
On talk and its institutional occasions

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1 Introduction

Whether starting from a programmatic address to the structure of face-to-face interaction or from a programmatic concern with the constitutive practices of the mundane world, whether in pursuit of language, culture, or action, a range of inquiries of several social-science disciplines (most relevantly anthropology, sociology, and linguistics) have over the past twenty-five to thirty years brought special attention to bear on talk in interaction. It is not unfair to say that one of the most focused precipitates of this broad interest has been that family of studies grouped under the rubric "conversation analysis." It is, in any case, with such studies of "talk" that I will be concerned in reflecting on "talk and social structure."

The reflections discussed in most of this chapter were prepared to serve as the opening presentation of a conference on "Talk and Social Structure" held at the University of California, Santa Barbara, March 1986, and most of the paper (and an additional section omitted here) have been published as "Reflections on talk and social structure" in D. Boden and D. Zimmerman (1991). In some places that paper, and the present minor revision of it, address once again matters taken up in an earlier paper (Schegloff 1987a), but different facets of those matters or in a more detailed fashion. My thanks to Jennifer Mandelbaum for contributions of tact and clarity in the preparation of the paper in its earlier published form. I am also indebted to Deirdre Boden, Paul Drew, Douglas Maynard, and especially Jack Whalen, whose reactions to an earlier draft of that paper, or to the reactions of others to it, helped in my efforts to arrive at a text which might be understood as I meant it.

In place of one section of the aforementioned paper, I have included a segment of another paper (Schegloff 1988/9) which may serve to give some empirical and analytic focus to what may otherwise appear merely theoretic and policy programs. The passage from the previous papers to this one has been facilitated, even motivated, by the tender ministrations of Paul Drew and John Heritage, for which I am in their debt.

Although itself understandable as a sustained exploration of what is entailed in giving an analytic account of “a context” (as in the phrase “in the context of ordinary conversation”), various aspects of inquiry in this tradition of work have prompted an interest in neighboring disciplines in relating features of talk-in-interaction to “contexts” of a more traditional sort – linguistic contexts, cultural contexts, and institutional and social structural contexts. At the same time, investigators working along conversation-analytic lines began to deal with talk with properties which were seemingly related to its production by participants oriented to a special “institutional” context; and, wishing to address those distinctive properties rather than ones held in common with other forms of talk (as Sacks had done in some of his earliest work based on group-therapy sessions), these investigators faced the analytic problems posed by such an undertaking.

The interest in the theme “talk and social structure” comes, then, from several directions – the most prominent being technical concerns in the analysis of certain forms of talk, on the one hand, and an impulse to effect a rapprochement with the concerns of classical sociology, and to do so by relating work on talk-in-interaction to those social formations which are referred to as “social structures,” or generically as “social structure,” on the other hand. My reflections will have this latter impulse as their point of departure, but will quickly seek to engage it by formulating and confronting the analytic problems which it poses.

Of course, a term like “social structure” is used in many different ways. In recent years, to cite but a few cases, Peter Blau (1977) has used the term to refer to the distribution of a population on various parameters asserted to be pertinent to interaction, claiming a derivation from Simmel and his notion of intersecting social circles. Many others have in mind a structure of statuses and/or roles, ordinarily thereby building in an inescapable normative component of just the sort Blau wishes to avoid. Yet others intend by this term a structured distribution of scarce resources and desirables, such as property, wealth, productive capacity, status, knowledge, privilege, power, the capacity to enforce and preserve privilege, etc. Still others have in mind stably patterned sets of social relations, whether formalized in organizations or more loosely stabilized in networks.

The sense of “social structure” intended in the thematic concern with “talk and social structure” does not range across all these usages. But almost certainly it includes a concern with power and status and its distribution among social formations such as classes, ethnic groups, age-grade groups, gender, and professional relations. It is this sense which has animated, for example, the work by West (1979) and Zimmerman and West (1975) on gender and interruption and West’s work (1984) on doctor–patient interaction. It includes as well a concern with the structured social relations which comprise organizations and occupational practice and the institutional sectors with which they are regularly identified (e.g. in Atkinson and Drew’s treatment of the courts [1979], in the work of Zimmerman and his associates on the police [e.g. Zimmerman 1984; Whalen and Zimmerman 1987], Maynard’s work [1984] on the legal system, that of Heritage [1985] on mass-media news, or Boden’s (forthcoming) on organizations). Mehan’s studies of decision making in the context of educational bureaucracies (Mehan, Hertweck, and Meihls 1986; Mehan 1991) touch on both usages (as, of course, do some of the other studies which I have invoked to exemplify one or the other).

The work which engages with these classical sociological themes and incorporates reference to and treatment of them in studying talk-in-interaction has revived for me some concerns which were deep preoccupations some twenty-five years ago, when work on the analysis of talk-in-interaction, of the sort now referred to as “conversation-analytic,” was getting underway. In these reflections, I want among other things to review, restate, and update some of those considerations, and ask how contemporary efforts to engage these topics stand with respect to some of these older concerns. Do the old concerns still have the force they once had, or have they faded in perceived significance? Are there now solutions to the problems as once formulated? Or can the results of current work at the interface of conversation and social structure be usefully enriched or constrained by engaging these issues?

Whatever answers we arrive at to these questions, there is one point I want to make before taking them up. Whatever substantive gains there are to be had from focusing on the relationship between talk and social structure in the traditional sense, this focus is not needed in order to supply conversation analysis with its sociological

credentials. The work which is focused on the organization of talk-in-interaction in its own right – work on the organization of turn taking, or on the organization of sequences, work addressed to the actions being done in turns and the formats through which they are done, work on the organization of repair, and work directed to the many discrete practices of talking and acting through talk which do not converge into domains of organization – this work is itself dealing with social organization and social structures, albeit of a different sort than in the received uses of those terms, and is no less sociological in impulse and relevance (Schegloff 1987b).

For some, the fact that conversation analysis (henceforth, CA) concerns itself with the details of talking has meant that it is a form of linguistics. Perhaps so, but certainly not exclusively so. If it is not a distinctive discipline of its own (which it may well turn out to be), CA is at a point where linguistics and sociology (and several other disciplines, anthropology and psychology among them) meet. For the target of its inquiries stands where talk amounts to action, where action projects consequences in a structure and texture of interaction which the talk is itself progressively embodying and realizing, and where the particulars of the talk inform what actions are being done and what sort of social scene is being constituted. Now, from the start, one central preoccupation of sociology and social theory has been with the character of social action and what drives it (reason, passion, interest, utility) – this is familiar enough. Another concern has been with the character of interaction in which action is embedded, for it is observations about some aspects of the character of interaction that motivated such hoary old distinctions as those between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between status and contracts, and the like. “Action in interaction” is, then, a longstanding theme of social analysis.

CA’s enterprise, concerned as it is with (among other things) the detailed analysis of how talk-in-interaction is conducted as an activity in its own right and as the instrument for the full range of social action and practice, is then addressed to one of the classic themes of sociology, although, to be sure, in a distinctive way. Of the several ways in which CA shows its deep preoccupation with root themes of social science and sociology in particular, these standing conversation-analytic preoccupations resonate more with the title of the recent Atkinson and Heritage collection (1984); they

are concerned with “structures of social action” – structures of single actions and of series and sequences of them. Atkinson and Heritage’s title is, of course, a thoroughly unveiled allusion to the title of Talcott Parsons’ first major work, *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), the work which launched the enterprise of Parsonian action theory. The difference between Parsons’s title and the Atkinson and Heritage allusion, *The Structure of Social Action* vs. *Structures of Social Action*, may suggest some of the distinctiveness.

Parsons’s tack was conceptual and global. For him there was “*the* structure . . .,” and it was arrived at by theoretic stipulation of the necessary components of an analytic unit – the “unit act,” components such as “ends,” “means,” “conditions.” This was a thoroughly conceptual enterprise on a thoroughly analytic object. The Atkinson and Heritage title, “Structures of . . .,” suggests not only multiplicity of structures, but the empirical nature of the enterprise. The units are concrete activities, and the search for their “components” involves examination and description of empirical instances.

But with all the differences in conception, mode of working, etc., there is a common enterprise here, and it has long been a central one for sociology and the social sciences more generally. It is one of getting at the character of social action and social interaction. In addressing this theme and the varied problems and analytic tasks to which it gives rise, CA is itself engaged in *echt* sociology; its sociological credentials are grounded by this undertaking, even without the introduction of such other traditional sociological concerns such as “social structure.” Of course, CA may go on to address itself to the relationship between talk-in-interaction (and the action and conduct which it realizes) and social structure as traditionally conceived, but this is an extension of its sociological office, not its basis.

The reasons for thinking about the relationships of talk and social structure are ready to hand. Both our casual and our studied examination of interaction and talk-in-interaction provide a lively sense of the occasions on which who the parties are, relative to one another, seems to matter, and matter to *them*. And these include senses of “who they are” that connect directly to what is ordinarily meant by “social structure” – their relative status, the power they differentially can command, the group affiliations they display or

can readily have attributed to them such as their racial or ethnic memberships, their gender and age-grade status, their occupational status and its general standing and immediate interactional significance, and the other categories of membership in the society which can matter to the participants and which fall under the traditional sociological rubric “social structure.”

The issue I mean to address is not “Is there such a thing as gender/class/power/status/organization/etc.?” or “Does it effect anything in the world?” Rather, the question is: whatever observations we initially make about how such features of social organization as these work and bear on interaction, how do we translate them into defensible, empirically based analyses that help us to get access to previously unnoticed particular details of talk-in-interaction, and appreciate their significance? For the lively sense we may all share of the relevance of social structure along the lines I have mentioned needs to be converted into the hard currency of defensible analysis – analysis which departs from, and can always be referred to and grounded in, the details of actual occurrences of conduct in interaction.

Again, I do not mean to be addressing myself to two apparently neighboring stances, although there may well be implications for them. I am not centrally concerned with those investigators whose primary analytic commitment is to social structure in the received senses of that term, and who mean to incorporate examination of talk into their inquiries because of the role attributable to it in the “production” of social structure. And I do not take up the position (apparently embraced in Goffman 1983) in which the *prima facie* relevance of social structure to the organization of interaction is in principle to be disputed (although I do suggest that some received notions may not be sustainable when required to come to terms with the details of actual occurrences.) Rather, I mean to formulate and explore the challenges faced by those attracted to the interaction/social-structure nexus. A solution must be found to the analytic problems which obstruct the conversion of intuition, casual (however well-informed) observation, or theoretically motivated observation into demonstrable analysis. For without solutions to these problems, we are left with “a *sense* of how the world works,” but without its detailed explication.

So what *were* those problems? Or, rather: what *are* those

problems? My discussion will be organized around two main themes:¹ the problem of relevance and the issue of “procedural consequentiality.” After a discursive explication of these themes, I will exemplify their upshot in a brief “case study” of an episode of talk-in-interaction.

2 Relevance

First, *relevance*. Here I draw directly from among the earliest contributions to conversation analysis, the first systematically developed work of Harvey Sacks, now over twenty years old (1972a, 1972b, but the arguments were developing as early as 1964–5). Let me remind you of some issues he raised with respect to how “members” characterize, identify, describe, refer to, indeed “conceive of” persons in talking to others.

The original focus of the work by Sacks which I mean to recall was the way in which persons engaged in talk in interaction did their talk, specifically with respect to reference to persons. Sacks noted that members refer to persons by various category terms – as man/woman, protestant/catholic/jew, doctor/patient, white/black/chicano, first baseman/second baseman/shortstop, and the like. He remarked that these category terms come in collections. In presenting them above, they are inscribed in groups: [man/woman], [protestant/catholic/jew], and so on, and that is the correct way to present them. It is not [man/woman/protestant], [catholic/jew]. This is what is being noted in the observation that the category terms are organized in *collections*.

Some of these collections Sacks called “Pn adequate”; they were adequate to characterize or categorize any member of any population, however specified, whether or not it had been specified (e.g. counted, characterized, or bounded) in some fashion (1972a: 32–3). Other collections were not “Pn-adequate.” [Male/female] is Pn-adequate; [first baseman/second baseman/shortstop...] is *not* Pn-adequate, because the latter is only usable on populations already specified or characterized as “baseball teams,” whereas the former is not subject to such restrictions.

One of Sacks’ main points was that there are demonstrably many Pn-adequate category collections. The collection of category terms for gender/sex and age are the most obvious ones, and these

two alone serve to allow the posing of the problem of relevance. The point is that since everyone who is an instance of some category in one of those collections is necessarily (for that is the import of Pn-adequacy) also an instance of some category in the other, or *an* other, the fact that someone *is* male, or *is* middle aged, or *is* white, or *is* Jewish, is, by itself, no warrant for so referring to them, for the warrant of “correctness” would provide for use of any of the other reference forms as well. Some principle of relevance must underlie use of a reference form, and has to be adduced in order to provide for one rather than another of those ways of characterizing or categorizing some member. That is the problem of relevance: not just the descriptive adequacy of the terms used to characterize the objects being referred to, but the relevance that one has to provide if one means to account for the use of some term, the relevance of that term relative to the alternative terms that are demonstrably available.

Now, this problem was developed by Sacks initially in describing how members talk about members. It showed the inadequacy of an account of a conversationalist’s reference to another as a “cousin” by reference to the other “actually being a cousin.” But, once raised, the point is directly relevant to the enterprise of *professional* analysts as well. Once we recognize that whoever can be characterized as “male” or as “protestant,” or as “president” or whatever, can be characterized or categorized in other ways as well, our scholarly/professional/scientific account cannot “naively” rely on such characterizations, that is, cannot rely on them with no justification or warrant of their relevance.

Roughly speaking, there are two types of solution to this problem in the methodology of professional analysis. One type of solution can be characterized as the “positivist” stance, in one of the many senses in which that term is currently used. In this view, the way to warrant one, as compared to another, characterization of the participants (for example, in interaction) is the “success” of that way of characterizing them in producing a professionally acceptable account of the data being addressed. “Success” is measured by some “technology” – by statistical significance, a preponderance of historical evidence, and so forth. Sometimes there is an additional requirement that the characterization which produces “successful” analysis be theoretically interpretable; that is, that the

selection of descriptive terms for the participants converges with the terms of a professional/scientific theory relevant to the object of description. In this type of solution, which I am calling “positivistic,” it does not matter whether or not the terms that are used to characterize the participants in some domain of action, and which have yielded “significant” results, are otherwise demonstrably oriented to or not by the participants being described. That is what makes this solution of the problem “positivist.”

The alternative type of solution insists on something else, and that is that professional characterizations of the participants be grounded in aspects of what is going on that are demonstrably relevant to the participants, and at that moment – at the moment that whatever we are trying to provide an account of occurs. Not, then, just that we see them to be characterizable as “president/assistant,” as “chicano/black,” as “professor/student,” etc. But that for them, at that moment, those are terms relevant for producing and interpreting conduct in the interaction.

This issue should be of concern when we try to bring the kind of traditional sociological analysis that is implied by the term “social structure” to bear on talk-in-interaction. Much of what is meant by “social structure” in the traditional sense directly implicates such characterizations or categorizations of the participants as Sacks was examining. If the sense of social structure we are dealing with is the one that turns on the differential distribution of valued resources in society, whether status or power or money or any of the other “goods” whose distribution can be used to characterize social structure, then that implies a characterization or categorization of the participants on that occasion as one relevantly to be selected from that set of terms. But then the problem presents itself of the relevance of those terms to the participants for what they are doing. Without a show of that warrant, we are back to a “positivistic” stance, even though the animating concerns may be drawn from quite antipositivistic theoretical sources or commitments.

Now let us be clear about what *is* and what is *not* being said here. The point is not that persons are somehow *not* male or female, upper or lower class, with or without power, professors and/or students. They may be, on some occasion, demonstrably members of one or another of those categories. Nor is the issue that those aspects of the society do not matter, or did not matter on that

occasion. We may share a lively sense that indeed they do matter, and that they mattered on that occasion, and mattered for just that aspect of some interaction on which we are focusing. There is still the problem of *showing from the details of the talk or other conduct in the materials* that we are analyzing that those aspects of the scene are what the *parties* are oriented to. *For that is to show how the parties are embodying for one another the relevancies of the interaction and are thereby producing the social structure.*

The point here is not only methodological but substantive. It is not just to add a methodological apparatus supporting analyses already in hand. It is, rather, to add to, and potentially to transform, the analysis of the talk and other conduct itself by enriching our account of it with additional detail; and to show that, and how, “social structure” in the traditional sense enters into the production and interpretation of determinate facets of conduct, and is thereby confirmed, reproduced, modulated, neutralized, or incrementally transformed in that actual conduct to which it must finally be referred.

This is not, to my mind, an issue of preferring or rejecting some line of analysis, some research program or agenda. It is a problem of analysis to be worked at: how to examine the data so as to be able to show that the parties were, with and for one another, demonstrably oriented to those aspects of who they are, and those aspects of their context, which are respectively implicated in the “social structures” which we may wish to relate to the talk. If we treat this as a problem of analytic craft, we can use it as leverage to enhance the possibility of learning something about how talk-in-interaction is done, for it requires us to return again to the details of the talk to make the demonstration.

So, one issue posed by the theme “talk and social structure” is relevance.

3 Procedural consequentiality

The issue just discussed with respect to the characterization of the participants in some talk-in-interaction also is relevant to a characterization of “the context” in which they talk and interact. “Context” can be as much a part of what traditionally has been meant by “social structure” as attributes of the participants are. So, for

example, remarking that some talk is being conducted “in the context of a bureaucracy,” “in a classroom” “on a city street,” etc. is part of what is sometimes intended by incorporating the relevance of social structure.

Such characterizations invoke particular aspects of the setting and not others. They involve selections among alternatives, and among subalternatives. For example, one type of formulation of context characterizes it by “place,” and this is an alternative to various other sorts of context characterization. But within that context type, various forms of place formulation are available, all of which can be correct (Schegloff 1972). So, although the details of the argument have not been fully and formally worked out for the characterization of context or setting in the way that Sacks worked them out for the characterization of participants, it appears likely that the issue of relevance can be posed in much the same way for context as it has been for person reference.

What I want to do here is add something to this relevance problem for contexts. It concerns what I am calling the “procedural consequentiality” of contexts.

Even if we can show by analysis of the details of the interaction that some characterization of the context or the setting in which the talk is going on (such as “in the hospital”) is relevant for the parties, that they are oriented to the setting so characterized, there remains another problem, and that is to show how the context or the setting (the local social structure), *in that aspect*, is procedurally consequential to the talk. How does the fact that the talk is being conducted in some setting (e.g. “the hospital”) issue in any consequence for the shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction that the parties conduct? And *what is the mechanism by which the context-so-understood has determinate consequences for the talk?*

This is a real problem, it seems to me, because without a specification of such a linkage we can end up with characterizations of context or setting which, however demonstrably relevant to the parties, do little in helping us to analyze, to explain, to understand, to give an account of how the interaction proceeded in the way in which it did, how it came to have the trajectory, the direction, the shape that it ended up having.² When a formulation of the context is proposed, it tends *ipso facto* to be taken as somehow relevant and

consequential for what occurs in the context. Yet it is nonetheless the analyst's responsibility either to deliver analytic specifics of that consequentiality or to abjure that characterization of the context. Otherwise, the analysis exploits a tacit feature of its own discursive format, but evades the corresponding analytic onus. A sense of understanding and grasp is conveyed to, and elicited from, the reader, but is not earned by the elucidation of new observations about the talk.³

So, this is an open question, somewhat less formally stated than the other: *how shall we find formulations of context or setting that will allow us (a) to connect to the theme that many want to connect to – social structure in the traditional sense, but (b) that will do so in a way that takes into account not only the demonstrable orientation of the participants, but, further, (c) that will allow us to make a direct “procedural” connection between the context-so-formulated and what actually happens in the talk, instead of having a characterization that “hovers around” the interaction, so to speak, but is not shown actually to inform the production and grasp of the details of its conduct.*

As with the issues of “relevance,” I am here putting forward not principled objections to the invocation of social structure as context, but jobs to be taken on by those concerned with the intersection of talk and familiar senses of social structure. They challenge us to be alert to possible ways of showing such connections. I will just mention a few possible directions here.

Some formulations of setting do the sort of job I have in mind because they capture features of the setting that fall under the general rubric of “speech exchange systems” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974: 729ff.). They satisfy this concern because they characterize a setting or context both in ways that connect to our general notions of social structure and in ways which directly refer to aspects of the practices by which the participants organize their talk. Some such settings carry with them as well a set of relevant identifications for the participants.

Consider, for example, the case of the courtroom in session (see Atkinson and Drew 1979; my remarks here rest on a much looser, vernacular, and unstudied sense of the setting). To focus just on the turn-taking organization, it is the “courtroom-ness” of courtrooms in session which seems in fact to organize the way in which the talk

is distributed among the persons present, among the *categories* of persons present, in the physical setting. So, for example, onlookers (members of the “audience”) are not potential next speakers, as the official proceedings go on. And among the others who *are* potential next speakers at various points – the judge, the attorneys, the witness, and the like – there are socially organized procedures for determining when they can talk, what they can do in their talk, and the like. It could be argued, then, that to characterize some setting of talk-in-interaction as in “a court-in-session,” characterizes it with a formulation of context which can not only be claimed to connect to the general concern for “social structure” (for it certainly relates to institutional context), but can be shown to be procedurally consequential as well. Insofar as members of the audience sitting behind the bar never get up and talk but rather whisper to one another in asides, whereas the ones in front of the bar talk in defined and regular ways, by the very form of their conduct they show themselves to be oriented to the particular identities that are legally provided by that setting and show themselves to be oriented to “the court-in-session” as a context.⁴

We have to be careful here to see what sorts of characterizations of context will satisfy these requirements. It is clear to me that vernacular accounts or formulations of context, even if informed by social-scientific considerations, will not necessarily do it, if they do not specify how the talk is organized. For example, one not uncommon kind of proposed context description of talk-in-interaction is “an experiment” or “in a laboratory setting.” Those terms sound like an adequate formulation of a kind of setting, and for some concerns perhaps they are. But these characterizations do not satisfy the concerns we have been discussing; under the rubrics “laboratory” or “experiment” very different sorts of organization of talk-in-interaction can be conducted.

Consider, for example, a study of repair published by the Dutch psycholinguist Willem Levelt (1983). Levelt had conducted an experiment on the so-called “linearization problem” (organizing a mass of simultaneously presented information into a temporally organized, hence linearized, format in talk). He had a number of subjects look at a screen on which were projected different shapes – circles, triangles, and the like – which were connected by lines of various sorts. Their job was to describe these figures so that

someone else (not present) would be able to retrieve the figure from the description. The descriptions were all tape-recorded. Levelt noticed that in the course of producing the descriptions, people regularly “mispoke”; they started to say one thing, cut themselves off, and went back and “fixed” it. Levelt recognized these as self-repairs (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977), and he wrote up a separate paper on various aspects of the placement and organization of self-repair and the evidence it gives about processes of self-monitoring by speakers.

But it seems to me that the findings of this work, at least with respect to the organization of repair, have an equivocal status at the present time. Why? Not simply because the talk was produced in a laboratory or experimental context. That the data come from laboratory-produced protocols does not tell us what consequences for the character of the talk are entailed. For example, it does not tell us what the speech-exchange system was in which this talk was produced. As it happens, this *was* consequential, and has a bearing on the topic of the research report.

The speech-exchange system in which this talk was produced was one whose turn-taking organization denied anyone else the right to talk besides the experimental subject. That is to say, within the boundaries of “the experiment,” there was no possibility of a sequence in which current speaker’s turn (e.g. subject’s) is followed by a next turn in which some recipient (e.g. experimenter or laboratory assistant) could have initiated repair. That is, this speech-exchange system’s turn-taking organization transforms the familiar organization by which opportunities to initiate repair are ordered (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977). In fact, one of the classical rationales for the insistence on the methodology of experiments, *formal experiments*, is precisely to exclude the talk or other “extraneous” conduct of the experimenter. The whole point was to hold everything (except the variables of interest) constant. And one part of holding everything constant is to keep the experimenter or the experimenter’s agent from talking in potentially varying ways to the different subjects, thereby introducing extraneous, and unmeasured, effects into the experimental results. So the whole point of this sort of experimental format *requires* the denial of the possibility of a next turn in which recipient/experimenter could talk.

We have, then, a very different turn-taking organization that

seems to be subsumed by the formulation of context that we call "laboratory" or "experiment," with various sorts of consequences for the organization of repair. Aside from general organizational considerations that relate next-turn repair to same-turn repair (Schegloff 1979b), more specific analytic issues are implicated, only one of which can be mentioned in passing here. It is that the sequential possibility of a next turn by another participant, and orientation to such a possibility, adds a wholly different *sort* of position for initiating repair from the ones incorporated into Levelt's account. He describes the positions in which repair is initiated *within* a turn in terms of their relationship to that which is being repaired (as do Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks [1977] with respect to the initiation of repair *across* turns). However, he does not (and with his materials he *cannot*) formulate the placement of the initiation of repair relative to the structure of the turn in which it occurs. For example, the initiation of repair cannot be formulated relative to possible completion of the ongoing turn by current speaker and possible start of a next turn by another (the relevance of which is analytically instantiated in Schegloff 1987b: 111), a matter we would expect to be strategic if there is a "preference for self-correction."⁵

Until someone does a parallel analysis on talk from ordinary interaction, and sees whether the findings about same-turn repair come out the same way or not, we will not know the status of Levelt's findings about how same-turn repair is organized (where repair is initiated relative to the trouble-source, how far back people go when they are going to reframe the trouble-source, and the like), or how substantial a contribution to our understanding of repair it can be.

In this case, I think the notion of "the laboratory as context" raises some serious concerns about particular research that was conducted under its auspices. But this is by virtue of the particular speech-exchange system which composed it on that occasion, which provides the link of procedural consequentiality to the particular features of the talk being focused on in the research.

Compare with this the data addressed in such work as that reported in Zimmerman and West (1975) and Maynard and Zimmerman (1984). These data are also referred to as occurring in a "laboratory" context. But the speech-exchange system involved

here is a wholly different one: that speech-exchange system provided for the parties (in this case, two “subjects”) to talk to each other. The organization of the talk did not render any speaker free of the contingency of someone talking next (with the opportunity, in principle, of initiating repair). Were one to use those tapes to study self-repair, I do not think the results would be subject to the concerns raised above about Levelt’s results, even though both of those settings can be characterized by a single context descriptor: “laboratory.” The vernacular terms do not do the work. In one case “laboratory” is, and in the other case it is not, procedurally consequential *for the particular phenomena being studied*.⁶

In the search, then, for characterizations of context which will link talk to social structure, we cannot necessarily rely on the social-structural terms we have inherited from the past. Some of them will be procedurally consequential, and some of them will not, just as some will be demonstrably relevant to the participants and some will not. We have to find those terms for formulating context which are both demonstrably relevant to the participants and are procedurally consequential for the aspects of the conduct being treated, *on any given occasion*.

But it is not necessarily our *loss* that we cannot just appropriate terms from the traditional lexicon of “social structure” to understand talk; for we come thereby to use our data as a test of the relevance and viability of our sociological inheritance. We should be prepared to find that some of what we have received from the past, however, cherished theoretically, culturally, politically, or ideologically, will not pass this test, and must therefore not be incorporated into our analysis. Rather, we should exercise our capacity to address the details of conduct, and exploit our data as challenges to our theoretical and analytic acumen, to enhance and expand our understanding of what “social structure” could consist of, as a robust and expanding tool of analysis rather than as an inheritance from the disciplinary past.

4 An exemplification: the Bush–Rather television encounter

The concerns for relevance to the participants and procedural consequentiality so far introduced as general considerations have a bearing on studies of talk at work as well. As with other settings,

not everything *in* the setting is *of* the setting. Not all talk at work is work talk. Further, sometimes the parties are not at all oriented to the relevance of the work setting and the related identifications of themselves. Sometimes, although they *are* oriented to its relevance, the setting does not directly contribute to the production of the talk; it is not procedurally consequential. But *some* talk in work settings is fully taken up with working, and that has substantial consequences for the talk. Indeed, it is through the ways in which the talk (and other conduct) is produced that the work setting is realized (by and for *its participants*, in the first instance) as a concerted interactional accomplishment.

A satisfying account of such a realized work setting should, of course, provide evidence of the work setting's relevance to the participants in the interaction being examined, and a description of the practices in which its procedural consequentiality is displayed. Thus, for example, the relevance of a courtroom context may be established, and a distinctive turn-taking system for "formal courtroom proceedings" characterized, for example, as involving a preallocation of turns to classes of participation (Atkinson and Drew 1979: ch. 2). The account of the procedurally consequential, however, must finally explicate the realization-in-their-course of those practices by which the setting is animated as a work context.

In what follows I offer a brief exemplar of how a course of talking in interaction for a while amounts to *doing* a news interview, and, as the talk practices change, the occasion slips from being an interview to being what was generally received as a "confrontation." The occasion which supplies the material for this account is an encounter between then Vice President George Bush, one of several contenders for the Republican nomination for president of the United States in the 1988 election, and CBS news anchor Dan Rather.⁷

Although it may initially seem puzzling, the need for explicating the characterization of this episode as "an interview" will quickly become apparent, and, I hope, exemplary for other such characterizations. The point of departure is that their social-structural location does not by itself endow occasions of interaction with a genre identity. The Bush–Rather affair offers eloquent *prima facie* testimony to the observation that labeling and announcing an occasion of talk-in-interaction as an interview (*post hoc* by commen-

tators or even *on the occasion* as part of the occasion itself) does not *ipso facto* make it one, nor does it guarantee that what begins as one will remain one.

All of which is to note that both the aspect of this event as an interview and its aspect as a confrontation (if that is what it became) require explication as *achievements*, as *outcomes* of practices of conduct in interaction (Schegloff 1987a: 218–28). And that is to ask, how did the parties to this event conduct themselves so as to make of the occasion, to constitute it, first as an interview, and then as a confrontation – how did they “do interview”; how did they “do confrontation?”

The achievement of such analyses can sometimes be made more difficult by their very situatedness in a recognizable social-structural context. For that context may “normalize,” “naturalize,” and make very nearly invisible those particular practices of talk and conduct in interaction by which the distinctive stamp of that type of work-realizing talk is achieved. Paradoxically, then, it is the very goal of relating talk to its social-structural and work-organizational context which may most recommend the bracketing of those aspects of context, lest they help mask how the participants procedurally realize that context through their activities.

If there is a single, most fundamental component of what is considered an “interview,” both in vernacular or common-sense conceptions of that term and in more technical accounts,⁸ it is that one party asks questions and the other party gives answers. An orientation to this feature by the participants, it might be argued, is at least partially constitutive of an occasion of talk as “an interview.”

Note the tack being taken here. It is not that, in interviews, it is an empirically established regularity that one party asks questions and the other answers. But that an occasion is progressively and methodically constituted and “realized” as an interview by, among other things, an orientation by its participants to having one of them be doing questions and the other answers. It is by virtue of their orientation to, and practice of, so conducting themselves that what I formulated at the start of this paragraph as an empirical regularity comes to be the case. But putting it this way allows us to see *how it comes to be the case*.

Let me illustrate this point from the Bush–Rather episode, by

examining the first exchange between the two participants.⁹ In doing so, I intend to be explicating how at the outset they constitute this occasion as an interview, and deliver “the context,” and the “definition of the situation,” which has been announced (Schegloff 1987a: 220–6).

Among the questions that parties to talk-in-interaction in general may undertake to do – and *not* just in interviews – some appear to their speakers to require some “background,” some “leading up to.” In ordinary conversation, this can present a problem because of the way the organization of turn taking for ordinary conversation appears to work. Participants who undertake to produce a turn can ordinarily *count on* getting to produce only a single, recognizably complete unit (like a clause or sentence).¹⁰ If they undertake to “lead up” to a question, they may find any possible ending of a unit in their “leading-up” talk treated as the end of their turn, with others starting up turns of their own at that point. And, even worse, talk which is innocuous enough as “background” may have a very different interpretation if taken to be what the speaker meant to say in its own right.

Consider, for example, the following exchange (taken from Schegloff 1980: 117–20) between two janitors, one of whom – Vic – has swept up a mess of broken glass at the building of the other, James. Now Vic wants his garbage pail (which he had left at James’s building) back, as well as a little credit for the good turn he has done James.

(1) [US:45-46]

- | | | | |
|----|----|----|---|
| 1 | V: | 1→ | The pail is in yuh hallway, (uh,) |
| 2 | J: | | [I know it |
| 3 | | | hu(hh)h! |
| 4 | V: | 1→ | The-the- I didn’ have a broom wit’ me, if I |
| 5 | | | adduh hadda [br̄oom I’d uh swept up. |
| 6 | J: | 2→ | [e(hh)h! [That’s |
| 7 | | 2→ | alright. |
| 8 | V: | | so (dat’s, right on). |
| 9 | J: | 2→ | [That’s a’ri’- Somebody- |
| 10 | | 2→ | got it up, I don’t know who. |
| 11 | V: | 3→ | [(Look). But do me a favr- <u>Do</u> , <u>me</u> , <u>one</u> |
| 12 | | 3→ | fa:vuh, I [<u>cleaned</u> it up! |
| 13 | J: | | [Yeh hh |
| 14 | J: | | Yeh right. I- ih-deh <u>ca:n</u> , (I- brought de) can |

- 15 (I'll) set it dehr own the sidewalk. [Izzat
 16 ehkay= [No.
 17 V: [No.
 18 J: = [Didjeh [sweep up duh rest a' duh me [ss.
 19 V: [() [NO I
 20 J: didn' sweep up nothin!
 21 V: Well o [kay well that's why I left the=
 22 J: [Leave ih deh.
 23 V: =can [innuh hallway
 24 J: [I'll do it (early) [innuh maw:ning.
 25 V: [so if you hadda
 26 V: br [oo:m then you c'd=
 27 J: [Yeh right.
 28 V: =sweep up duh dust [()-
 29 J: [Very, uh- very good I
 30 J: [appreesh- 'hhh
 31 V: [-the glass,
 32 J: I apprecia [te that Victuh,
 33 V: [Tomorruh I-
 34 V: 4→ No. [Tomorruh I want my pail back.
 35 J: [E(hh)h yeh.
 36 V: Dass a [ll.
 37 J: [Ye(hh)h!
 38 J: I don'know I may keep dat pail.

For Vic, as we come to see in the sequel at arrow 4, the talk at the start of this sequence (at the arrows numbered 1) is leading up to a request for the return of his pail. But James hears it as said in its own right, and, far from giving Vic credit for a favor done, he understands Vic to have apologized, accepts the apology, and credits some anonymous person for cleaning up the glass (at the arrows numbered 2).

So “leading up” to something, or doing talk as prefatory to something else, can pose problems of sequential organization for the participants in ordinary conversation. And, indeed, by virtue of the structurally recurrent character of this possibility, there are specific practices of talking in interaction which are addressed to it. One of these I have had occasion (1980: 116) to dub a “pre-pre,” a preliminary to a preliminary; it is an utterance which marks what directly follows it as said not in its own right, but as preliminary to something which will follow. One way of doing a “pre-pre,” for example, is to formulate in advance the type of utterance or action

being led up to, and that is done by an “action projection” such as *Can I ask you a question?* In Vic’s dealing with James, he follows the “misunderstood” talk with such an action projection (at arrow 3: “do me one favor”), after which his preliminaries get heard as preliminaries, and his request gets registered as a request (ibid.: 117–20 for a fuller analysis). All this, recall, is in ordinary conversation.

Now when we shift our attention from ordinary conversation to a different “speech-exchange system” like “interviews,” or more specifically “news interviews,” a different turn-taking system may produce different problems and different opportunities of sequential organization. If one constitutive property of interviews is that one of the parties – ordinarily a particular predesignated one – asks questions, then the turn-taking system may obviate the “problem of preliminaries” without the services of a “dedicated solution” like “preliminaries to preliminaries.” On this view, the designated questioner’s turn is not “over” in a sequentially relevant sense, and it is not its recipient’s turn to talk, until a question has been asked. And it *is* over, and it *is* the other’s turn to talk, when a question *has* been asked. In that case, one of the ways in which the parties could – in concert – accomplish the occasion *as an interview* would be by organizing the talk to display that some such orientation was being jointly sustained. They would be doing it with one another, showing it *to* one another, showing it to the audience, and to us as technical onlookers as well.

With this theme in mind, examine (2), the transcript of the first exchange of the Bush–Rather episode following the end of a prepared videotaped feature, and parse the surface of its turn-taking and sequence-organizational structure.

(2) [Bush/Rather, 00:00]

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | Rather: | ...Today, Donald Gregg still works inside the |
| 2 | | White House as Vice President Bush’s trusted |
| 3 | | advisor. ((End of feature; start of live |
| 4 | | broadcast.)) |
| 5 | | (1.0) |
| 6 | Rather: | ’hh Mister Vice President, tha:nk you for |
| 7 | | being with us toni:ght, ’hh Donald Gregg |
| 8 | | sti:ll serves as y’r tru:sted advi#sor,=he |
| 9 | | w’z dee:ply involv@d in running arms t’the |

- 10 Contras an' he didn' inform you.=
 (0.5)
 11 Rather: { =.hhhh } *Now when President Rea:gan's, (0.2)
 12 trusted advisor: Admiral Poindexter: (0.6)
 13 failed to inform hi:m, (0.8) the President-
 14 (0.2) fired'im.hh
 15 (0.5)
 16 Rather: Why is Mister Gregg still: (.)inside the
 17 White Hou@se'n still a trusted advisor.=
 18 Bush: =Becuz I have confidence in im, (0.3) en becuz
 19 this matter,Dan, ...

* Bush brings hands together and mouth opens.

+ Bush separates hands.

@ Bush's lips part (with in-breath?).

Rather begins with an appreciation/greeting (lines 6–7); no question, no next turn taken by Bush. Rather next produces, as a first preliminary to a projected question, what amounts to a bridging repetition of the last sentence of the video-tape lead-in, including its key terms, “Donald Gregg” and “trusted advisor.” At the possible completion of the unit, Rather employs a practice used in ordinary conversation to interdict a possible start-up by another and to extend the current speaker’s turn (see Schegloff 1982) – he rushes into the start of a next unit (line 8), here marked by the “=” between “advisor” and “he w’z dee:ply involved.” But although there is some evidence that Bush has monitored this spot in the talk as structurally a place where a next speaker might otherwise start (the evidence being a slight postural adjustment and an opening of the mouth – marked in the transcript by “#”), he does not actually move to start talking here.

In fact, Rather produces additional talk coming to a quite decisive-sounding possible completion, at “inform you” (line 10). Here he stops to take a big in-breath, one lasting about half a second – quite a long time, conversationally speaking. To be sure, the long audible and visible in-breath projects an “intention” on Rather’s part to continue, but such gaps are not infrequently exploited by aspiring next speakers. Not here, however, although Bush again gives some indication of registering the opening, the possibility, by another adjustment of the position of his hands (marked in the transcript by “+”).¹¹

Next, at lines 11–14, Rather produces the second preliminary,

the second component of the problem with which he means to confront Bush. There are several pauses here – of 0.2, 0.6, 0.8, and 0.2 seconds respectively, but these are internal to units of turn construction, and are not in the first instance places for an interlocutor to enter the talk.

But the silence at line 15 is quite another matter. Here, another unit of talk has been brought to recognizable possible completion, *and*, furthermore, the second element of Rather's problem/challenge has been articulated. Here is an eminently ripe place for Bush to enter in. But the question itself, however strongly adumbrated, has not yet been posed. And here we have the apex of Bush and Rather together doing a display of the occasion as interview. It is virtually choreographed: Rather leaves a yawning gap with the challenge glove off his hand but not yet thrown to the floor, and relies on Bush to withhold entering the lists. And Bush, raring to go, withholds until such a unit of talk is done as properly occasions his response. And, indeed, at the first possible completion of Rather's actual question at line 16–17 – at the word "House" – Bush's lips part in an apparent preturn in-breath, and directly on the next possible completion of the question, with not a moment of gap. Bush begins his turn, designed from its very outset to reveal itself as "an answer" – a "because" to fit to Rather's "why."

Here, in this first turn of the occasion, we see Bush and Rather orienting to the constitutive properties of "interview," and organizing their conduct to produce them. It is by virtue of such orientations and conduct that they collaborate here to produce an exchange, a potential statistical "case," if you will, in which one asks a question and the other answers. For Bush clearly "*could have*" talked earlier, at the several junctures which I have mentioned. And then it would *not* have been one of the cases which lead to the conclusion that in interviews one party asks questions and the other gives answers.

But as long as they proceed as they have at the first exchange, participants will produce interviews in which overwhelmingly one party produces questions and the other answers, because the latter party will not talk where talk might otherwise be done if a question has not been asked, and the former party will provide that type of turn which will allow the occasion properly to proceed from turn to turn and phase to phase. And thereby the participants constitute –

do – the context which might otherwise be thought of, indeed is often described as, “supplying” the setting for their talk (Schegloff 1987a; see also Clayman 1988: 479–80; Greatbatch 1988: 409–13).

But we need not conjecture about Bush hypothetically talking at the earlier junctures in the “*développement*” of a question. The Bush–Rather affair supplies us with actual occurrences. Shortly after the initial exchange which has just been briefly examined, Bush does precisely that; he talks at those earlier junctures. Which is at least part of how we come to understand this occasion as “an interview which turned into a confrontation.”¹² It is not possible here to track step by step the devolution, or reversion, of this occasion of talk-in-interaction from “interview” back to a version of ordinary conversation,¹³ but it may be useful to explicate one of the forms which this transition takes. Rather’s first question engenders a long response from Bush, which itself engenders a number of touched-off sequences, including ones in which Bush complains about the video-taped feature which had preceded the “interview” and challenges Rather in various other respects. This, clearly enough, is a departure from the interview format, and is the occasion for several flurries of overlapping talk. At the end of one such spate of contentious talk, about three minutes into the interview, Bush appears to key the resumption of “interview” talk explicitly by returning the floor to Rather by inviting/demanding a question. The consequence affords a telling display of the ways in which “interview” requires realization in practice and in conduct, and not merely institutional settings and declared intentions.

(3) [Bush/Rather, 03:00] (See Appendix A for a fuller text)

- 1 Bush: ... 'hh An' I've answered every question put
 2 before me.=now if you have a question, (0.2)
 3 'hh what is it.
 4 Rather: [I do have one.]
 5 Bush: Plearase.
 6 Rather: [I-] I have one.
 7 Bush: Please f i r e a w a y . ()
 8 Rather: [You have said that] y- if you had
 9 know:n: you sed th't'f hed know:n: this was an
 10 a:rms for hostages swap, 'hh that you would
 11 Bush: [Yes

- 12 Rather: have opposed it.=
- 13 Rather: = 'hhh You've also said that- that you]=
- 14 Bush: [Exactly. (M a n y-)]=
- 15 Rather: = [did not know:: that you:]
- 16 Bush: = [May I-] May I May I] answer that.
- 17 Rather: That wasn't a ques] tion. It was=
- 18 Bush: [(Th- right]
- 19 Rather: [=a statement.]
- 20 Bush: [Yes it was] a statement,=
- 21 =- an' I'll answer it.= The President=]
- 22 Rather: [Let me ask the question if I may first.]
- 23 Bush: =created this program, 'hh has testifie- er:
- 24 stated publicly, 'hh he did not think it
- 25 was arms for hostages.
- 26 Bush: 'hh I t w a s o n l y l a:] ter that-
- 27 Rather: [That's the President.] Mr. Vice [President]
- 28 Bush: [and that's]
- 29 me.
- 30 (.)
- 31 Rather: ['hh Well-
- 32 Bush: [Cuz I went along with it becuz=
- 33 = <y'know why Dan, { 'hhh/(0.2) }
- 34 becuz [I worried when] I saw=
- 35 Rather: [That wasn' the question] Mister
- 36 Vice President.
- 37 Bush: [=M i s t e r ::] hhh Mister Buckley, 'hh
- 38 uh'r heard about Mister Buckley being
- 39 <torured ta death.> Later admitted as
- 40 the CIA chief. 'hh So if I erred, I erred on
- 41 the side of tryin' ta get those hostages
- 42 outta there.=
- 43 Bush: = ['hh And the whole story has been to:ld]=
- 44 Rather: = [Mister Vice President, you set thee:-]=
- 45 Bush: = [to the Congress.]
- 46 Rather: = [you set the rules for this:] this
- 47 talk here. >I didn' mean to step on
- 48 yer line there, < 'hhh but you insisted that...

In response to Bush's invitation/demand for a question, Rather begins as he had done at the outset, by laying the groundwork for the question with some preliminaries (lines 8–12). His procedure appears to be the same as before: he will introduce two, claimably incompatible, events or assertions and challenge Bush to reconcile them (Pomerantz 1988/9). The talk at 8–12 is the first of these, much like that at lines 7–10 in (2) above. But unlike the earlier

instance, Bush does not allow the production of the second preliminary. Indeed, before the first preliminary has been completed, there are indications of trouble for “the interview.”

First, well before the first preliminary has come to possible completion, even before the grammatical juncture of its initial conditional clause, Bush interpolates a receipt token of sorts. Most like a “continuer” or “backchannel” response, its ordinary use in conversation is to pass, on behalf of its speaker, a place at which that party might otherwise talk. Its use in the Bush–Rather episode at line 11 is in any case somewhat special, because even in ordinary conversation, this would not be (in strictly turn-taking terms) a place for Bush to talk;¹⁴ passing an opportunity to talk would, then, not ordinarily be an issue at such a point.

But such an interpolation, and the one at the start of line 14, is particularly anomalous in the context of a news interview. In news interviews, neither party (albeit each for a different reason) ordinarily registers what the other has said with recipient tokens, either to register receipt of information, or to pass an opportunity to talk (see Heritage 1985). One does not find continuers in news interviews,¹⁵ because interviewers do not treat themselves as the true recipients of interviewee’s talk (ibid.), and interviewees only respond to questions, whereas continuers specifically pass the opportunity to do a full turn, such as “answering.” As early as midway through the first of Rather’s preliminaries, then, there is evidence in Bush’s continuer that commitment to the practices of “doing interview” has broken down.

Furthermore, as soon as Rather has projected, and begun producing, a continuation of his preliminaries, Bush interrupts at line 14/16, proposing to “answer.” When Rather explicitly invokes the constitutive property of interviews to block Bush’s talk: “That wasn’t a question. It was a statement,” and “Let me ask the question if I may first,” it appears that he may not. Bush seems to concur that it was a statement, but insists on “answering” in any case (thereby adhering at least rhetorically to the constraint that interviewees should only do “answering”). And here we have empirically what we had earlier conjectured hypothetically: Bush (and interviewees generally) *can* talk at earlier junctures preceding production by the interviewer of a question. When they do so, the interview *qua* interview breaks down.¹⁶

The career of this episode suggests a methodological canon. Establishing relevance and establishing procedural consequentiality cannot be “threshold issues”, that is, once you have “enough” to show it you are finished. Rather, they are questions for continuing analysis. And not necessarily in the “loaded” form, “how are they now doing ‘interview?’”; but in “open” form – “what does the form of the talk show about recipient design considerations and about orientation to context (institutional, social structural, sequential, or whatever)?”

If the focus of inquiry is the organization of conduct, the details of action, the practices of talk, then every opportunity should be pressed to enhance our understanding of any available detail about those topics. Invoking social structure or the setting of the talk at the outset can systematically distract from, even blind us to, details of those domains of events in the world.

If the goal of inquiry is the elucidation of work institutions, one might think that quite a different stance would be warranted, and one would want to give freer play to the effective scope of social-structural considerations, and do so free of the constraints I have been advancing. Though this stance has much to recommend it, it could as well be argued that one does not best serve such an undertaking by attributing to social-structural constraints or features properties which are better understood as the outcomes of the procedures of ordinary interaction. In any case, the understanding of social structure will be enhanced if we explicate how its embodiment in particular contexts, and on particular occasions, permeates the “membrane” (Goffman 1961a) surrounding episodes of interaction to register its stamp within them.

5 Concluding remarks

These, then, are some of the issues mobilized for me when the talk turns to “talk at work.” We may share lively intuitions, in general or with respect to specific details, that it matters that some participants in data we are examining are physicians or news interviewers; that they are working at tasks which are constrained by the law, or by economic or organizational contingencies, or by their material setting. However insistent our sense of the reality and decisive bearing of such features of the work institution or setting, there

remains the relevance of anchoring our “grasp” in a methodic explication of the objects of our inquiry, cast, so to speak, from the inside. To reprise these themes:

- 1 How can we show that what is so loomingly relevant for us (as competent members of society or as professional social scientists) was relevant for the parties to the interaction we are examining, and thereby arguably implicated in their production of the details of that interaction?
- 2 How can we show that what seems inescapably relevant, both to us and to the participants, about the “context” of the interaction is demonstrably consequential for some specifiable aspect of that interaction?

In brief, the issue is how to convert insistent intuition, however correct, into empirically detailed methodic analysis.

This is a heavy burden to impose. Meeting it may well lead to exciting new results. But if it is not to be met in one or more respects, arguments will have to be put forward that the concerns I have discussed are no longer in point, are superseded by other considerations, or must yield to the new sorts of findings that are possible if one holds them in abeyance. Simple invocation of the burden of the sociological past will not suffice.

With respect to social structure, then, as with respect to other notions from social science’s past such as intention, the stance we might well consider is treating them as programmatically relevant for the parties, and hence for us. In principle, some one or more aspects of who the parties are and where/when they are talking may be indispensably relevant for producing and grasping the talk, but these are not decisively knowable *a priori*. It is not for us to *know* what about context is crucial, but to *discover* it, and to discover *new sorts* of such things. Not, then, to privilege sociology’s concerns under the rubric “social structure,” but to discover them in the members’ worlds, if they are there.

Otherwise, we risk volunteering for a path which has led close inquiry into social life astray in the past, but which we now have an opportunity to avoid. In the past, one has needed a special warrant or license to examine closely the details of ordinary life and conduct. Whether it was the defectiveness of the people involved as with the mentally ill or retarded or physically handicapped, their

moral taint as with criminals, delinquents or other versions of “evil,” or the possibilities of enhanced efficacy as in the improvement of production processes or bureaucratic administration, or enhanced justice or fairness, there was always a “good reason” for looking closely at the details of conduct.

With the license came a shaped focus, either on a target population, a target set of behaviors, or a target aspect of conduct which one examined. What was found was then generally attributed to the license under which one found it. Thus, early investigations into the language of schizophrenics (e.g. Kasanin 1944) came upon the phenomenon of a spate of talk being touched off by the sound of some word in a prior utterance (so-called “clang association”), a phenomenon which students of conversation will recognize as not uncommon in ordinary talk. But having found it through the close examination of schizophrenic talk (talk which could be so closely examined by virtue of its speakers’ diagnoses), it was taken as specially characteristic of such talk. So also with children’s talk, etc.

If the study of conversation and talk-in-interaction is once again required to be “licensed,” whether by practical concerns or by the institutionalized interests of traditional disciplines, then we may well find ourselves attributing – now to “social structure” – what are the indigenous features of talk-in-interaction. Should we not give the latter a chance to be recognized in their own right, especially since they constitute their own sociology in any case?

Appendix A

[Bush/Rather, 03:00]

- 1 Bush: ... 'hh An' I've answered every question put
- 2 before me.=now if you have a question, (0.2)
- 3 'hh what is it.
- 4 Rather: [I do have one.]
- 5 Bush: Ple_{ase}.
- 6 Rather: [I-~] I have one.
- 7 Bush: Please f i r e a w a y . ()
- 8 Rather: [You have said that] y- if you had
- 9 know:n: you sed th't'f hed known: this was an
- 10 a:rms for hosta_{ges} s_wap, 'hh that you would
- 11 Bush: [Yes
- 12 Rather: have opposed it.=
- 13 Rather: ='hhh You've a:lso [said that- that you
- 14 Bush: [Exactly. (M a n y-)] =

- 15 Rather: = [did not know:: that you:
 16 Bush: = [May I-] May I May I] answer that.
 17 Rather: That wasn't a question. It was=
 18 Bush: [(Th- right
 19 Rather: [= a statement.]
 20 Bush: [Yes it was] a statement,=
 21 = [an' I'll answer it. = The President =]
 22 Rather: [Let me ask the question if I may first.]
 23 Bush: = created this program, 'hh has testified- er:
 24 stated publicly, 'hh he did not think it
 25 was arms for hostages.
 26 Bush: 'hh [It was only later that-
 27 Rather: [That's the President.] Mr. Vice President
 28 Bush: [and that's
 29 me.
 30 (.)
 31 Rather: 'hh Well-
 32 Bush: [Cuz I went along with it cuz =
 33 = < y'know why Dan, 'hhhhh
 34 cuz I worried when I saw =
 35 Rather: [That wasn't the question] Mister
 36 [Vice President]
 37 Bush: [= Mister : :] 'hhh Mister Buckley, 'hh
 38 uh'r heard about Mister Buckley being
 39 < tortured to death. > Later admitted as
 40 the CIA chief. .hh So if I erred, I erred on
 41 the side of tryin' ta get those hostages
 42 outta there. =
 43 Bush: = ['hh And the whole story has been to:ld] =
 44 Rather: [Mister Vice President, you set thee:-] =
 45 Bush: = [to the Congress.]
 46 Rather: = [you set the rules for this: :] this
 47 talk here. > I didn' mean to step on
 48 yer line there, < 'hhh but you
 49 insisted that this be li:ve, en
 50 [you know (th't) > we have a limited amount of] =
 51 Bush: [E x a c t l y . T h a t ' s w h a t I : -] =
 52 Rather: = time. < =
 53 Bush: = [> That's why I wan-na get my share < in: he:re,
 54 Rather: [= 'h h h h [Now
 55 Bush: [on something] other than whatchu wanna talk=
 56 Rather: [The President-]
 57 Bush: [= about.
 58 Rather: [The President- (.) h's- has spoken for
 59 him: self. = I'm asking you: to speak [for you: =
 60 Bush: [Please

- 61 Rather: =self, which you have not been willing
 62 t'do in the pa:st,= [if I m- =
 63 Bush: ()
 64 Rather: =if I may- u- suggest th't- that- this is what
 65 leads people to sa:y, .hh quote, "Either
 66 George Bush wz irrelevant, (0.3) or he
 67 w'z ineffective=>he said himself he
 68 wz outta the loop< =>now lemme give
 69 [an example, you said to ask you a question<
 70 Bush: () outta the loop]
 71 May I explain "outta the loo:p." No:=
 72 =operational ro:le. Go ahead.
 73 Rather: Now. You've said that if you'd known it wz 'n
 74 arms fer hostages swap you would've opposed
 75 it.=You said the first you knew it was an arms
 76 fer hostages swap wz in <December of Nineteen
 77 Eighty Six> [(correct?)]
 78 Bush: [w h e n] the who:le thing
 79 became brie:fed ta me by Senator
 80 Duerrenburger,
 81 Rather: Exactly
 82 Bush: [and the pro:ximity of arms to hostages
 83 'hh much closer.] than we had thought, on these=
 84 Rather: [But Mr. Vice President, you
 85 went ta Israel in] <July of Nineteen Eighty=
 86 Bush: =hearings that w-]
 87 Rather: [=Six?>]
 88 Bush: [Yes]
 89 Rather: 'hhhh And- a member of your own sta:ff Mister
 90 Craig Fuller.- ((swallow/(0.5))) has verified.
 91 And so did the o:nly other man the:re. Mister
 92 Ni:r. Mister Amiron Nir, 'hh who's the
 93 Israeli's 'hh to:p anti-terrorist man,
 94 Bush: [Ye: s.
 95 Rather: 'hh [Those two men >were in a meeting with
 96 you an' Mister Nir not once,< but three:
 97 times. three times, underscored with
 98 you that this was a straightout arms
 99 [fer hostages swap.] = 'h h h
 100 Bush: [W h a t t h e y : :] (,) were doing.]=
 101 Rather: =Now [how do you- How] do you recon-] I have =
 102 Bush: [Read the memo] Read the memo.] What =
 103 Rather: = [(sir)
 104 Bush: = [they::] were doing.
 105 Rather: How: can you reconci:le that you were
 106 there<Mister Nir a- underscored three::

107 separate occasions, 'hh that it was a- arms
 108 fer hostages swap an' to:ld you we were
 109 dealing with the most ra:dical elements in
 110 Iran:. You were dealing straightaway with the
 111 Ayatollah Khomeini
 112 Bush: I was told what they: were doing,
 113 and not what we were doing en that's the big
 114 difference...

Notes

1. For a penetrating treatment of many of the issues taken up here, cf. Heritage (1984a: 280–90).
2. A similar argument is made for explicating how cultural/linguistic context has the consequences attributed to in (Schegloff 1987c). Aspects of prosody may well have consequences for misunderstanding in crosscultural interaction (e.g. Gumperz 1982), but understanding how they issue in the particular misunderstandings which ensue will require explicating what in the structure of talk-in-interaction converts that prosody into that *type* of misunderstanding.
3. Reasons both of relevance and procedural consequentiality motivated a decision not to characterize the “Opening up closings” paper (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) as contextually specific to American culture, as had been requested by an anthropologically oriented referee (see footnote 4, p. 291, and also Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974, footnote 10, p. 700, on the same issue). That request invoked on behalf of anthropology a cultural sense of “context,” parallel to the invocation by sociologists of social-structural senses of “context.”
4. A penetrating account along these lines of the constituting of a speech-exchange system through practices of talking, in this case of “the job interview,” may be found in Button this volume ch. 7.
5. I leave aside here the exclusion of interactional considerations (Jefferson 1974) which can bear on where and how repair is initiated, an exclusion which allows the depiction of the initiation of repair in strictly grammatical terms.
6. One could harbor a concern that the setting of the Zimmerman–Maynard data is procedurally consequential for the organization of topic talk which is their focus, since the participants in their experiment were asked to talk while knowing they were to be interrupted for the start of an experiment in a “few minutes” (Maynard and Zimmerman 1984), a prospect which may well constrain the sort of topic talk participants undertake. There are naturalistic settings which are in many respects similar (e.g. medical waiting rooms, though there is no injunction to talk there) in which the seriousness of this concern might be assessed.

7. The account by Clayman and Whalen (1988/9) tracks the transformation of the Bush–Rather episode rather further than does the present one. The two accounts are in accord where they address the same parts of the data. Greatbatch (1988) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) offer a systematic account of the news interview as a speech-exchange system, and of a distinctive turn-taking organization as a systematic solution to some of the problems of analysis posed in the text of the present chapter.
8. For example, on the employment interview see Button (1987b); on the medical interview, see Frankel (1990); and, most relevant here, on news interviews see Heritage (1985), Clayman (1988), Greatbatch (1988), Heritage and Greatbatch (1991).
9. The whole of the Bush–Rather episode (not including the prepared video feature shown before the beginning of the “interview”) lasts approximately nine minutes. I transcribed no further than the first seven minutes, and only about two-and-a-half of those first seven minutes. As with all transcripts, the one with which I am working is virtually endlessly revisable. However, in the respects which matter for the discussions in this chapter, I believe it is reliable. The full transcripts on which I am relying may be found as appendix I in Schegloff (1988/9).
10. Of course, in point of fact they may end up producing more, but prospectively they are systematically assured of but a single “turn-constructural unit” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974).
11. It is not just that he marks these places by adjustments of hand positioning; to this point he has not moved except at such “structural joints” in the talk.
12. Another might be the actual reversal of the questioning “role,” as in the following exchange about six minutes or so into the talk:

Bush: ... 'cause I wanna talk about why I wanna be President. 'hh why those forty one per cent a' the people are suppo:rting me,=
 Rather: [= 'hh en I don' think it's fair to judge a who le=
 Bush: And Mister Vice President, these questions()]
 =careg:r, 'hh it's not fair to judge my: whole
 careg:r by a rēhash on Iran.<'hh How wouldju like
 it. (0.2) if I judge your career by those seven
 minutes when you walked off the set in New York.
 (1.0)
 Rather: Well, Mis-
 Bush: Wouldju like tha:t?

13. Clayman and Whalen (1988/9) address themselves to this development.
14. But see Lerner (1987) for the juncture between “if” clauses and their consequents as an “opportunity space” for collaborative completion

by a recipient of current speaker's talk. Furthermore, production of such continuers or "backchannels" and leaving room for them can have uses relevant to accomplishing particular activities and alignments in the talk, uses which may get them placed at just such turn-taking junctures.

15. See Greatbatch (1988: 411–13). For this observation, and many others in this paragraph, I am indebted to John Heritage. For discussion of the "hostile" use of continuers in the segment, see Heritage and Greatbatch (1991).
16. This can be seen in the rather more extended excerpt provided in the Appendix. The talk initiated through Bush's intervention continues to line 43/5, and engenders further talk to line 72. At line 73, Rather tries again, repeating the first preliminary from 8–12 at 73–5, followed by some more preliminary talk, with the question which Bush invited at lines 2–3 finally being delivered at lines 105–11.