not especially mobilize the resources of adjacency-pair organization, although that organization may also deal with them. And, once we have registered how the organization of turn-taking, adjacency pairs, etc., do satisfy functional communicational needs, we must go on to note that they regularly do so as a by-product, and are otherwise focused. Adjacency-pair organization in particular is directed to the organization of action in various respects.

3 The distinction between turn-taking organization with its adjacent positioning of turns and adjacency pairs and their expansion into larger sequences can be brought to bear on other difficulties which Goffman believes confront dialogic analysis/ CA. For example,

Goffman suggests (ibid.: 28) that back-channels (e.g. 'uh huh') interpolated by a recipient into another's turn constitute an 'embarrassing fact'. But it is not clear why. For the most part, back-channels seem to be actions related to the organization of turns and turn-taking; they are ways recipients/hearers have of showing that they understand that an extended turn-at-talk is in progress and is not yet finished. They seem to be *not* a way of responding to a turn, but of allowing a turn to continue to completion, at which point it will be responded to (Schegloff 1981; Jefferson 1984). In this sense they do not change the character of the ongoing talk as a 'single speaking'; they show an orientation to it precisely as that. They do not ordinarily count (for the parties to the talk) as a turn (Schegloff 1981: fn. 16; Duncan and Fiske 1977). They have no particular bearing on adjacency-pair organization.

When Goffman's discussion does not run turn-taking and adjacency-pair organization together, it sometimes poses false dilemmas in requiring a ranking of their relative primacy. For example, with respect to turns with two units or 'moves' in them, one of which belongs to one sequence, the other to another, he writes (ibid.: 24), 'We are still required to decide which concern will be primary: the organization of turns *per se* or the sequencing of interaction'.

But we need not decide this question. The organization of turns and turn-taking on the one hand, and of sequences on the other, are both generic organizations in talk-in-interaction. Both are present all the time. The talk can be organized to achieve varying relations between them. Sometimes the parties will talk in a manner which momentarily elevates the relevance of one or another organization (for example, raising the voice to insist on completing a turn in the face of an early start by recipient on the response). But this is not something 'we' as analysts are required to decide with respect to primacy, only something which is ours to describe when it appears as a practice in talking.[10]

By the time of writing 'Felicity's condition' Goffman appears to have recognized the difference between the adjacency relationship and adjacency pairs (though he does not make this explicit), and it contains (1983a: 49–50) the same sort of attack on the former as 'Replies and responses' mounted on the latter. He seems to want to say, 'but everything is so much more complicated'. For example, he writes (ibid.),

> It is true that prior turn is very likely to provide some of the context in terms of which current utterance will be interpreted . . . But . . .

> prior turn can never be the only such condition current speaker will be required (and allowed) to employ as a frame of reference . . .

and he goes on to list others.

Now why would Goffman (or anyone else) understand CA writers to be claiming that it is *only* prior turn which conditions the production and understanding of next turn? Perhaps it is this. CA workers examine some utterance or string of utterances in its sequential context, or examine instances of some phenomenon, each in its sequential context, and recurrently find prior turn being relevant in this or that way, because for the participants it was relevant in this or that way. For CA, as for them, 'this *versus* that way' matters. The different ways in which one turn figures in the organization of another, the different ways in which speakers are responsive to what has just been said and show that in their talk, are the stuff of CA work, and differences are consequential. For those whose enterprise is not committed to the analysis of the details of talk in its sequential context, these differences do *not* matter in the same way. From that perspective, CA papers appear to conduct analysis by reference to prior turn again and again – as if that was all that mattered.

But it is critical to recognize that CA inquiry is examining *data fragments* as representations of singular strips of talk in interaction, subjected to repeated detailed scrutiny in their singularity. Such inquiry tries to make sense of how these strips of talk are organized, what their participants are doing moment by moment, how the episodes come to have the trajectories they have. These segments of talk-in-interaction are *CA's units of work*. Goffman (as also perhaps others) is examining *issues*, and trying to enumerate and array them (how often the phrase 'and then there is the issue of' used to recur in his discussions). Those are *his units of work*. So all CA's different instances, with different bearings of turn on turn, all go in the same basket for him; and he is led to conclude that for CA that is all that matters.

Similarly for turn-taking and sequence organization; it is not that they are the only things worth studying, but, being fundamental and omnipresent, they regularly enter into the constitution of what is going on in some fragment of data. For those concerned with the 'range of issues' in the several relevant disciplines, they see 'more on turn-taking, more on adjacency pairs'. But, of course, the fact that certain aspects of the talk enter into analysis recurrently does not mean that they alone are relevant. There is no lack of analyses in the

CA mode in which much else besides prior turn is brought into the analysis.

By the end of 'Replies and responses', Goffman has reached a position of considerable ambivalence. On the one hand, declaring that 'the box that conversation stuffs us into is Pandora's', he seems to celebrate the final inaccessibility of this human activity to disciplined inquiry by asserting its potential arbitrariness.

> In these circumstances the whole framework of conversational constraints – both system and ritual – can become something to honor, to invert, or to disregard, depending as the mood strikes. On these occasions it's not merely that the lid can't be closed; there is no box. (1981b [1976]: 74)

There is here a nice twist on the metaphor, but in the service of an entirely premature analytic nihilism. The particular phenomena invoked earlier in this paragraph are *not* beyond description. Goffman chooses to see in them arbitrariness, but he has picked a particular usage – what have been called 'out-louds'; mutterings which leave another free to respond or not – utterances built precisely to allow such 'arbitrariness'. To conclude from this that all is lost is a *non sequitur*.

Balancing the conclusion of arbitrariness and unanalysability in his ambivalence is quite the opposite concern, an almost resigned concession that the tie in conversation between an utterance and the preceding turn

> . . . must be explored under the auspices of determinism, as though all the degrees of freedom available to whosoever is about to talk can somehow be mapped out, conceptualized, and ordered, somehow neatly grasped and held, somehow made to submit to the patterning-out effected by analysis.
>
> (ibid.: 72)

Perhaps it is this prospect that Goffman triumphantly rejects at the end, his analytic nihilism motivated by an assertion of human freedom (a sharp turn from the closing of *Stigma*, where he teases those who would keep a corner of the world, or was it the soul, safe from sociology).

But this metaphysical pathos is as unwarranted as his analytic nihilism. For the organization present in human action is *enabling* as much as it is constraining – at least the organization described by the

notion 'system requirements'. The orderliness of the structures of action and talking-in-interaction includes an endless array of options. The organizations of interaction no more confine humans in a deterministic prison than the laws of geometry and physics determine the outcome of a game of pocket billiards. Of course, on particular occasions particular participants may find themselves constrained, oppressed, etc. But surely this is not the result of general and formal organization that makes a participant's contribution organizationally responsible in *some* fashion to what has preceded. We need not reject the very possibility of formal analysis that is nonetheless responsible to the empirical detail of ordinary occasions of talk on this account.

VII

How, then, might one proceed? What is needed is not abstract proposals, but exemplars of other ways of conducting analysis. To preserve a sense of what follows as alternative to Goffman's enterprise, I have selected as the material for analysis an interactional episode directly related to one of his instances. Here is his vignette, drawn from 'Replies and responses' (1981b [1976]: 58), and introduced to make the point that

> . . . just as interchanges can incorporate non-linguistic actions along with verbal utterances concerning these actions, so interchanges can incorporate references to past doings as occasions for now doing praise or blame, thereby placing responses to wider circumstances before or after verbal reference to these circumstances and thus bringing them into the interchange.

I must say, parenthetically, that this discussion is part of the effort of the whole of the paper to show the untenability and unusability of the notion of 'adjacency pair', and that I do not understand how this point, if successfully made, would contribute to that outcome. Still, I wish to make available the context in which Goffman introduces the example to which my fragment of data is similar.

Here is his offering:

> B comes home from work, apparently not having brought what he promised to bring, and shows no sign that he is mindful of his failure.

A_1: 'You forgot!' [An utterance whose propositional form is that of an assertion of fact, but here can be understood as blame-giving]
B_1: 'Yes. I *am* sorry.'
A_2: 'You're always doing it.'
B_2: 'I know.'

That is all. Immediately following this presentation, attention is shifted to other ways in which 'the accuser' can proceed, especially with hedges. What Goffman has had to say about this excerpt, then, is the introductory framing about the incorporation of reference to past doings (actually, although in past tense, 'you forgot' is more an observation about the present situation), and the observation that the initial putative utterance has an ostensible assertion of fact used as a blame-giving, but with no suggestion as to how this can work, whether any assertion of fact could be so understood, or could be so understood in some context, and if so what aspects of context or utterance might be relevant to this usage.

Here is the beginning of the episode in my materials which approximates the vignette reproduced from Goffman.

> Sherri, Ruthie and Karen are in their dormitory room, talking with Mark, who has been telling a story. Carol, who may also live there, comes in. She apparently had said she was going to get an ice cream sandwich, but has returned with some other edible. The whole episode begins at line 151 of the transcript with the squeak of the door, and ends with Carol's departure at line 191.

151 [*door squeaks*]
152 S: Hi Carol. =
153 C: =H[i::.]
154 R: [CA:RO]l, HI::
155 S: You didn't get en icecream sanwich,

I want to begin by focusing here on the parallel to Goffman's vignette at line 155, though my discussion will only sporadically be comparative, and will largely treat this fragment in its own terms. Still, I note that this episode begins with a greeting exchange, and Goffman's does not, or he did not provide it, and that this can bear on our understanding of what is going on, as can the termination of the greetings after an initial round – without an exchange of

'howareyou's, for example. So line 155 is not as early as it could be, but may be somewhat pre-emptive nonetheless.

Further, and again without taking this up in any detail, after the greetings, a structural issue is faced that regularly comes up when new arrivals join previously ongoing conversations: whether to assimilate the newcomer to the talk-in-progress, or abandon the talk in favour of something tailored to the newcomer. Line 155 displays an instance of this second practice. What then can we say about the utterance, or turn, or move, at line 155?

To begin with, Sherri *does a noticing*. That may seem obvious enough – both that she does a noticing, and what she notices. But it is not so obvious, or rather, its obviousness is itself to be explicated.

Sherri's *noticing is of a negative event*, something which did not happen. The issue about such observations – by both interactional participants and by professional analysts – should by now be commonplace. Because an indefinitely expandable set of things did not happen (here an indefinitely expandable set of things which Carol did not get), some relevance rule or relevancing procedure must underlie the formulated noticing, by reference to which it is remark-able.

This may lead us to note that the girls might well have forgotten that Carol was to bring an ice-cream sandwich in particular, just as Carol might have forgotten that she was to do so. The patent fact that she doesn't have one, then, by itself, is of equivocal relevance to the doing of an utterance which does such a noticing. The noticing, then, remarks not only on the absence of the ice cream, but on the relevance, and hence the observability, of this absence to Sherri.

So also could Carol have 'forgotten', and it is not given in the scene whether Carol forgot and therefore will be surprised at relevantly not having an ice cream (i.e. although there is not one with her, she may be unaware of relevantly lacking one), or whether she *knows* that she doesn't have one (where this does not refer to being aware, for example, of having lost something). So it is unclear, and not only to us but also perhaps to Sherri, whether this noticing is telling Carol that *Sherri has noticed* 'no ice cream', or whether it is *also informing Carol* of the observation 'no ice cream' itself. Is it, then, just a noticing, or is it also an announcement or a telling?

I might mention, parenthetically, that this noticing occurs in a position in which noticing recurrently is done, namely just after initial exchanges. Noticings are subject to a metric relative to perceptual (here visual) access; someone who doesn't comment during or just after openings about a change in appearance of other

or of the surroundings (when, that is, such a comment is apt on recipient design grounds) may be suspected of not having noticed at all. So openings, and just after openings, is a place in which noticings regularly occur (Schegloff 1985). And that is where this one has occurred. (This is the point of my earlier remark that this noticing could have come earlier, but may still be pre-emptive.)

Having noted that the noticing is about a negative event, we can go on to notice that it *formulates a failure*, and particularly something which the recipient failed to do. This observation is especially in point here, for (as will become apparent from subsequent utterances) Carol *has brought* something, something to eat. They could, then, have remarked on what she *did* bring. Making the noticing be one about an absence, and about an absence as a product of Carol's action or failure of action, invites analysis (both from us, and in the first instance from Carol) of what is being done by and through this form of noticing. This, it appears (both here and in other data), is a practice which is regularly used to do *complaining*.

Obviously, some constraints must be added to this observation, for some such noticings can constitute praising – if, for example, the remarked absence is something which is negatively assessed (as in 'you didn't stumble once during the whole speech'). But with such constraints, we may note that one method, one practice by which 'complaining' can be done is by formulating a failure, either by some object (as in 'My car is stalled'), by speaker ('I couldn't write a word today') or by recipient ('You didn' get an ice cream sandwich', or, for that matter, to return to Goffman's case, 'You forgot').

Now it should be clear that the preceding is but the beginning of an analysis of how 'You didn't get an ice cream sandwich' (or 'You forgot') could be used to do complaining, and to be so recognized by co-participants. No evidence has been offered yet that these utterances were so understood. And only the initial lines of a candidate account have been offered of what about such talk provides for its status as a complaint. There has been only the mention of some other instances, with no analysis of them. No more than this sketch of a direction of analysis can be offered within the scope of this essay.

But it should indicate the sort of analysis that is largely missing in Goffman's treatment of action in interaction. Although he does note that what seems to be one sort of talk ('assertion of fact') can be seen to be doing another ('blame-giving'), the observation appears only as a parenthetical quasi-assist to the reader, rather than as the point of the discussion of his vignette. He offers no analysis of what makes

this work, and accordingly what restrictions operate on the observation – clearly, not all assertions can be seen to be doing complaining; some do other actions (cf. Drew 1984); and sometimes an assertion is just an assertion. What is needed for such analysis is not a conceptual working through of 'conditions' under which some form of talk successfully qualifies as an instance of the action-class 'complaints'. That sort of 'speech-act'y analysis should by now be understood to be at best a kind of lexical semantics of a certain class of verbs, giving the conditions under which they operate as descriptions, rather than a procedural account of action. What is needed is rather an analysis of actual talking to see how 'complaining' is done, or what 'noticing failure' is used to do, or how *any* actions which get recognizably achieved do so. And that requires access to the detailed doings of interactional participants, not perspicuous reconstructions by analysts.

Now it is in point to note that the preceding observations about line 155 contribute to several possible characterizations of it as a first pair part of an adjacency pair. Linked to these accounts of it as a first pair part are projections of sequentially implicated second pair parts, response types if you like. There are two main characterizations involved, one of the type of action being prosecuted – a possible complaint; the other about the turn format through which that action is being effected – a noticing/informing.[11]

A variety of turn types and action types can serve as responsive *seconds to complaints* – among them remedies or offers of remedies, accounts, excuses, co-complaints or agreements or alignments with the complaint, apologies, and others (of course, not every complaint will tolerate each of these response types). Among the sequentially implicated *seconds to noticings/tellings* are registerings (for example, through what Heritage (1984) calls 'change of state' tokens), claims of prior knowledge, assessments of the noticed feature, agreements, and others. If both characterizations we have offered of line 155 are in point, then both sets of constraints should be relevant, either on next turn, or deferred in an orderly manner to later in the sequence.[12]

What then, in the case in hand, actually does happen next?

155 *S*: You didn' get an *i*cecream sanwich,
156 *C*: I kno:w, hh I decided that my body didn't need it,

As before, only a few observations can be taken up.

Note first that Carol's turn begins with what appears to be an agreement, indeed a verification, that there is no ice-cream sandwich. The factuality of that state *does* appear to be affirmed, but surely more is going on. Indeed, if we ask what Carol is *doing*, we might not want to say that she is doing 'agreeing' or 'verifying'. Those actions might be done by an agreement token such as 'no' (an agreement with the preceding negative would take a negative form).[13]

Although the facticity of the noticing may be affirmed as a by-product of 156, the form Carol uses speaks directly to an issue we earlier noted was raised by 155, namely, *whether Carol knew* she did not, relevantly, have an ice cream, or *whether she would be informed* of that by the utterance. With 'I know' she claims that she was aware of this before the preceding utterance was produced. Her turn thus begins with a unit, a 'move' in Goffman's locution, which is addressed to one aspect of the preceding turn – the noticing/informing format which can raise the issue of recipient's knowledge, by taking a stand on it. 'I know' shows Carol to have taken such an issue to have been raised by the format (e.g. did she just forget), and to respond to it. She has, then, not just agreed with the noticing; 'I know' is consequentially different here from 'no'.[14]

The preceding paragraphs are meant to exemplify the second sort of issue generally missing from Goffman's treatment of talk-in-interaction, an absence inseparably linked to the form of data relied on. That issue concerns the locus of analysis of what one participant has done by a turn at talk: is that analysis the academic analyst's and (if convincing) the readers'? Or is it, and in the *first instance*, that of the co-participants in the interaction? And if the latter is claimed, what evidence can be offered in support of that claim? If we are to understand the lines along which the interaction actually developed, what is needed is evidence of the latter, for it is on *their* understandings which subsequent actions (which *constitute* the developing line) are predicated.

I mean in the preceding and following paragraphs to show and to have shown that earlier discussion of Sherri's turn at 155 has introduced aspects of that utterance relevant not only to this academic interest in it, but to Carol's practical interest in responding to it. Once again, these displays of co-participants' understanding of the talk are embodied in aspects of their subsequent conduct which an academic analyst is unlikely to have invented, or would be sore put to defend if s/he had. Indeed, such a defense would require having already in hand just the sort of analysis we are trying to develop.

Note next, then, that the second unit in the turn at 156 offers an account for not getting the ice cream. And recall the earlier analysis

that, by formulating a failure by Carol, Sherri had done a complaint, a first pair part for which a variety of seconds were relevant, among them an account or explanation for the failure or absence. So we are noting that this next turn seems oriented to the sequential relevancies projected by its position in an adjacency pair, both with respect to the responsive action it is doing, with respect to the format it is responding to, and with respect to the relationship between the two.

Several features of the way in which this account by Carol is formulated deserve mention, even in this abbreviated treatment, because with these data they can get us to appreciate features of the way talk is conducted by the parties really, which are not likely to be incorporated in the diction by which analysts choose to render it.

Note, for example, what Goffman (1981b [1979]: 146–52) calls the 'embedding' which Carol employs in saying not 'I don't/didn't need it', or 'My body didn't need it' (I will return to that way of putting it), but '*I decided that* my body didn't need it' (emphasis supplied). It seems clear that it is not so much 'embedding' that is relevant here, as a continuing orientation to the possibility raised by the prior turn that the failure to bring the ice cream was a product of forgetting. The 'I know' asserted that, at the moment of the telling utterance (i.e. line 155), she did not have to be told; but it was compatible with having forgotten earlier (as, for example, in 'I know. I remembered on the way up the elevator'). 'I decided that my body didn't need it' marks the 'non-bringing' as an intentional, achieved outcome.

Note next that the terms used by Carol to express this decision build in an allusion to its basis. Specifically, the use of 'my body' to refer to herself, most obviously in contrast to 'I' ('I didn't need it'; 'I decided that I didn't need it'), is a device for focusing attention on her appearance, or her weight, etc.[15] And in that regard, she can be heard to have expressed a negative self-assessment, a self-deprecation, one of the few types of utterance with which it is preferred to disagree rather than agree (Pomerantz 1978).

By the end of the utterance at line 156, then, among other things, there has been a complaint at the failure to bring an ice cream and an account for that failure, constituting a first and second part of an adjacency pair. Of course, there has been more: a working through of the several parties' state of knowledge about this, and a put down by Carol of her appearance, which can make some rejection by others appropriate. But the 'conditional relevance' of some second pair part to the complaint has been met. However, given the range

of possible response types to complaints, and given the particular account Carol has offered, it remains to be seen whether or not this response will be treated by its recipient(s) as adequate. At the same time, it remains to be seen how the self-deprecation will be dealt with, if it is dealt with at all.

155 S: You didn' get an *i*cecream sanwich,
156 C: I kno:w, hh I decided that my body didn't need it,
157 S: Yes but ours di:d =
158 S: =hh heh heh heh [heh heh heh [·hhih
159 ? [ehh heh heh [
160 ? [( )

Sherri's next turn has three components (note that the laughter on line 158 is a continuation of Sherri's turn, placed on a new line as a transcription convenience to allow representation of overlapping contributions by unidentifiable others).

As is commonly the case in such multi-unit turns (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974: 722–3), the first unit is back-linking to prior turn (as was the initial unit in Carol's turn at 156). Although 'yes' might have seemed to be a sort of agreement token as 'I know' had, they are clearly quite different. This 'yes' can acknowledge Carol's prior turn without agreeing to the self-assessment as overweight, and without accepting prior turn's account as an adequate response to the complaint. It operates here as a form of 'be that as it may'. This usage here is by no means unusual; disagreements and rejections are commonly delayed in their turns, and among the items used to defer them is, as Sacks (1987 [1973]) and Pomerantz (1978, 1984) have noted, a pre-disagreement 'agreement token'.[16]

The last observations can serve to anticipate the next step, both in the interaction and in this sketchy account of it – namely, a rejection of Carol's explanation as an adequate response to the complaint. When an agreement with or acceptance of, her account fails to occur at the start of next turn (here they could have taken such forms as an information registering 'oh', an acceptance such as 'okay', or other less formulaic uptakes), the possibility of disagreement or rejection can be projected, and is here realized. The very grounds which Carol had offered for *not* getting the ice cream are now invoked as grounds for getting it, and their service as an adequate account is thereby potentially undercut by precisely the strength they

presumed to have in their very offering. The complaint which engendered the sequence is thereby left not adequately dealt with.

Note an additional aspect of Sherri's talk, the terms with which she implements the rejection. By saying 'ours' she moves to transform what is otherwise a *multi-person* interaction into a *two party* one – with Carol as complaint-target as one party, and the others as complainants as the other. She thus moves to unilaterally co-opt the other(s)[17] to her rejection of Carol's account, and thereby potentially to her complaint.

Leaving aside for the moment what happens in the remainder of this turn, this rejection could itself be dealt with in various ways. It can, in turn, be rejected, and a disagreement sequence be prosecuted. Or, the account at 156 having been rejected, Carol could accept that rejection and offer another account. Or, an account having been rejected as the response to the complaint, Carol could accept the rejection and offer a different type of second pair part or response to the complaint – for example, an apology, a remedy, or an offer of a remedy. There may be other structural possibilities, i.e. stable types of response turns for this sequence type, that are not yet appreciated. But recall that these alternatives were outlined after having momentarily set aside the third part of the turn, the laughter, which must now be taken up.

First, the laughter can prompt us to make explicit another aspect of the turn-so-far, and that is its character as a 'quick comeback', as a wisecrack of sorts. Wisecracks require placement in next turn because they are done by playing with aspects of prior turn – paralleling it, transforming it, reversing it, parodying it, etc. Sherri's 157 employs several such devices: it parallels and indexicalizes the construction of 156, the indexicals working by virtue of the parallel (i.e. 'ours' referring to 'bodies' and 'did' referring to 'needing it'). And, as noted in a more somber tone a moment ago, the retort turns the prior speaker's own stance against her, making her argument for not getting the ice cream into an argument for getting it, the legitimacy of these grounds of action having just been attested by Carol's invocation of them (a kind of conversational martial-arts principle).

Note also that the talk does not 'dissolve' into laughter. That is, it does not progressively involve laugh tokens or aspirations in its words, gradually turning into unmixed laughter. It is done straight-faced, without even smile voice, and then sharply, abruptly breaks into laughter. What the utterance might be as a serious one is thus

given a moment of its own, before that is allowed a possible transformation (cf. Drew 1987).

The laughter, and the qualification of what has preceded as 'joking' or 'unserious', can be understood as bearing on various strategic aspects of this place in the talk, this position in the sequence, which might be seen as in need of such modulation. There is the apparent agreement to the self-deprecation by not overtly rejecting it and even risking an agreement token directly after it. There is the correlative implied and improper self-praise (i.e. if Carol's 'didn't need it' alludes to overweight, then 'ours did' can claim slimness). There is the rejection of the account, and with it potentially the reactivation of the complaint. There is the unilateral co-optation of others as parties to these potential breaches by the use of 'our'.

The laughter can move to transform all of these understandings of 'Yes, but ours did', by inviting treatment of it as a 'joke'. That 'invitation' has direct interactional expression as an invitation to join the laughter and laugh together (Jefferson 1979). And such laughter, should it be elicited, can serve to help remedy the potential offence or offences, by co-implicating the co-laugher in the potential offender's stance (Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff 1987). The laughter at line 159 is, unfortunately, not attributable with confidence to a particular participant, and no analysis will therefore be pressed here.

There is not the space to continue to take up all the elements of this episode at the level of detail, sketchy as it is, which we have so far settled at. The main additional point which I wish to register is the way in which this sequence, which constitutes the whole of this interactional episode with Carol between the greeting and leave-taking sequences, is organized *as a succession of second pair parts to an initial first pair part*, a succession of responses to the complaint.[18]

In the episode we are examining, one after another of Carol's tacks in response to the initial complaint is rejected, each rejection being met by yet another offered response. By lines 157–8, we had seen the first of these rejections, of the first of these responses. Note that however much the utterance at 157–8 may get understood as a wisecrack and a joke, its import as a rejection of the account/explanation as a response to the complaint is not necessarily blunted. Indeed, Carol's next turn (at 161–2) begins with an acceptance of what Sherri has done.

155 S: You didn' get an *i*cecream sanwich.
156 C: I kno:w, hh I decided that my body didn't need it,
157 S: Yes but ours di:d =
158 S: = hh heh heh heh [heh heh heh [·hhih
159 ? [ehh heh heh [
160 ? [( )
161 C: hh Awright gimme some money en you c'n treat me to
162 one an I'll buy you a:ll some [too.]
163 S: [I'm] kidding,
163a *I* don't need it.
164 (0.3)
165 ? (hhh)
166 C: I WA:N' O:N [E, [*in 'whine' voice*]
167 S,R? [ehh heh h[uh
168 C: [hheh-uh ·hhh =
169 C: = No they [didn' even have any T*a*:b.
170 R?: [hheh
171 C: This is all I c'd find.
172 (0.2)
173 R: Well then there's ez many *c*alories ez *th*at prob'ly
174 in en ice cream sa:nwich (so) yih jis', yih know.
175 (.)/(ϕ)
176 C: I know an icecream sanwich is *b*etter, (b't) I d'n
177 feel like going down tuh 'P' an' seeing all those
178 weird people an' have them st [a:re at me.
179 R: [In yer slipper]s,
180 (0.3)
181 C: Yeah.
182 (0.8)
183 C: I don't want them tih see me when I l(h)ook
183a th(h)is good.
184 (0.4)
185 R?: Hhuh ·hhhh =
186 C: N(h)o [one des(h)erves] it.
187 ? [( )]
188 ? (Tch ·hh =)
189 C: I'll see you all later.
190 R: Awri:ght.
191 (1.4) [*door opening*]
192 M: Where were we.

Note in brief: Carol's turn at line 161, which begins ('Awright') with an acceptance of Sherri's preceding turn (which had rejected her account as an initial response to the no-ice-cream complaint), ends with another of the earlier-mentioned, second pair parts to complaints – an offer of a remedy ('I'll buy you all some too'), though, to be sure, this one is made contingent on the recipients' response to a request. That is, Carol's 'awright' is a form of response to Sherri's prior utterance taken seriously; a response to that turn taken as a joke would be a laugh (but recall that the laugh at 159 may have been Carol's). Taken seriously, Sherri's turn had rejected the account as an inadequate response to the complaint. 'Awright' registers that rejection, and proceeds to a different form of response to the complaint – the offer of a remedy.

This turn, then, is organized not only with respect to the preceding turn (at 157), but with respect to the turn at line 155 as well. It is so organized by virtue of adjacency-pair organization, and cannot be properly understood without reference to that (or some such) unit/level of sequential organization.

Then note: in the utterance at line 163, Sherri rejects this second response to the complaint in turn 155. More specifically, Sherri withdraws the serious import of her own prior turn ('I'm kidding'), and insists on its status as a joke. That is, she *rejects* Carol's offer *by withdrawing the utterance which occasioned it*, both by insisting on its non-seriousness and by specifically negating the overt assertion which was its vehicle ('I don't need it').[19] So, after having rejected the account/explanation as second pair part at 157, Sherri now rejects the offer of remedy as a second pair part at 163. Two responses to the complaint, each rejected in turn.

Note next that Carol's turn at 169–71[20] offers *another* account *and* a remedy: it appears she has brought back some sort of 'goody', gives an account for why she has brought it, and offers it. This, then, is yet another response to the initial complaint, combining new tokens of types already tried – accounts and offers. At 173–4, this response is also rejected, although now by Ruthie, and not by Sherri. The rejection displays by its incorporation of the 'ice-cream sandwich' as a comparison base its speaker's understanding that the turn at 169–171 was addressed to the complaint at 155 in which the 'sandwich' was first introduced. Carol concedes the assertion by which this rejection is made at line 176 ('I know an ice-cream sanwich is better'). A third response to the complaint, also rejected, the rejection again accepted.

may address more than one prior turn, Goffman's just one among them, and may address none of them in the way in which they were meant to be taken.

Goffman may well have shown us how far you can go with real-time observation, clippings and vignettes. With them he helped show the direction in which what must surely be a central domain for the social sciences could be found, but something different may be required to actually find it. The moments, with their men, and their women, may be at hand.

NOTES

My thanks to Paul Drew, John Heritage and Jennifer Mandelbaum for help in sorting and taming what this assignment elicited. Remaining failures, whether substantive or ritual (if I may put it that way), are mine alone.

1 My thanks to Ray McDermott for calling these remarks of Yeats to my attention.

2 That itself had little precedent, except perhaps in the source which Goffman himself cited, namely the work of Elliot Chapple.

3 I use the term 'psychology' here in the sense cited earlier from Goffman (as in 'the individual and his psychology'), and not in its contemporary conventional senses.

4 The relevant contrast with CA work will be developed in the ensuing text but may be anticipated here. As against the central concern with face as both an account for action and as the motivating basis for the ritual *organization* of interaction, there is CA's treatment of such sets of practices as (a) turn-taking organization, which allocates, and constrains the size of, opportunities to participate, and is built to do so for participants of varying 'moral' characters, e.g. for both the verbose and the taciturn; (b) adjacency-pair organization, which orders sequences of actions-in-turns and their properties; and (c) the organization of repair, which orders opportunities for actions of a certain sort, namely dealing with trouble in the talk. In each of these instances, the organizational domain – the locus of organization – is that of actions and opportunities to enact them, something which is in principle independent of actors and their expressive behaviour.

5 Of course, we need in the first instance to question the basis for this sort of exercise, in which the academic analyst takes some lexically specified target as an invariant point of reference, and varies the contexts around it. This is how some linguists and philosophers have proceeded, but it is unclear what it has to do with empirical inquiry. The phenomena of interaction are rarely identified by lexical stability, so these framings cannot seriously be claimed to be 'potentially applicable to the "same" event' (1981b: 68). Goffman may have been trying to sweep the problem under the rug by putting scare marks around 'same'; rightly so, for the problem is a scary one for his analysis).

6 For a telling discussion of the contrasting ways of working at issue here, see Sacks (1984 [1971]: 25).

This very divergence presents challenging problems for analysis. For there is apparently some lively sense of the world with which Goffman's descriptions resonated, which they tapped, and for which his analyses 'worked', at least at the time. There is thus some robust intuition for interaction, which may well inform the conduct of interaction, but which does not provide the sort of detailed version of exactly how interaction occurs which a formal discipline answerable to empirical detail requires. Like the grammarians' intuition of grammaticality, it may be a real object in its own right, even if it is not, and does not describe, the way people actually conduct themselves. Because it may itself inform people's conduct, and because it casts an omnipresent shadow on empirical analysis, it is an important object for inquiry in its own right. I doubt that studies of 'typification' have begun to get at it.

7 I am not unaware of the ironic keying that can be attributed to this remark, in which it is Goffman's which are 'really real' in a deeper sense, but this is conjectural at best, and wrong at worst.

8 Much more, of course, can be, and has been, said about turns of this sort. And what Goffman has to say about 'unhearings' as compared to 'misunderstandings' is not quite right either, in part because his data on the former are similarly inaccurate. But this is not the place to detail how; a paper on such 'unhearings', or next-turn repair initiation, is in preparation.

9 Jefferson and Schenkein (1977) view these differently, and treat the three-turn sequence as the basic, or 'unexpanded', form.

10 Of course, not all of Goffman's challenges are the products of misunderstanding. Some of his remarks point to interesting problems for analysis, but ones which are to be met within the scope of CA, rather than subverting its viability. Several examples may be mentioned:

(a) Although I impoverish his point by putting it this way, Goffman notes the effects of what he calls 'unhearings' or rerun signals (requests for repetition) and counters (e.g. questioning or insulting in return) in next turn instead of second pair parts, while still working as responses to first pair parts. Since Goffman wrote, there has been attention to this question with respect to the rerun signals (Sacks 1987 [1973]). The 'counters' have yet to be treated systematically, but it is striking that they appear to work by invoking the same adjacency-pair structures back on the original first-pair-part speaker. Although in need of explication, therefore, they seem more to testify to the robustness of adjacency-pair organization than to undermine it.

(b) Then there are the problems of conversations with more than two participants, for example, the case of multiple answers to questions (ibid.: 28), or proposed topic shifts not honoured by a third party, etc. There is indeed an important class of problems here, centring on an organizational issue for talk-in-interaction which concerns the articulation of a turn-taking organization built for *n* parties (any number of parties) with a sequence structure built on a two-part base. The solution to that problem will take the form of sequential devices, describable from empirical materials, by which these different organizational designs are reconciled in the talk. For example, the 'conference pass' described in Jefferson and Schenkein (1977) may be treated as one such device. Serial answers by several recipients to another's question may be another.

(c) In a number of other instances, Goffman's remarks offer interesting observations, but in his own explication do not pose any serious problem for adjacency-pair organization, although they are phrased in a manner which gives the impression of being troublesome. There is, for example, the matter of 'reach' (ibid.: 40 ff.), i.e. the capacity of an utterance to refer not just to an immediately prior, but to a whole prior sequence, much earlier talk, etc. But Goffman himself writes of these (ibid.: 44),

> A response that casts backward in time beyond the prior statement, or abstracts an aspect of a statement, or focuses on a particular piece of a statement . . . can . . . leave [initial speaker] with the sense that he [responder] has satisfied system constraints, that the response he evoked has done so, too, and, further, that the ritual considerations have been satisfied – or at least not unacceptably violated.

In other words, satisfactory response is achievable in adjacency pairs, across variations in reach. How this is done may be a puzzle, but it is a puzzle about how adjacency pairs work, not one that undercuts their operation.

11 This characterization of action and format cannot be further developed here, but is taken up in other ongoing work (Schegloff 1985).

12 I might add that past work has suggested that where some turn format is used as the vehicle for some action and both are responded to, then the format is responded to first, and the action which was done through it afterwards. To 'would you like some more coffee?' – an offer done through a question format – 'yes, thank you' speaks first to the question format with an answer, and then to the offer with an acceptance.

13 The import of the 'might be done' in the preceding sentence is that a substantial array of data could be presented, were there time and space, in which agreement with, or verification of, a noticing is accomplished by the use of agreement tokens. This is meant as an *empirical*, not a *conjectural*, 'might'.

14 Note as well that the regularity noted in note 11 is re-enacted here – the format aspect of prior turn is addressed first in next turn.

15 That it is so heard is evidenced later in the sequence, when Ruthie says with respect to what Carol *has* brought, 'Well then there's as many calories as that probably in an ice-cream sandwich'.

16 Still, here this usage is especially delicate and tricky, for in the turn after a self-deprecation, the absence of overt disagreement may be taken as agreement. What is tricky here is not so much that 'yes' will be heard to agree, but that the absence of some disagreement will be so heard.

17 At least Ruthie is involved; it is unclear whether Karen is in the room at this point; neither she nor Mark speak in this interaction at all.

18 This is but one of a number of overall expansion formats for long, adjacency-pair-based sequences. Elsewhere (Schegloff 1980, in press (a)), I have described other such formats, characterized by substantial pre-expansion before the first part, insert expansions between the first and its responsive second, and/or post expansion after the second. And others await description.

19 Although the matter cannot be taken up here, such efforts to abort a sequence by withdrawing the utterance which engendered it regularly fail initially, at least for a moment, as does this one; note the momentary extension by Carol's own 'joke' sequence at lines 166–8. The 'No' at the start of 169 is used as a marker of transition from 'joke' to 'serious' (Schegloff 1987: 206–8; 212–16).

20 This is a single, multi-unit turn; the 'heh' at line 170 overlaps with the 'didn' ' in line 169.