

The Surfacing of the Suppressed

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I was first alerted to the phenomenon I sketch here by an incident in which I was a participant. The episode was not taped; I noticed the key occurrence when it happened in the course of the interaction, a meeting ("job interview" would probably be the more accurate term) with the Vice Chancellor of a small New England university in the early 1970s. After the end of the interview, I wrote a note about what I had noticed on—you won't believe this—the back of an envelope.¹ Here's the note:

Talking to Vice Chancellor; he tells about an administration report that slams some departments and the trouble to be expected when the report becomes public. It is set up for "the shit will hit the fan," but he censors it. Still, it's "in his brain," as witnessed by: a few moments later, replying to a suggestion that it not be made public, he says "it's already in the fan."

So there in a nutshell is a raw description of the phenomenon. If we ask what happens to the talk that gets suppressed when an utterance gets aborted before being brought to completion, then we sometimes see the suppressed item pop up in the talk later. As I say, that's a "raw description." How can we refine it? And why, or how, is it of interest?

As an initial take, we might say it is of interest, first, because it is a recurrent occurrence in conversation (if it turns out to be) and it is our job to describe such things. And, second, because we may well find ourselves called upon to explore and register what has been suppressed when talk is self-

¹ I am, it should go without saying, *not* recommending this way of working, especially for getting started on a project, but one should not discard candidate phenomena only because they have come to attention in this way.

interrupted, and what prompts the suppression. If we have grounds for looking to a particular place and knowing how to recognize what is to be found in it, we may find evidence there to support a claim about what was suppressed. And often enough *what* was suppressed is the best lead as to *how come* it was suppressed.

How can we refine the rough initial account? At the very least it would be nice to put some constraints on the claim that something said later is “the suppressed item,” and some constraints on “later;” surely it cannot be indefinitely later.

And surely we want to press such refinements not on anecdotes written on the backs of envelopes, but on recorded data that can be inspected over and over again to give us the best possible chance of detecting this phenomenon. And it needs *detecting*. As we see herein, what happens to suppressed material often appears designed to *escape* notice—for obvious reasons; if it was wanted to be kept out of the talk *once*, there may well be grounds for keeping it from figuring in the talk *subsequently* as well. In fact, I found my most recent instance while preoccupied with some other topic, in data that I have been working on for about 30 years, data that were in fact collected several years before my episode with the Vice Chancellor. That’s a long time to escape detection! Here, I can examine only a few exemplars, but I think we can at least sketch some of the key features of this phenomenon, which I am calling “the surfacing of the suppressed.”²

A FIRST TAKE: INITIAL OBSERVATIONS AND RESOURCES

Let me begin with an exchange that presents (at Line 29) a very simple and accessible version of some of the central features of these occurrences. (The reader is urged to examine the transcripts with some care and not “read around”

² In Gail Jefferson’s article “On the Poetics of Ordinary Talk” (1996), she employed the term “suppression-release” (at pp. 8, 18, 20 and 24) for a somewhat different, but not unrelated, phenomenon. By that term she meant “You’re being very careful not to say something, and you succeed in not saying it, and it sneaks out in the next utterance” (p. 8). However, in none of the instances that she examined in this regard is there an overtly displayed suppression of the talk (e.g., by cutting off the talk that would articulate the suppressed material), talk that subsequently is “released.” In three of the four instances, Jefferson developed a cogent account of an ongoing suppression of some word or theme that subsequently comes out in the talk, but that was not done as a suppression—was not done as a *displayed* suppression; in the first of the instances for which she introduced the term, there *is* a displayed suppression, but it is applied prematurely, and the item hypothetically being avoided (“Blacks”) is not the one subject to displayed suppression and does not in fact come out subsequently. So although Jefferson’s account of what she referred to by suppression-release is tracking something that is thematically closely related to what I am examining here, the details of the occurrences and their analysis are different.

them; notational conventions are explained in Appendix A. Readers are invited to access the audio of this and virtually all the data extracts in this article, in a format suitable for most platforms, on my home page, which can be addressed at <<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/>>, with a link to the present paper. Should this web page cease to be available, readers should contact me directly or search the California Digital Library at <<http://cdlib.org/>>. The extract is from a telephone call in the late 1960s between two young women who grew up in the same neighborhood and attended the same college until Bee transferred to another school; here Bee is asking about the school that she has left and that Ava still attends.)

(1) TG, 4:34-5:31 (simplified)

34 (0.4)
 35 Bee: Eh-yih have anybuddy: thet uh:? (1.2) I would
 36 know from the English depar'mint there?
 37 Ava: Mm-mh. Tch! I don't think so.
 38 Bee: °Oh,=<Did they geh ridda Kuhleznik yet hhh
 01 Ava: No in fact I know somebuddy who ha:s huh [now.
 02 Bee: [Oh
 03 my got hh[hhh
 04 Ava: [Yeh en s' he siz yihknow he remi:nds
 05 me of d- hih-ih- tshe reminds me, 'hhh of you,
 06 meaning me:.
 07 (0.4)
 08 Bee: Uh-ho that's [a- that's a s[wee:t co:mplimint]
 09 Ava: [Kuhleznik.= [I said gee:, tha:n]ks
 10 a lo:[t honeh,
 11 Bee: [hhhhhhuh huh=
 12 Ava: ='hh [Said] yih all gonna gitch' mouth shuddup=
 13 Bee: ['hhhh!]
 14 Ava: =fih you yih don't sto:p i[t.]
 15 Bee: [°M]mmyeh,
 16 Bee: I think evrybuddy's had her hm[hhh!
 17 Ava: [Ohh,
 18 [she's the biggest] pain in the a:ss.
 19 Bee: [-fih something,]
 20 (0.3)
 21 Bee: °Yeh,
 22 Ava: .T She's teaching uh English Lit too, no more
 23 composition,
 24 Bee: Oh:::, She's moved up in the wor[ld]
 25 Ava: [She] must know
 26 somebuddy because all those other teachers they
 27 got rid of.hhhh
 28 (0.3)
 29 Bee:-> Yeh I bet they got rid of all the one::Well one I
 30 had, t! 'hhhh in the firs' term there, fer the
 31 firs' term of English, she die::d hhhuh-uhh [hhh
 32 Ava: [Oh:.

33 Bee: She died in the middle of the te:rm?mhhh!=
 34 Ava: =Oh that's too ba:d hha ha!=

Note then that this extract begins with a topic-proffering sequence initiated by Bee to Ava, a sequence whose second try (at Line 38) asks whether “they” (i.e., the authorities at the college) got “ridda Kuleznick yet,” a teacher who is held in low regard by both Ava and Bee. They “work up” the Kuhleznick case for a bit, and it turns out that she has not only *not* been sacked, but is doing very well—“teaching English Lit too, no more composition,” the import of which is registered by Bee (Line 24) as having “moved up in the world,” and explained by Ava (Lines 25–27) by reference to her knowing somebody “because all those other teachers they got rid of.” Such a reuse of a word from a question (Line 38’s “Did they get ridda Kuhleznick yet”) deep into an extended answer sequence is a practice for marking or claiming the end of the answering (Schegloff, 1998).

And here (at Line 29) it appears that Bee is aligning with this move to close the sequence by agreeing with the claim with which Ava has proposed to end it with respect to the fate of the faculty they knew in common, “Yeh I bet they got rid of all the one::.” Although this is epistemically qualified to a supposition by the “I bet,” the turn-so-far still appears on the way to alignment, projecting a continuation as “. . . got rid of all the one[s I had].”³ But it is aborted before getting there.

The turn is arrested in a relatively unusual way—not with a cut-off but with a sound stretch (marked by the colons near the end of Line 29). It seems to convey, “waitamminnit, I’m just thinking of something that makes what I was about to have said not quite right.” It exemplifies a suggestion made some years ago (Schegloff, 1979) that, whereas cut-offs commonly initiate repair on the talk-already-produced, sound stretches ordinarily initiate repair on talk as yet unsaid. And so Bee aborts the “about-to-have-said-ness” of it, and tells what problematizes it: One of her former teachers could not have been gotten rid of by the *secular* higher-ups (so to speak), because she died. And thereby what was on the way to being an agreement with what Ava had said, and an alignment of their views and the closing of the sequence, is derailed. It is turned into an *exception* to what Ava had said, and thereby at best a nonalignment, perhaps even a disagreement and challenge (a characterization resonant with the “well” that initiates the new departure, “well” being often deployed as an opposition- or disagreement-marking token).

As it happens, this outcome characterizes virtually every sequence and topic in this conversation. At one point, having secured from Ava an agreement that she is home (she *must* be, because that is where Bee called her and she answered, and this is before “call-forwarding” technology), Bee remarks in

³ The brackets enclose a plausibly projectable continuation of the talk that was not in fact articulated.

frustrated vindication (or vindicated frustration), "See? hI-I'm doin' somethin right t'day finally, I finally said something right. (0.2) You are home." Still, Ava finds a way to distance herself even from this inescapable truth: "Yeh- I believe so. Physically anyway." Bee's backing away from the alignment we are examining, concerning getting rid of teachers, is just one appearance of something deeper and more pervasive going on in this interaction and in the relationship of which it is the most recent (and possibly the last) episode.

But note how Bee starts this "exception": "Well one I had t! .hhhh in the fir's term there," and so forth. Note two things. *First*, what follows the suppression of the ending of the turn unit that was aborted includes in its very beginning just the words that appear to have been suppressed—"I had." Indeed, we almost reflexively use those words to either reconstruct, or ground the reconstruction of, what that aborted ending was going to be.⁴ *Second*, note the break between "one I had" and its descriptor "in the first term there." This ends up being a single phrasal person reference—"one I had in the first term there," but it is "fractured" in the middle, both with the tongue click and with a substantial inbreath, an inbreath that displays the at least transient "unit-in-its-own-right" status of this chunk, and the persistence of the boundary that was projected to occur after "had."⁵

⁴ As we do with error correction; cf. Jefferson, 1974.

⁵ Here is another, quite similar, instance (at Lines 38 and 41). Mark has been visiting and "schmoozing" with Sherrie, Karen, and Ruthie in their dormitory room in the mid-1970s, talk mostly dominated by Mark's recounting of his recent social life. Then:

- (A) SN-4, 12:15-40.
- 15 Mark: Yih know my stomach after every meal now feels
 16 r:ea:lly weird 'n it's been giving 'hh Mi:les got
 17 Digel tablets? 'n stuff like tha:t?
 18 (0.4)
- 19 (??): [°henh
 20 Mark: [A:nd uh: like-(·) 't's r:ea:lly weird, (too).
 21 'hh- I find one thing.don't eat their pineapples.
 22 They make yer stomach imme:diately after dinner
 23 really feel lousy.<'t least mi:ne.=
 24 Sher: =Their pineapple's ca:nned.
 25 (1.5)
- 26 Mark: (°I 'on't care,) it's still terrible.
 27 Sher: mmh-
 28 Mark: hhhh HUH-HUH 'hhhh hh they really- just turn my
 29 stomach. Sump'm after dinner [(ih) (·) ('s)] °turning
 30 in yer stomach .hh
- 31 (??): [hhhh 'hh]
 32 (0.5)
- 33 Mark: But u:m:
 34 (1.2)
- 35 Kar: C'est la vie, c'est la vie,=
 36 Mark: °=eyeh°

So the candidate finding I want to take away from this instance is that something that has been suppressed in the course of producing talk in a turn may pop up *in the same words in the very next spate of talk*. We add to and shape this observation as we examine additional candidate exemplars, but, for now, we have this: what was suppressed—that is, the word or words that were suppressed (if they appear to have been projected), may surface in the immediately following talk. That gives us something to look for and a place to look for it, and those two things—position and composition—are major parts of all sorts of practices and phenomena in talk-in-interaction.

EXCURSUS: SUPPRESSION AND INSERTION

There are occurrences that look very much like suppressions, ones in which the “suppressed” item pops up in immediately following talk, which however are a quite different phenomenon. They are instances of same-turn repairs accomplishing the operation of “insertion.” Thus for example:

- (2) Joyce and Stan, 4:07-11
 01 Stan: And fer the ha:t, I'm lookin fer somethi:ng uh a
 02 --> little different. Na- uh:f: not f:: exactly funky
 03 but not (.) a r-regular type'a 'hhh >well yihknow
 04 I I< have that other hat I wear. yihknow?
 05 Joyce: Yeah,

In this telephone conversation recorded in the mid-1970s, Stan is soliciting advice from his sister Joyce about where to purchase a hat and a pair of sandals. At Line 02 he appears to suppress something—which begins with an “f” — when he says about the hat that he is looking to buy, “not f:.” And when a moment

-
- 37 (1.2)
 38 Mark:--> That's about it hell I haven't been doing anything
 39 but- (·) s- (Well,) (0.2) going out [actu]ally.
 40 ?Kar: [mmh]
 41 (0.7)
 42 Mark:--> I 'aftuh start studying no:w

Mark is apparently starting to complain that he has done nothing but s[tudy], which is (by the testimony of his own prior talk) the opposite of the case. When he comes to the “payoff” component of this turn-constructural unit (at the start of line 39), he suppresses it, and confesses that he has done nothing but good times. The “correction” from what he was about to say to “the truth” is even underscored by the “actually” which serves here (as it often does; Clift, 1999, 2001) as a correction-marker. And then the suppressed “studying” surfaces in the turn to repentance which follows (at line 42); one might almost hazard the conjecture that this further extension of his talk at this juncture is designed to accommodate the surfacing of the suppressed element of the prior talk.

later the word “funky” comes out, it may look like the “surfacing of the suppressed.” But Stan has in effect put the utterance-so-far on hold in order to insert something—here, the word “exactly”—before the word he was in the process of saying, after which he returns to the saying of it; thus “not f.: exactly funky.” “Funky” has not been “suppressed, only to surface anyway”; it has been held in momentary abeyance to insert something before it. To be sure, this practice is as deserving of careful analysis as suppression is (because it is as much an issue for recipient as suppression is): How shall we understand a speaker’s disruption of the production of the talk to insert some element—*this* element in particular—at this juncture? What does its insertion do to the upshot of the turn? To what possible understandings of the talk by recipient does a speaker show orientation by inserting this element when it was not included in the previously articulated composition of the turn? Etc. But these questions are different than the ones mobilized by suppression. Or consider the following extract from earlier in the same conversation. Stan has asked his sister the outcome of a traffic ticket incident in which she was involved and she has reported deciding to pay the ticket rather than contesting it. Then:

(3) Joyce and Stan, 01:20-30

01 Stan: [I guess it would ye you figured out finally
 02 found out it'd be too much ha:ssle ta take care
 03 of it.
 04 Joyce:--> 'hh I figu:red (0.4) in order: I would just haf
 05 tig- make two trips down there:,
 06 Stan: Yeah,
 07 Joyce:--> Yihknow I'd hafta go down there ta pay it,
 08 Stan: Right,
 09 Joyce: Then make an appoi:ntment (.) ta come back there
 10 again,
 11 Stan: Yea[h,
 12 Joyce: [An' they wouldn't give me a date, fer a month
 13 an a half,
 14 Stan: Yeah,

Stan is offering a guess about why his sister Joyce has chosen to pay a parking/traffic ticket rather than contesting it. Joyce appears to be suppressing something when she says (at Lines 04-05, in regularized orthography), “I would just have to g-,” with that something surfacing at Line 07, “I'd hafta go down there ta pay it.” But it is clear that here again an insertion is being done. Joyce has temporarily put this utterance on hold while inserting “make two trips down there” before the “go:”—inserting, that is, the larger point of which the self-interrupted utterance is a first part.

Although this is not the place for a substantial comparative treatment of “suppression” and “insertion,” at least this much can be said here. A speaker can show that “insertion” is being done by having the previously abandoned and now

repeated or returning element be implicated in the same trajectory of utterance as was initially in progress, and this is ordinarily implemented by employing the same grammatical form and lexicon—by “doing resuming” as part of the practice of “doing inserting.” In suppression, as we see later, the “suppressed” element—when surfaced—is often *virtually unrecognizably different from* what was in progress or “due next” grammatically and semantically rather than resumptive of it, and is implicated in a different trajectory of utterance.

One upshot of registering the practice of same turn insertion repair, and differentiating suppression from it, is this. It may be necessary to track the *subsequent development of the talk* in order to determine exactly what practice the earlier “abandonment” of a TCU-in-progress (TCU stands for turn-constructional unit) was the product of—necessary *both for the co-participant and for the professional analyst*. And, for the coparticipant, once engaged with that subsequent talk, and with its potential sequential implicativeness for what should be said next in response, the possibility of returning to the point of abandonment—the point of “suppression”—and lingering on its import is attenuated.

SECOND TAKE: PAYOFFS: EMPLOYING THE OBSERVATIONS AND RESOURCES

Returning now to suppression itself, let us see what the resources developed on the first exemplar (before the excursus), and the search that they permit, yield on another “specimen.” In this telephone call between two college women in the mid-1970s, Hyla has called her good friend Nancy ostensibly to talk about the arrangements for going to the theater that evening, but a good deal of talk about other matters gets done as well. Quite early on in the conversation there are opportunities for each to tell anything major that happened during the day, and it is in such a telling by Nancy that the utterance we examine occurs (at Line 24).

(4) HG, 2:1-25

- 1 Hyla: [Bu:t]
 2 Nancy: [My f]:face hurts,=
 3 Hyla: =°W't-°
 4 (.)
 5 Hyla: Oh what'd'e do tih you.
 6 (.)
 7 Nancy: GOD'e dis (.) prac'ly killed my dumb fa:ce,=
 8 Hyla: =Why: Ho[-ow.]
 9 Nancy: [(With,)]
 10 (.)
 11 Nancy: With this thing I don'ee I wzn'even looking I
 12 don't kno::w,
 13 (.)

14 Nancy: B't 'e jis like o:pened up,
 15 (0.6)
 16 Nancy: a lo*:t* y'know('v)
 17 (0.4)
 18 Nancy: the pimples I ha:veɿ=
 19 Hyla: =Eoh::,
 20 (·)
 21 Nancy: It (js) hu:rt so bad Hyla I wz cry:::ing,=
 22 Hyla: =Yhher khhiddi[:ng.]
 23 Nancy: [nNo:]:: 'He really hurt me he goes
 24 I'm sorry, 'hh wehh 'hh I khho th(h)at dznt make
 25 i(h)t a(h)n(h)y better yihknow he wz jst (0.4)
 26 so, e-he didn't mean to be but he wz really
 27 hurting m[e.]

Looking at Nancy's turn at Lines 23–27, we can note that here too an utterance is aborted, its ending suppressed. Nancy has reported her exchange with the doctor after crying in reaction to the pain: He apologizes (Lines 23–4), she reports herself to reject the apology (Lines 24–5). Then (in standard orthography), “He was just (0.4) so, e-he didn't mean to be but he was really hurting me.” “He was just so” *what?* In the aftermath of pain infliction and an apology that is treated as rejectable? He was just so . . . what?

I take it that this can be not only a question for us external analysts; it can be an issue for the parties as well, the recipients of the talk. Recall that recipients parse a speaker's talk in real time, turn-so-far by turn-so-far, projecting where it is going, what it is coming to, what it will take for it to be possibly complete. They are projecting all the time, and using each next bit of the speaker's actual talk to confirm or modify their projection of where the talk is going—to *re-project*. So Hyla is not listening in a docile manner for each next bit of Nancy's turn to fall into her lap, so to speak. She is listening proactively, in the fashion that (as we have seen from such work as that of Sacks [1992] and Lerner [1991, 1996] on collaboratives or anticipatory completions) can often allow such a recipient in effect to say the projected next part of the utterance *for* or *with* the current speaker. Indeed, in just such a place as we have arrived at, one often enough finds the recipient chiming in at the point of the hesitation and supplying the missing item (Lerner, 1991, 1996). There are grounds then for taking the *recipient* to be oriented to the possible turn completion that is being suppressed and not delivered (just as recipients can be demonstrably oriented to it when suppression is not an issue). “He was so . . .” There is a virtual tension built up by the recurrent cycle of projection (by the recipient) and delivery by the speaker of a next bit of the turn-so-far, a tension deprived of resolution by the suppression. We return to this theme later.⁶

⁶ One sort of evidence for this line is suggested by the suppressed elements reappearing in the immediately following talk not of the suppressing speaker but of the *recipient*, whose close attention

How about “mean”? “He was just so mean?” Look then at the immediately following talk after the suppression, and notice: “He didn’t mean to be but . . .”

Now this is clearly a different “mean.” What is suppressed in Nancy’s turn, if it *was* “mean,” was a descriptor (an “adjective”) —was the “mean” of “nasty,” “cruel,” and the like. The “mean” of “He didn’t mean to be but . . .” is a verb—the “mean” of “intend.” Still, it is a way in which the word or words that have been suppressed find a way out, so to speak. Sometimes they are the same lexical items used in the same “sense”—as in “one I had”; sometimes they are the same lexical items used in an entirely different sense, as with “mean.” And when they come out in such a radically different usage, they are very hard to detect. In effect, they are a form of camouflage, allowing the suppressed talk to come out, perhaps even at some level to ground the energy or tension set up by the “unfulfilled” projection of the turn completion, without actually saying the suppressed thing. It (so to speak) grounds the “energy” left unspent by the non-saying of the projected, although still not “saying” the suppressed, although using its word(s).⁷

But what is so important about “not saying the suppressed”? In many such instances, what is suppressed is suppressed because in some fashion it is problematic or delicate. Such problemativeness or delicateness also commonly figures in a speaker’s providing an opportunity for anticipatory or collaborative completion by the recipient (as in the work of Sacks and Lerner cited earlier). Getting the recipient to say the delicate item allows them to have said it together, collaboratively; it shows the recipient to also be capable of “thinking that thought” and saying it.

So what is so delicate or problematic in the episode in Extract 4? Here is another piece of the puzzle, another ingredient of the phenomenon being described here. We want to show not only the suppression reappearing, and

to the turn-so-far, and orientation to its projected completion, are displayed by production of the candidate suppressed element. For discussion of several exemplars of this, see Appendix B.

⁷ Consider the blizzard of tokens of the suppressed item in the following episode of mutual accommodation in arranging to take a meal together.

- (B) MTRAC, 90-2, side 1
 Marcia: Bu wai- d’ya wanna have lunch? ‘r dinner. Witha
 Big Mac.
 Fiona: Which d’ya think is best fer you.
 (1.0)
 Marcia:--> Well I don’tuh:: (1.5) I- I’m- I’m adjustable.
 I think if I know now, y’know I c’n:uh:: (1.0)
 adjust my time accordingly,

I take Marcia to be saying “Well I don’tuh::[know]” with the “know” suppressed. But then note the flurry starting with “. . . if I know now y’know,” none of which is the “know” that she suppressed (which was the knowing of “what . . . is best fer you”).

reappearing in the next spate of talk (composition and position); we would like to motivate or ground the suppression interactionally, and where it is so grounded, come to terms with the camouflaged appearance that it sometimes takes. The phenomenon can still be there without "heavy" interactional motivation; but then, perhaps, it is most centrally an artifact of the speech production machinery under interactional control and shaping.⁸

⁸There is a closely related phenomenon and practice that deserves brief mention and exemplification here, without full treatment. This involves a display of orientation to public "cultural norms" in the very course of transgressing them; that is, even when they do not command full assent or conformity from the speaker her or himself. This can take the form of full or partial suppression. In the former, the speaker omits articulation of the transgressing elements. Thus, in a storytelling episode discussed in various papers (Goodwin, 1986, 1987; Schegloff, 1987, 1988, 1992), Mike is telling about a fight at the race track the night before. Although he later shows himself willing to articulate far more offensive language, he begins the storytelling itself this way:

(C) Auto Discussion, 6:23-4

23 Mike:--> Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in thee,
24 (0.6)

And the silence at Line 24 is broken by the intervention of another party to the conversation. What is "missing" here is quite clearly the word "ass," which figures in similar contexts later in the story and is articulated there. But here there is a sort of obeisance paid to the cultural impropriety of the usage, and it is fully suppressed. In partial suppression, the improper talk is produced in lowered voice, *sotto voce*, as what I am inclined to call "quiet improprieties." For example, in the following phone call recorded in the mid-1960s, a woman "of some years" is telling her friend about a holiday trip to Lake Tahoe in California, and the comparative virtues and drawbacks of the venue. This includes what could be reckoned to be prejudiced comments about various so called "minority groups." Although she has little reason to believe she can be overheard, she nonetheless lowers her voice to register an awareness of, and orientation to, the impropriety of what she is doing.

(D) SBL, T2:C4, 3:1-30 (simplified)

01 Bev: So you go outta California into Nevahda. All of the
02 motels are in California, all the ga(h)mb^ling
03 places, and the big hotels, are in Nevada.
04 Ann: Mm hm,
05 Bev: And os it's- it is. -hh
06 Ann: Yeah,
07 Bev: iin^finitely different. And I don' know, Ann, but I
08 think -- they're stealing a lotta Los Vegas.
09 Ann: I wouldn't be surprized.
10 Bev:--> The other thing that we noticed, ((very quiet)) You
11 know, we didn't see any Jews, you know in Las Vegas,
12 you [know how you see those greasy old women an'=
13 Ann: [Uh huh
14 Bev: =[men, but at-
15 Ann: =[Uh huh,
16 Bev:--> And very few Negroes. ((voice moves to low-normal))
17 But we saw lots of Orientals.
18 Ann [Mm hm,

So what is the problem or delicate matter here? I offer this proposed analysis, or conjecture. Nancy is a young woman, in her late teens, in the transition between adolescence and adulthood. Under the stress of the pain and the telling about it, it appears that she is “regressing” a bit, reverting to a child’s grasp of pain—it is inflicted by those who administer it because they are “mean.”

There is evidence of such a stance elsewhere in this very conversation. Hyla, for example, a little later on, reacts to a mention of the “Dear Abby” advice column by launching into a story: “Oh, she said something mean yesterday I didn’ like her,” and as soon as Nancy asks her to go on, she retracts the “mean” as a descriptor, “Well it wasn’t mean b’t it wz really stupid.” “Mean” here is a kind of generic negative. But here is another instance of the usage of the term, this time from an adolescent boy, a “hotrodder” in 1960s Los

18a Bev [You see, I think they come in from San Francisco.
 19 Ann: Mm hm,
 20 Bev:--> ((voice returns to normal)) And the Orientals, you
 21 know, are always very well dressed,
 22 Ann: Mm hm,
 23 Bev: And they're tremendous gamblers.
 24 Ann: Mm hm,
 25 Ann: I think that's ()
 26 Bev: So uhm uh:: they have a grand time at the crap
 27 games.
 28 Ann: Mm[hm,
 29 Bev: [They-
 30 Bev: They really at uh- it's a something to see, and I'm
 31 glad I saw it, 'n I had a wonderful time doin' it.

Formal notice is thus taken of the cultural norms applicable here, in the very course of showing a lack of commitment to abide by them. Finally, there are gradations between full suppression and “reduced offensiveness,” in which, for example, a speaker mouths the words or parts of them without actually voicing them, or begins that way and then gradually allows some voicing to set in, as in the following characterization (by the same “Mike” cited earlier in this note) of the villain in the story.

(E) Auto Discussion, 9:23-27
 23 Mike:--> D[eWa:ld is a [big burly ((silent))ba((vl))sterd=
 24 Curt: [Jeezuz. [_____
 25 Phyllis: [`hhhh hhehhhhhehheh,
 26 Mike: = [jihknow,
 27 Curt: = [Mmhm,

Here, the first syllable of “bastard” is mouthed silently and its remainder is voiced very quietly (“vl” is an abbreviation for “very low”). What we have in the various gradations of this practice, then, appears to involve more than simple word production apparatus per se, and yet not some this-interaction-specific matter of delicateness, but one way in which “culture” in the anthropological sense, and an orientation to cultural prescriptions as privileged points of reference, appear in talk-in-interaction.

Angeles talking about the relationship between teenagers and the police, which embodies just the usage I have suggested for Nancy.

(5) GTS

1 Roger: When a cop sees a hopped up car, he doesn't care
 2 if you're goin forty five you must be doin
 3 --> somethin wrong, and if he wants to be mean, he
 4 can bust you on a thousand things.
 5 Al: He doesn't have to have a reason...

Here again the adult who does something painful to the kid does so because he is, or wants to be, "mean."

So here is Nancy poised on the very verge of a relapse into this "childish" way of seeing the world: She does not treat the doctor as hurting her incidentally, as part of doing something *for* her, and when he apologizes she rejects the apology as ineffective, and characterizes him as . . . just as she is about to say "mean," she backs away. And note, what she backs into is precisely the adult counterpart to the childish view—it's not that he means to be hurting her, but it hurts just the same. And in the very course of articulating this newer adult part of her, she leaks out—in camouflaged form—the bit of childishness she has almost let escape.⁹

A rather more public problematicity and delicateness informs the next instance, taken from an interview on National Public Radio's news program "Morning Edition." President Clinton had nominated obstetrician/gynecologist Dr. Henry Foster to be Surgeon General of the United States, and the nomination had run into trouble in its pursuit of confirmation when Dr. Foster was reported to have performed a number of abortions—these being treated as "immoral" by one segment of the press, the Congress, and the public, and as a "medical decision" by another segment. Journalist Joanne Silberner developed a story on the attitude of obstetrician/gynecologists toward doing abortions, and one part of the story reported on Dr. Elizabeth Garrow (Lines 1–4), and included her recorded response to an inquiry during an interview (Lines 5–13).

(6) NPR, Morning Edition, 2/23/95

1 JS: ...Elizabeth Garrow does one or two abortions a week
 2 as part of her practice in suburban Virginia. She
 3 says it's one of many services she offers her
 4 patients.
 5 EG: Just as if a woman comes in an' says, ".hh I'm
 6 pregnant=I want ta have a baby, en I- try to give

⁹Compare the relationship of this surfacing of a suppressed item with the earlier-discussed reappearance of an item held in abeyance to allow an insertion before it, as in Extracts (2) and (3) and the discussion of them.

7 her good prenatal ca:re, .hhh or .h I don't want to
 8 be pregnan en I g:et her on the pi:ll, 'f=sh=s's I
 9 am pregnan en I don't want ta be:, .hh that's- (.)
 10 -helping her take care of that is just another
 11 aspect. (0.8) of- of my jo:b. I don't see it as any:
 12 (0.2) more a less important. It's j's- it's a part
 13 of it.

At Lines 11–12, it seems apparent that Dr. Garrow is on the way toward summing up how abortion presents itself to her in her practice—as “just another aspect of my job” (Lines 10–11)—by saying “I don’t see it as any [moral issue].” In the context of the public controversy that prompted the story and interview in the first place, this would, of course, have been fuel on the fire. As she approaches the problematic element of her TCU, she slows and pauses, and suppresses “moral.” But note how it creeps out nonetheless. In a striking restructuring of her TCU, the “any” is converted into the start of the idiom “any more or less [important].” But her articulation of this phrase, by reducing the “or” to “a”, incorporates the suppressed “moral” like this: “any: (0.2) [more+a+l]+ess . . .” In the very swerving to avoid the publicly problematic “moral,” it occupies the turn in camouflaged form and in the very next bit of talk.

Let me end with the instance that had escaped me all these years, and that I finally saw while examining something quite different. This comes from the conversation drawn on for the first extract that we examined—a telephone call between two young women in late 1960’s New York. Ava is telling Bee about how she came to be “so tired.”

(7) TG, 02:10-38
 10 Ava: I'm so:: ti:yid. I j's played ba:ske'ball
 11 t'day since the firs' time since I wz a
 12 freshm'n in hi:ghsch[ool.]
 13 Bee: [Ba::]sk(h)et=
 14 b(h)a(h)ll? (h) [(°Whe(h)re.)
 15 Ava: [Yeah fuh like an hour enna
 16 ha: [lf.]
 17 Bee: ['hh] Where didju play ba:sk[etbaw.]
 18 Ava: [(The) gy:m.
 19 Bee: In the gy:m? [(hh)
 20 Ava: [Yea:h. Like grou(h)p therapy.
 21 (.)
 22 Ava: Yuh know [half the grou]p thet we had la:s'=
 23 Bee: [O h : : : .]'hh
 24 Ava: =term wz there- <'n we [jus' playing arou:nd.
 25 Bee: ['hh
 26 Bee: Uh-fo[oling around.
 27 Ava: ['hhh
 28 Ava: Eh-yeah so, some a' the guys who were bedder
 29 y'know wen off by themselves so it wz two
 30 girls against this one guy en he's
 31 ta:ll. Y'know? ['hh
 32 Bee: [Mm hm?

33 Ava:--> En, I had- I wz- I couldn't stop laughin it
 34 wz the funniest thing b't y'know you get all
 35 sweaty up'r en evrything we didn' thing we
 36 were gonna pla:y, 'hh en oh I'm knocked out.
 37 Bee: Nhhkhhhh! 'hhhh
 38 Ava: Ripped about four nai:ls, 'n okhh!
 39 Bee:--> Fantastic.=
 40 Ava: -> =B't it wz fun-You sound very far away

Here, it appears that the "I had-" at Line 33 suppresses "I had [fun.]" Note first that the "fun" surfaces a bit later in "the funniest thing" (Line 34), where, however, the sense of "fun" (as "having a good time") is masked by the sense of "funniest" (as "laughter prompting") given by its following "couldn't stop laughing." Then note that, just before a final quick exit line from this topic at Line 40, Ava says, "But it was fun"; this is the same "fun" that was suppressed earlier (as compared to the "funniest" as the superlative of "funny" that is not, quite), but she still manages to deflect it from herself to the situation as a whole: "*It* was fun," rather than "*I* had fun." Note as well that the first thing to follow the initial suppression at "I had-" (Line 33) was "I wz-" (itself cut-off in turn), and that "wz" returns in the exiting line "it w'z fun" (Line 40). Several ties connect this exit line with the earlier site of the suppression, then. (Note by the way that Bee's otherwise odd "fantastic" (Line 39)—odd as a response to "knocked out" and "ripped about four nails"—may invite understanding for its resonance of "*fantastic*" with "fun.") So the features that have recurred in other instances of suppression that we have examined appear to be present here as well. But what is going on? I would like to end with an(other) illustration of an unexpected way in which having a sense of such a phenomenon as "suppression resurfacing" as a real thing can figure in our understanding of entirely different aspects of what is going on in some episode of interaction.

The suppression and its reappearance (or the capacity of the reappearance to warrant that there *was* a suppression and *what* it was) throws new light on something odd in the opening of this conversation. In the opening, Bee says a curious thing after detecting in the sound of Ava's voice and in her apparent "kidding around" a note that properly warrants notice by a recipient in an opening; she says, "Why whatsa matter with y- y'sound happy." Now "sounding happy" would not ordinarily be characterized or made accountable as "something *the matter with you.*" The allusion here, I had always taken it, was to Ava being a "sad sack" type, always complaining, never being content, so that the later "y'sound sorta cheerful" that follows Ava's denial of being "happy" would, even as a reduced descriptor, be a noticeable. But this had been mere supposition; interpretation with little in the data to support a stronger claim of analysis.

And here—in the suppression we have been examining—we see what may be such evidence: Ava cannot bring herself to say she had fun—"I had fun"—even though everything about the telling about playing basketball conveys that. This is not quite something that *motivates* the suppression, but it grounds the claim of suppression in a larger canvass of the speaker's conduct, and grounds Bee's treatment of Ava's sounding happy as "something the matter with her" in an actual display of "happiness avoidance."

This is a long way from where we started (though subsequent developments can be brought to bear on the episode with the Vice Chancellor, even if only conjecturally for lack of a recording of the exchange). The moral of my story is this. Taking seriously, and pursuing, an observable for the purely technical object it can be, can make available a resource whose bearing on the warrantable analysis of what is going on in interaction is by no means "purely technical" in the pejorative sense ordinarily attached to that phrase.

Perhaps the larger moral is to remove the pejorative sense attached to terms such as "technical," "merely technical," "purely technical," and the like altogether. If something is correct as an account of a possible event or practice or phenomenon in talk-in-interaction, then pursuing it in its own terms promises to deliver an analytic resource whose scope of relevance cannot be properly imagined in advance.

POSTSCRIPT

It will not be lost on readers that my title alludes to a phrase generally associated with psychoanalytic theorizing, and with Freud in particular, the "return of the repressed." Why, then, have I danced around this memorable phrase, and settled for something that retains both its semantic sense and its poetic alliteration, but not its literal identity? "Suppression" and "repression" have, to my mind, slightly different connotations. "Repression" is deeper, "suppression" shallower; "repression" long-lasting; "suppression," at least potentially, shorter term and transient (a government may "suppress" an uprising, but we do not speak of it as "suppressive"; if this is a long-term, character-revealing tendency of a regime, we speak of it as "repressive"); "repression" fundamental, "suppression," at least potentially, relatively superficial. Still, in both of them, grounds are found by actors for affirmatively avoiding the externalization of something assertedly (by the analyst thereof) present in the scene and informing the conduct of participants in the scene—whether these be thought of as regimes and bodies politic, individuals and their psyches, or participants in episodes of interaction. Here I have been dealing with "suppression"; to what degree the discussion turns out to be relevant to "repression" (whatever that term may be understood to

denote, given the methodological obstacles to rigorous and clear thinking in this domain) remains to be determined.

Dealing with "suppression" (and "repression" as well, of course) involves us in nontrivial issues of interpretation and evidence, and this in two respects. First, it involves showing what was *not* said—and this implicates a host of issues bound up with making negative observations. Second, it can involve (and does in the present case) arguing that something that *was* said not only was said, but is what was specifically not said earlier, and has thus in effect "escaped."

With respect to the first of these sets of issues, it may be worth reviewing in as compact a form as possible the problem of negative observations. Strictly speaking, an indefinitely extendable set of things was *not* said at any specified point in a conversation, yet only a very limited part of that set can *relevantly be noted* to have been "not said"—by parties to the conversation *in* the conversation or by external analysts *about* it. As noted early on in the conversation analytic literature, one consequence of the sequence-building resource dubbed the "adjacency pair" (two-turn sequences such as greeting-greeting, question-answer, request-grant/reject, etc.) is that when there is no response to the first part of such a pair, one can not only generally say *who* was silent, even though no one has talked; one can say *what was not said/done*. After a question, then, the silence is understood as a failure to answer or a withholding of answering. Here, formulating what was not said takes the form of a characterization of the activity or action that was not implemented, and that line of analysis can be grounded in the relevance rules by which a first pair part constrains, shapes, and casts an interpretive key over the moments directly following it.

The negative observation implicated in a claim of "suppression," however, can be more detailed and specific than this. In the episodes examined in this chapter, what is claimed is that some word(s) or phrase(s) or topically specific fragment of talk—some sayable in particular—has been specifically withheld from articulation, has been "suppressed." The relevance rules that underlie such a claim therefore have to be more fine-grained than those underlying characterizations of missing responses to first-pair parts.

With respect to the second set of issues, one feature of the type of understanding of interaction (and social life more generally) sought by conversation analysis and kindred pursuits in the social and human sciences is that analytic characterizations of actors' conduct be grounded in, and warranted by, the participants' own demonstrable orientations to the setting, context, and import of what is going on. In this enterprise, one eschews analytical claims warranted only by the theory one brings to the data, whatever the force of the statistical or experimental or interpretive data marshaled on their behalf.

Whatever categories of action the analyst's theory has generated, if we cannot show the participants to be oriented to the conduct in its course by reference to such "categories," to such an understanding of the import of their actions, then that line of analysis is not tenable. But are we then to argue about talk that has "slipped out"—as is implied by "the surfacing of the suppressed"—that this captures the orientation of the parties? The import of the conduct for *them*? That is what is involved in arguing that something that *was* said not only was said, but is what was specifically not said earlier, and has thus in effect "escaped."

These are some of the more general issues mobilized by the empirical occurrences with which this chapter engages. It would, of course, be presumptuous to claim that they have been "solved." But I hope to have indicated one way in which we can approach taking them seriously and beginning to deal with them. Their relevance may extend past conversation analytic work itself.

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This article is co-published in German in Volume 1, No. 4 of the new journal *Psychotherapie und Sozialwissenschaft*. Readers coming to the article from a background in psychiatry or psychoanalytically oriented psychology will find in the Postscript some reflections on the relationship between the sort of conversation-analytic work presented here and those traditions of inquiry—as reflected in the title, and may wish to consult it first, or in due course.

Appendix A

Suppressed Elements Surface in Recipient's Utterance

This appendix presents brief accounts of two episodes in which suppressed elements reappear in the immediately following talk not of the suppressing speaker but of the *recipient*, whose close attention to the turn-so-far, and orientation to its projected completion, are displayed by production of the candidate suppressed element. Consider first the following opening of a telephone conversation.

(8) D&B, 1:1-17

01 Dina: Hello?
 02 Bernie: H'llo, Dina?
 03 Dina: hhhHI!
 04 Bernie: Hi, how're you.
 05 Dina: I Calledju las' night.
 06 Bernie: You di:d,
 07 Dina: yea:h.
 08 Bernie: Wha' tj:me.
 09 Dina: Uh:: about seven uh'clock, or was it e- tch! Oh
 10 I- I don't remember b- but I calledju.
 11 Bernie: Yeah.
 12 Dina: N- nobuddy was home.
 13 Bernie: hhhh[hhhh
 14 Dina: --> [Gee I was just th- n- that's very funny.
 15 How are you.
 16 Bernie: Okay.
 17 Dina: That's good.
 18 Bernie:--> Tch! hhhh I think I was home last night.

Almost certainly Dina was saying at Line 14, "Gee I was just th[inking about you]," something that is often accompanied by "that's [very] funny" (at the beginning of an unanticipated phone call). Here it is suppressed (perhaps because it is a further display on her part of interest in him which may not be reciprocated or appropriate). Note then that it pops up three turns later, in the *recipient's* mouth ("I think I was home last night."). Two observations may be made about this. First, regarding the "non-immediacy" of the position: This is the first turn of Bernie's following the suppression, which is not sequentially constrained by Dina's prior turn. Second, hurdles are overcome for this utterance to be produced here. A reciprocal "howareyou" question is in order, as Bernie's first "howareyou" at Line 4 was by-passed by reporting the effort to call him, and Dina's "howareyou" was marked by its stress on the second syllable as a "first" inquiry of a reciprocal pair (Schegloff, 1986). Where the reciprocal inquiry was due, Bernie does not do it. In its place he replies to the "Nobody was home" of

Line 12 with what is in effect a disagreement or rejection or correction, its contrariness marked by the epistemic downgrade of the "I think," which was the suppressed element of Dina's earlier turn.

The second exemplar occurs early in the conversation between Joyce and Stan examined earlier in the discussion of "insertion" (Extract 3), and indeed is the larger sequence in which that insertion occurred.

(9) Joyce and Stan, 01:09-02:12

01 Stan: 'hh First of all how'd that thing turn out with
 02 --> the ticket. Dju:anything happen?
 03 (0.4)
 04 Joyce:--> Oh, I just decided ta pay it.
 05 Stan: --> Decide(d) ta pay how much was it?
 06 Joyce: Fifteen fifty.
 07 Stan: Fifteen fifty?
 08 Joyce: Mm hm,
 09 (0.2)
 10 Stan: Bitch. Bitch.
 11 Joyce: I(h) kn(h)ow[h
 12 Stan: [I guess it would ye you figured out
 13 finally found out it'd be too much ha:ssle ta
 14 take care of it.
 15 Joyce: 'hh I figu:red (0.4) in order: I would just haf
 16 tig- make two trips down there:.,
 17 Stan: Yeah,
 18 Joyce: Yihknow I'd hafta go down there ta pay it,
 19 Stan: Right,
 20 Joyce: Then make an appoi:ntment (.) ta come back there
 21 again,
 22 Stan: Yea[h,
 23 Joyce: [An' they wouldn't give me a date, fer a month
 24 an a half,
 25 Stan: Yeah,
 26 Joyce: An' I figu:red (0.9) the case [just wu-
 27 Stan: [(Plus) ya gotta
 28 yih gotta put down the money.ahead a'time.
 29 Joyce: Yea:h,
 30 Stan: Yeah,
 31 Joyce: Yeah t[hey give it back to you. l:ater.=
 32 Stan: [(Yeah the)
 33 Joyce: =[(see an')
 34 Stan: = [The way I beat mine it was a pa:rkng ticket.
 35 yihknow, so I was able ta go to ta night court.
 36 (wu) then beat the ten dollar ticket.
 37 Joyce: Oh:.,
 38 Stan: 'hh Yihknow just the principle'a thing that
 39 bugged me.
 40 Joyce: Yea:h,=
 41 Stan:--> =U:m (1.4) tch! (.) So wudja do pay it through
 42 the auto club?
 43 Joyce: Yea:h,
 44 (0.5)

On the theme that the suppressed item may show up in the immediately following talk of recipient, note that Stan surely appears to suppress something at Line 02: “Dju:anything happen?” He is starting to ask an agentive question: “Did you: [pay it]” The sound stretch on the “you” shows him thinking the better of it, and he shifts to a non-agentive form of the inquiry, one that does not introduce the relevance of any particular action on Joyce’s part (which she might have to report having failed to do, e.g.). Then note that the suppressed item shows up in the next turn by the recipient, “Oh, I just decided ta pay it.” and is then repeated by Stan (Line 05) as a form of registering the response (Schegloff, 1997). Once out in the open, Stan uses it again (at Line 41), as he brings the the topic/sequence to a close. (For further discussion related to this general topic, see also Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1979)

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