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6 Assessments and the construction of context

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Editors' introduction

Charles and Marjorie Harness Goodwin are both Professors of Anthropology at the University of South Carolina. Both received their Ph.D.s from the University of Pennsylvania – Charles in Communications and Marjorie in Anthropology – where they worked closely with Erving Goffman, Gail Jefferson, and William Labov. Their primary research interest is the analysis of how talk is organized as a phenomenon embedded within human interaction, and more generally the systemic resources and procedures used by human beings to organize their interaction with each other. As anthropologists they want to investigate interaction in the endogenous situations where people actually live their everyday lives. Moreover, because of their belief that talk is intrinsically interactive, and thus shaped as much by recipients as by speakers, as well as by the activity within which the talk and its participants are embedded, the Goodwins want to focus their analysis on the talk that members of a society **produce for each other** within the **activities** that constitute their culture, rather than relying on interviews, collected stories, or other texts produced for the anthropologist or other outsiders.

In pursuit of such goals Marjorie Harness Goodwin tape-recorded the conversations of a group of urban black children over a period of a year and a half as they played on the street. In analyzing these materials she has been especially interested in how the children use talk to build social organization in the midst of moment-to-moment interaction. The length of time she spent in this setting enabled her to track how the children moved from activity to activity, while the fact that she recorded everything that they said permitted fine-grained analysis of how the activity of the moment was being constituted through their talk. Boys and girls were able to build different types of social organization within their same-sex peer groups (hierarchical for the boys, and egalitarian with extensive coalition formation for the girls) through alternative ways of formatting, and responding to, speech actions such as directives (M. H. Goodwin 1980c). However, when activities shifted, and girls and boys interacted with each other, the girls were fully competent in forms of speech typically associated with males, and indeed were frequently able to outdo the boys in activities such as argument and ritual insult (M. H. Goodwin and C. Goodwin 1987). These findings challenge current perceptions about how women speak with an inherently different voice (Gilligan 1982), while

demonstrating the importance of tracking interaction across a range of different types of events. Other speech activities of the children included stories (M. H. Goodwin 1982a, 1982b), disputes (M. H. Goodwin 1983), and a particular type of gossip that the children called "he-said-she-said" (M. H. Goodwin 1980a). In all of these events, talk was shaped in fine detail by the activity in progress, carefully designed for its particular recipients, and it provided resources for both constituting and transforming the social organization of the moment. None of this analysis, with its focus on the design of talk for its recipients and the events it is helping to constitute, could have been pursued if talk had not been recorded within endogenous activities that the participants were organizing, not for the researcher, but for each other. Marjorie Harness Goodwin's analysis of how the children used talk to collaboratively build the events of their lifeworld is the subject of her recent book *He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children* (1990b). In other work she has used video-recordings to investigate interaction within the turn in assessment sequences, and **byplay** (1990a) – collusive commentary on the extended talk of another speaker.

Talk is typically viewed as an activity that **speakers** perform. Thus one might imagine a division of labor in which the exchange of turns at talk was an interactive phenomenon (as is clearly demonstrated in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), but the production of talk **within** the turn was not. Instead it rested in the hands of a single individual, the speaker. Study of how individual utterances were shaped and produced could then be safely left to psychologists and linguists, with analysis of interaction beginning at the boundaries of the turn. In his research Charles Goodwin has been interested in demonstrating that in fact talk emerges through **systematic processes of interaction in which recipients are very active co-participants**. By using videotapes of conversation he was able to investigate **processes of interaction that occur within the turn itself** (cf. C. Goodwin 1981). Most basically a speaker needs a hearer, and the availability and orientation of a recipient is something that participants actively accomplish and negotiate as an utterance unfolds. Thus a speaker who brings her gaze to an addressee who is not gazing back toward her frequently produces a restart in her talk at precisely that point. Such action both marks the talk then in progress as defective (i.e. the sentence is aborted without being brought to completion), and acts as a request for the recipient's gaze; right after the restart the recipient typically starts to move her gaze to the speaker. Such phrasal breaks are not manifestations of the speaker's defective performance, or the product of purely psychological processes restricted to a single individual, but instead interactive phenomena that demonstrate the active work that speakers perform to produce sentences that are attended to as coherent wholes by their recipients. Similarly, in order to coordinate their actions with appropriate reciprocal actions of their recipients, speakers frequently add new segments to emerging utterances, and change the meaning of an emerging sentence as they move their gaze from one addressee to another so that it maintains its appropriateness for its recipient of the moment. The utterance actually spoken within the turn, and the sentence manifested through it, thus emerge not from the actions of the speaker alone, but rather as the product of a process of interaction in which the recipient is a very active co-participant. In other work Charles Goodwin has investigated the interactive organization of gesture (1986b), displays of

forgetfulness (1987), and stories (1984, 1986a), showing for example how the telling of a story creates a multi-party field of action in which alternative types of participants are differentially positioned, each with their own tasks to perform, as they collaboratively constitute the telling as a social event.

The events that occur within a turn at talk are quite heterogeneous, encompassing a range of both vocal and nonvocal behavior, as well as a variety of different types of action. This poses the question of how such disparate phenomena can be studied as integrated, coherent systems of action. In this chapter, the Goodwins argue that investigating **the interactive organization of activity systems** and the **participation frameworks** they include is one way of doing this.¹ They focus their analysis on a specific activity: **assessments**. Activities provide context that guides the interpretation of events lodged within them, and indeed when collaboratively producing assessments different participants can calibrate their separate evaluations of events in their phenomenal world and intricately demonstrate how their minds are in tune with each other. However, while such interpretive issues are important, they do not provide a comprehensive picture of the social and cognitive phenomena relevant to the organization of activities. While using activities as interpretive resources participants are simultaneously faced with the task of building these very same activities. This process is accomplished through a complex deployment of inference, action, and behavior which is situated within time and space. Within such a framework individual behavior is transformed into meaningful social action, and affect, action, and cognition can be analyzed as socially distributed phenomena. The analysis of **participation within activities** makes it possible to view actors as not simply embedded within context, but actively involved in the process of building context through intricate collaborative articulation of the events they are engaged in.

The phenomena investigated here are relevant to themes addressed in a number of other chapters in this volume, including the analysis of contextualization cues (Gumperz), the study of how larger social frameworks can be invoked within small strips of talk (Duranti, Hanks, Gaik, and Cicourel), the analysis of stories (Bauman, Lindstrom, and Basso), and the collaborative organization of participation (Kendon and Hanks).

Note

- 1 Indeed scholars in a number of different disciplines have independently advocated the central relevance of activities to the study of a range of interactive phenomena including the acquisition of language in its sociocultural matrix (Ochs 1988: 14–17), the analysis of discourse (Levinson 1979), the study of language acquisition and learning processes from a Vygotskian perspective (Wertsch 1981, 1985), and the analysis of cognition as a situated process (Lave 1988). Within the field of face-to-face interaction, Goffman (1961: 96) proposed that a basic unit of study should be the "situated activity system": a "somewhat closed, self-compensating, self-terminating circuit of interdependent actions." Such a framework has close affinity with Hymes's (1972) sociolinguistic notion of

"speech event," an interactive unit above the level of speech act "which is to the analysis of verbal interaction what the sentence is to grammar" (Gumperz 1972: 17). Both Goffman and Hymes formulate a unit of analysis which emphasizes the interactive meshing of the actions of separate participants into joint social projects. Participation frameworks have been the topic of recent study by Goffman 1981; C. Goodwin 1981, 1984; C. Goodwin and M. H. Goodwin (1990), M. H. Goodwin (1980b, 1990a), Hanks (1990), Heath (1986), Kendon (1990, this volume), and Levinson (1987).

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Assessments and the construction of context

This chapter will investigate some of the ways in which context is attended to and constituted as a dynamic phenomenon within the turn at talk in conversation. Two processes that occur within the turn will be investigated:

- (1) **The activity of performing assessments or evaluations of events being discussed within talk**

This process is relevant to the issue of how context is organized within the turn in a number of different ways. For example, examining it will enable us to look at how participants attend to the emerging structure of the stream of speech as both context to their actions and a resource for the achievement of coordinated action within the turn, and to investigate coherent social activity systems that provide participants with resources for displaying to each other a congruent view of the events they encounter in their phenomenal world. We will thus be able to study how both social organization and shared understanding can be negotiated and accomplished within the boundaries of the turn at talk.

(2) **Instigating**

A process situated within a gossip-dispute activity in which one girl tells another that a third was talking about her behind her back. Examination of the talk used to build this activity will enable us to investigate how assessments and evaluations can be used to build structures within the turn that both attend to and help shape activities that extend far beyond it.

The present chapter is able to focus on specific activities within the turn at talk in large part because of other research which has provided extensive analysis of how context is constituted in larger processes of interaction that surround the turn. Of particular importance are Goffman's work on the organization of talk in interaction (see for example Goffman 1953, 1964, 1974, 1981), Kendon's analysis of the role played by body behavior and spatial organization in framing encounters in which talk occurs (for an excellent review of much of this research see Kendon 1990), and work of anthropological linguists such as Gumperz (1982) on such phenomena as contextualization cues. The work that is most relevant to the issues being investigated in the present study is the research initiated by Harvey Sacks and his colleagues into the sequential organization of conversation (see for example Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Jefferson 1973; Pomerantz 1978; Sacks 1963; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 1968, 1986b). Indeed, this research contrasts with other approaches to discourse (speech act theory for example) in its sustained effort to investigate how participants utilize context, and in particular sequential organization, to both understand and produce the talk they are engaged in. Thus Schegloff (1988: 61) argues that

What a rudimentary speech act theoretic analysis misses, and I suspect a sophisticated one will miss as well, is that parties to real conversations are always talking in some sequential context. I refer here not to social contexts like offices, classrooms or families, but sequential contexts formulated in terms of more or less proximately preceding talk and the real jobs of projecting further talk which utterances can do, for which they can be inspected by their recipients, an inspection to which speakers must therefore be reflexively attentive. Such prior and prospective contexts are inescapably implicated in the real life projects, however humble or exalted, which are being prosecuted through the talk. These real life projects, and the sequential infrastructure of talk-in-interaction, are involved in the production and analysis of talk by the parties in such intimate detail that we are only beginning to understand it. But it is clear that temporality and sequentiality are inescapable; utterances are in turns, and turns are parts of sequences; sequences and the projects done through them enter constitutively into utterances like the warp in a woven fabric.

Similarly Atkinson and Heritage (1984: 11) note that in examining conversation

the analyst is immediately confronted with an organization which is implemented on a turn-by-turn basis, and through which a context of publicly displayed and

continuously updated intersubjective understanding is systematically sustained. It is through this turn-by-turn character of talk that the participants display their understandings of the state of the talk for one another . . .

While much of this research has focused on how turns are sequenced to each other, C. Goodwin (1981), M. H. Goodwin (1980b), and Heath (1986) have demonstrated how such sequential organization is constitutive of the turn itself. This research constitutes the point of departure for the present study.

1 Data and transcription

We will investigate in some detail sequences of conversation recorded on audio- and videotape. The tapes are from a larger sample of data recorded in a range of natural settings. The data to be examined here are drawn from talk between two women at a July 4th block party, a phone call between two teenage girls, and a group of urban black children playing on the street in front of their homes.¹ Talk is transcribed using the Jefferson transcription system (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974: 731-3). The following are the features most relevant to the present analysis:

- **Boldface** indicates some form of emphasis, which may be signaled by changes in pitch and/or amplitude.
- A **left bracket** connecting talk on separate lines marks the point at which one speaker's talk overlaps the talk of another.
- A **right bracket** marks the place where the overlap ends.
- **Double slashes** provide an alternative method of marking overlap. When they are used the overlapping talk is not indented to the point of overlap.
- **Tildes** between words are used to mark rapid speech.
- **Colons** indicate that the sound just before the colon has been noticeably lengthened.
- A **dash** marks a sudden cut-off of the current sound.
- **Intonation**: punctuation symbols are used to mark intonation changes rather than as grammatical symbols:
 - A **period** marks a falling contour.
 - A **question mark** indicates a rising contour.
 - A **comma** indicates a falling-rising contour.
- **Numbers in parentheses** mark silences in seconds and tenths of seconds.
- A **series of "h"s preceded by an asterisk** marks an inbreath.
- **Italics in double parentheses** indicate material that is not part of the talk being transcribed, for example a comment by the transcriber if the talk was spoken in some special way.
- A **degree sign (°)** indicates that the talk following it is spoken with noticeably lowered volume.
- An **arrow** is used to mark specific lines of talk being discussed in the text.

- An **equals sign** is used to indicate "latching"; there is no interval between the end of a prior unit and the start of a next piece of talk.
- **Capitals** indicate increased volume.

2 Assessments

One activity that both speakers and recipients perform within the turn at talk is evaluating in some fashion persons and events being described within their talk. The following provide clear and simple examples of assessments performed by speakers in the midst of their talk.² In both cases speakers preface descriptive nouns with the word "beautiful" and thus evaluate the phenomena referenced by those nouns (i.e. in [1] Eileen assesses the "Irish Setter" she is talking about by describing it as "beautiful"):

- (1) Eileen: Paul en I got ta the first green,
(0.6)
→ An this beautiful, (0.2) Irish Setter.
(0.8)
Came tearin up on ta the first gree(h)n
an tried ta steal Pau(h)l's go(h)lf ball. *hh
- (2) Curt: This guy had, a beautiful, thirty two O:lds.

The word "assessment" can in fact be used to refer to a range of events that exist on analytically distinct levels of organization. In view of this some definitional issues arise:

- The term can be used to describe a structural unit that occurs at a specific place in the stream of speech, for example the adjective "beautiful." For clarity this sense of the term, which is used to designate a specific, segmental unit in the stream of speech, can be called an **assessment segment**. Though we will quickly see that not all assessment signals are limited to specific segmental phenomena in this way (and moreover that segments that precede the explicit assessment term, for example intensifiers, might also be part of the activity of assessment), being able to talk about an assessment occurring at a particular place offers great advantages for starting analysis of the larger activity of performing assessments – e.g. once an **assessment segment** is located an analyst can look in detail at the different types of action that not only co-occur with this event but also precede and follow it. Moreover, participants themselves attend to the distinctiveness and salience of such segmental phenomena; for example they distinguish an **assessment segment** from events that precede it, and treat it as a place for heightened mutual orientation and action (a phenomenon to be explored in detail later in this chapter).
- In addition to using phenomena that can be neatly segmented in the stream of speech, such as assessment adjectives, participants can also

display their involvement in an assessment through nonsegmental phenomena such as intonation, and also through recognizable nonvocal displays (M. H. Goodwin 1980b). Indeed it sometimes becomes quite difficult to precisely delimit the boundaries of an assessment.³ As a function of language (in the Prague sense of that word) rather than a specific act, the activity of assessment is not limited to word- or syntactic-level objects, but rather, like prosody in an utterance, runs over syntactic units. In this sense it acts much like intonation (which is indeed one principal resource for displaying evaluation)⁴ *vis-à-vis* segmental phonology.⁵ A display showing a party's involvement in an assessment can be called an **assessment signal**. **Assessment segments** constitute a particular subset of **assessment signals**. It is however quite relevant to distinguish **assessment segments** from the larger class of **assessment signals** since they have the special, and quite useful, property of being precisely delimited in the stream of speech.

- The term "assessment" can also be used to designate a particular type of speech act. This sense of the term differs from the first two in that emphasis is placed on an action being performed by an actor, rather than on the speech signal used to embody that action, or the particular place where it occurs in the stream of speech. An assessment in this sense of the term can be called an **assessment action**. Several issues relevant to the analysis of assessments on this level of organization can be briefly noted. First, while most analysis of speech acts has focused on actions embodied by complete sentences or turns, assessments constitute a type of speech act that can occur **in the midst of an utterance**. Subsequent analysis in this chapter will investigate some of the consequences of this. Second, a crucial feature of assessment actions is the way in which they involve an actor taking up a position toward the phenomena being assessed. For example, in assessing something as "beautiful" a party publicly commits him- or herself to a particular evaluation of what he or she has witnessed. By virtue of the public character of this display, others can judge the competence of the assessor to properly evaluate the events they encounter (such a process is clearly central to the interactive organization of culture), and assessors can be held responsible for the positions they state. Third, insofar as assessments make visible an agent evaluating an event in his or her phenomenal world, they display that agent's **experience** of the event, including his or her affective involvement in the referent being assessed. **Affect displays** are not only pervasive in the organization of assessments, but also quite central to their organization. Moreover, public structures such as this which display the experience of one participant provide resources for the interactive organization of **co-experience**, a process that can be accomplished and negotiated in fine detail within assessments.
- Assessment actions are produced by single individuals. However (as will be investigated in some detail in this chapter), assessments can be organized as an interactive activity that not only includes multiple participants, but also encompasses types of action that are not themselves assessments. This can be called an **assessment activity**. Within this activity

individuals not only produce **assessment actions** of their own but also monitor the assessment-relevant actions of others (M. H. Goodwin 1980b), and indeed dynamically modify their own behavior in terms of both what they see others are doing, and the recognizable structure of the emerging assessment activity itself (a topic to be explored in detail later in this chapter).

- (v) Finally the word **assessable** will be used to refer to the entity being evaluated by an assessment.

In subsequent analysis the context in which the word "assessment" is being used will usually indicate which of the several senses of the term noted above is relevant at that point. Therefore these distinctions will not be marked in the text unless necessary.

3 Assessments that precede assessables

What consequences does the fact that a speaker doesn't just describe something, but also does an assessment of it, have for how that talk is to be heard and dealt with by recipients? To start to investigate this issue we will look at example (1) in some detail. For completeness a full transcript of this sequence is given below. However, to make the presentation of the analysis as clear as possible, simplified extracts from this transcript will then be used to illustrate specific phenomena.

- (1) Paul: Tell y- Tell Debbie about the dog on the
 ((*smile intonation begins*)) golf course t'day.
 Eileen: °eh hnh, hnh ha has! ha!
 Paul: hih hih Heh Heh! *hh hh
 Eileen: *h Paul en I got ta the first green,
 (0.6)
 Eileen: *hh An this beautiful, ((*swallow*))
 Paul: Irish Setter. ((*reverently*))
 Eileen: Irish Setter
 Debbie: Ah:::,
 Eileen: Came tearin up on ta the first=
 Paul: °Oh it was beautiful
 Eileen: =gree(h)n an tried ta steal Pau(h)l's
 go(h)lf ball. *hh
 Paul: Eh hnh hnh.
 Eileen: *hheh! *hh

3.1 Using an assessment to secure recipient co-participation

Returning to the question of how a speaker's assessment might be consequential for her recipients' action, it can be noted that in (1) just after the noun phrase containing the assessment, one of Eileen's recipients, Debbie, responds to what has just been said with an elaborated "Ah:::"

- (1) Eileen: *hh An this beautiful, (0.2) Irish Setter.
 → Debbie: Ah:::,
 Eileen: Came tearin up on ta the first gree(h)n an tried ta steal
 Pau(h)l's go(h)lf ball. *hh

By placing an assessment in her talk, the speaker secures an immediate subsequent assessment from a recipient. Moreover, through the way in which she pronounces her "Ah:::" Debbie co-participates in the **evaluative loading** of Eileen's talk, and indeed matches the affect display contained in Eileen's assessment with a reciprocal affect display. The talk marked with the assessment is thus not treated simply as a description, but rather as something that can be responded to, and participated in, in a special way.

Further insight into what this might mean from an organizational point of view can be gained by examining the sequential structure of this talk in more detail. It can be noted that the recipient's action does not occur at the end of the speaker's current turn-constructural unit, the characteristic place for recipient response, but rather at a point where her current sentence has recognizably not reached completion. Structurally, the assessments of both the speaker and the recipient are placed in the **midst** of a turn-constructural unit.⁶

3.2 Differential treatment of talk as it emerges and when it reaches completion

The issue arises as to what relevance such sequential placement has for the organization of action within the turn. For example, does access to multiple places to operate on the same strip of talk provide participants with resources for the organization of their action that they would not otherwise have, and if so how do they make use of these resources? One way to investigate this issue is to look at how this talk is treated when it does eventually come to completion. Looking again at the data, it can be seen that at its completion Eileen's talk is not dealt with as an assessable but rather as something to be responded to with laughter. Moreover, such treatment of this talk was in fact projected for it before it began (arrows mark laughter in the preface, climax, and response sequences):

- (1) Paul: Tell y- Tell Debbie about the dog on the
 ((*smile intonation begins*)) golf course t'day.
 → Eileen: °eh hnh, hnh ha has! ha!
 → Paul: hih hih Heh Heh! *hh hh
 Eileen: *h Paul en I got ta the first green,
 (0.6)
 Eileen: *hh An this beautiful, (0.2) Irish Setter
 Debbie: Ah:::,
 Eileen: Came tearin up on ta the first gree(h)n
 → an tried ta steal Pau(h)l's go(h)lf ball. *hh

- Paul: Eh hnh hnh.
 → Eileen: *hheh! *hh

Components of this sentence are thus dealt with in one way as it emerges through time, while the sentence as a whole is treated in a different fashion when it reaches completion. Schegloff (1980) has argued that one systematic issue posed for recipients of extended sequences of talk is whether to operate on a current piece of talk in its own right or treat it as a preliminary to something else. Here we find the participants able to deal with a single piece of talk in both ways. By marking the description of the dog as an assessable, the speaker was able to extract the description from its embedded position within the story as a whole for independent treatment on its own terms. However, in that that description occurred at a point where the speaker's sentence was recognizably incomplete, the not-yet-actualized tying of this talk to relevant further talk is also an operative feature of its structure, with the effect that the larger sentence remains something to be returned to after the assessment activity has been brought to completion. Within this single utterance the participants are thus able to perform a range of different interactive activities, and deal with the talk that it contains in distinctive, separable ways.

3.3 Pre-positioned assessment adjectives as guides for hearers

Let us now examine in more detail the interactive organization of the noun phrase itself, and the way in which its components might be attended to as it emerges through time. It can be observed that within the noun phrase the speaker's assessment term occurs in a particular position relative to the object being assessed, i.e. it occurs before that object. Thus **by the time the object itself emerges the recipients have been alerted to hear it in a particular way**. The issue arises as to whether recipients do in fact track the emerging structure of a noun phrase on this level of detail. Is it the case that at the completion of the word "beautiful" a recipient will deal with the next words to be spoken in a different way than she would have before hearing this term? Features of these data not yet examined provide some evidence that indeed recipients do deal with the interactive import of emerging talk on this level of detail. Just after saying "beautiful", the speaker hesitates. Paul, the party who experienced with the teller the events being described, appears to interpret this hesitation as the beginning of a word search; just after it he provides the projected next item in the speaker's talk, the words "Irish setter," beginning an instant before the speaker herself says this. However, Paul does not simply speak these words; rather through his actions while speaking he makes visible an **alignment toward them** that is congruent with the assessment just made by the speaker. His talk is produced in a lowered "reverent" tone and while

speaking Paul performs a prototypical nonvocal assessment marker, a lateral headshake.⁷ Indeed this action is escalated during Debbie's receipt of the assessment when he closes his eyes and performs an even larger headshake over her "Ah:::",":

- (1) Eileen: An this beautiful, (0.2) Irish Setter.
 Paul: Irish Setter ((reverently))
 ((assessment head shakes))
 Debbie: Ah:::,
-

Thus in the very next moment after Eileen says "beautiful," Paul treats as an assessable what is about to be described in the still incomplete noun phrase. Moreover this marks a definite change in his alignment to that phenomenon. When, in asking Eileen to tell the story, he first made reference to "the dog," he did not orient himself to it as an assessable.

What happens here is also relevant to the analysis of affect as an interactive phenomenon. It was noted earlier that Debbie reciprocated the affect display made available by Eileen's assessment. We now find that Paul does this as well. Eileen's assessment thus leads to a sequence of action in which three separate parties co-participate in the experience offered by the assessment through an exchange of affect displays. These data also demonstrate how evaluative loading is not restricted to specific segments within the stream of speech, but instead can accrue to a sequence of rather heterogeneous phenomena (for example the noun "Irish Setter" and the nonlexical "Ah:::") and can even bridge actions performed by separate speakers (i.e. Paul's headshake encompasses not only the joint production of "Irish Setter" but also Debbie's subsequent "Ah:::").⁸ In brief, while on the one hand assessments constitute a mode of interaction that can occur within utterances, indeed within subcomponents of utterances, on the other hand they also provide an example of an activity structure that can seamlessly span multiple utterances, and even utterances by different speakers.

Sequence (3) provides further information about how the activity of assessing what is being said might provide organization for the interaction

of participants within relevant descriptive units, such as the utterance manifestations of noun phrases. Here, even though the original description of the ice cream is responded to as an assessable (lines 1 and 2), when the speaker, after describing the machine used to make it, returns to the ice cream itself in line 8, the recipient does not display any heightened alignment to it. The speaker then interrupts the noun phrase in progress before it has reached a recognizable completion and redoes it, only this time placing the word "homemade" before the type of ice cream. Just after this word, over the second production of "peach," the recipient begins to treat the talk in progress as an assessable:

- (3) 1 Debbie: Oh we had homemade ice cream today.
 2 Eileen: Ah:::
 3 Debbie: They had big- (0.4) We- I don'
 4 know what they're like. =I never saw 'em
 5 before. But you put ice and salt
 6 around them? =And there's a little can'
 7 in the middle and you just put- We had
 8 pea:ch? Homemade peach, en strawberry.
 9 Eileen: ↑ Ahoh:,

((Eileen begins
 assessment headshake))

The second version of "peach" (line 8) is treated by the recipient in a way that the first wasn't, and this change in alignment appears to be in response to the details of the way in which the speaker organizes her emerging description. First, by interrupting that talk before it has reached a point of recognizable completion, the speaker shows the recipient that for some reason it is no longer appropriate for that talk to continue moving towards completion. What the speaker does next, recycle "pea:ch?:" as "**H**omemade Peach," in part by virtue of its status as a repair of the talk just marked as flawed, provides some information about what she found to be problematic with the earlier talk. Insofar as the second version differs from the first primarily through the addition of the word "homemade," that term is marked as in some sense essential for proper understanding of the description in progress. However, her recipient has already been told in line 1 that the ice cream was homemade. Thus the speaker is not telling her recipient something new but instead informing her that something that she already knows has not yet been taken proper account of. By taking up the same alignment to this new version of the description that she gave to the first production in "homemade," the speaker attends to the repair as having precisely this import.

In brief it would appear that the problem being remedied with the repair lies not so much in the talk itself as in the way in which the recipient is

visibly dealing with it. Moreover, the speaker is able not only to see this problem but to initiate action leading to a remedy of it while the description itself is still in progress. Such events enable us to see in greater detail some of the ways in which concurrent operations on talk are sustained and shown to be relevant through active processes of interaction between speaker and recipient as the talk is being spoken.

4 Post-positioned assessments

In the data so far examined the assessment term and the phenomenon being assessed have been packaged together within a single unit, for example a single noun phrase. It is, however, possible to perform these activities separately. For example, in (4), "asparagus pie" is introduced in a first sentence and then it is assessed in a second:⁹

- (4) Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie
 it wz s::so: goo:d.

Here the assessment occurs after the assessable has been made available¹⁰ and is the only activity done in the speaker's second sentence. The ability to perform assessments in this fashion is useful to participants in a number of different ways. For example, with such a structure participants are able to assess phenomena that would not fit neatly within a single unit. In (5), the speaker has provided an extended description of a movie she has seen:

- (5) Hyla: A:n then they go t' this country club fer a party
 en the gu:y, *hh u::m. (0.2)
 en they kick him out becuz they find out eez Jewish,
 → *hh an it's j's r:rilly s:::sa::d,

How are actions such as these perceived by their recipients? What consequences does the way in which a speaker's action is built have for a recipient's participation in it?

4.1 Post-positioned assessments as techniques for displaying closure

A first observation that can be made about such post-positioned assessments is that by moving to the assessment the speaker shows that though her talk is continuing, a marked structural change has occurred in it. Looking again at (5), it can be observed that when the speaker begins the assessment she is no longer describing events (here incidents in the movie), but instead commenting on the description already given:

- (5) Hyla: Jewi:sh, *hh an it;s=
 → Nancy: =j's r:rily s::s a : : d,
 Hyla: =En ao I mean it jist (.) a f:fantastic
 moo-oh en then the one thet's bigotted,
 *hhh she's married tih this guy who's,

Such a shift from **description to assessment of described events** in fact constitutes one of the characteristic ways that speakers begin to exit from a story. Here Hyla does not end her story but instead begins to tell Nancy more about what happened in the movie. However, the way in which she resumes the telling in fact supports the possibility that participants do attend to assessments as marking a move toward closure. After Nancy produces her own assessment, Hyla does not, as she had after earlier continuers and brief assessments, produce a next event in the story. Instead she follows the recipient's assessment with another one of her own. Hyla then interrupts this assessment before it reaches completion and marks her return to the description of the movie with a misplacement marker, "oh."¹¹ Thus the resumption of the telling is shown to be a misplaced activity, rather than one that would follow unproblematically from the assessment activity then being engaged in.

5 Performing an assessment as a structured interactive activity

Looking now at the structure of the sentences used to construct post-positioned assessments in (4) and (5), it can be noted that despite differences in the words used a similar format is found in both assessments:

- (4) It wz s::so: goo:d.
 (5) an it's r:rily s::sa::d,
 [it] + [copula] + [adverbial intensifier] + [assessment term]

A first observation that can be made about this format is that it seems to reflect a division of activity within the utterance, with the first part of the sentence being occupied with referencing the assessable, and the second, specifically the material after the verb, with the activity of assessment itself. Moreover, the way in which each utterance is spoken is consistent with such a possibility. In both cases the speech quality of the assessment term itself is heightened through noticeable lengthening of sounds within it. Such enhancement of the talk is absent from the first part of the utterance but begins to emerge at the beginning of the adverbial intensifier, which in both cases receives additional stress in addition to the lengthening of sounds within it. In brief, both the semantic organization of these sentences and the way in which they are spoken seem to reveal a movement toward heightened participation in the activity of assessing by the speaker as the sentence unfolds.

Looking at these data from a slightly different perspective, it can also be noted that the speaker's heightened participation in this activity of assessment begins before the assessment term itself, with the intensifier.¹² Earlier it was seen that as soon as the assessment adjective occurs its recipients could begin to treat the talk to follow as an assessment. This raises the possibility that by attending to the pre-positioned intensifier, recipients of sentences of the type now being examined might be able to align themselves to the emerging talk as an assessment before the assessment term itself is actually produced. Indeed, when the responses made by the recipients of these utterances are examined, it is found that in both cases the recipient starts to produce an assessment of her own just as the intensifier comes to completion:

- (4) Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie
 it wz s : :so: goo:d.
 → Clacia: I love it.
 (5) Hyla: an it's j's r:rily s : :s a : : d,
 → Nancy: Guy that sounds so goo ::d?

Thus at the point where the speaker actually produces her assessment term, her recipient is simultaneously providing her own assessment of the same material. Such activity has a number of consequences for the present analysis. First, it provides a clear demonstration of how the production of an assessment can constitute a social activity involving the collaborative action of multiple participants. Second, the placement of the recipient's action supports the possibility that she is tracking in rather fine detail both the emerging structure of the speaker's sentence and the activity that the speaker is progressively entering. It would thus appear that subcomponents of a speaker's utterance, such as the intensifier, as well as the details of its sound production, contribute to the interactive organization of the actions of speaker and hearer in the activity they are jointly engaged in. In this sense the emerging structure of the speaker's utterance, and the details of the way in which it is spoken, constitute one aspect of the context that recipients are actively attending to within the turn as consequential for the organization of their own actions. Moreover, that context, and the utterance itself, are intrinsically dynamic, and are attended to as such by participants. By making projections about the future course of an utterance, these recipients demonstrate that they are not dealing with it as a monolithic whole. Instead they treat the utterance as a process that emerges through time, and that carries with it an expanding horizon of projective possibilities that are relevant to how the recipient can respond to the utterance while it is still being spoken.¹³

Listening to talk thus involves constructing a continuously changing horizon of projected possibilities for what the unfolding talk might

become. Moreover, making such projections is not simply an individual cognitive process, but a relevant component of the visible actions that a recipient is engaged in. In these data recipients project what is about to happen in order to be able to perform an appropriate reciprocal action at a particular moment in time. If recipients were not engaged in such projection, coordinated action of the type found in these data might not be possible. In brief, within interactive activities, cognitive operations can be analyzed as processes embedded within particular modes of social practice.

5.1 Extended overlap

The assessments produced by recipients in these data take the form of complete substantial sentences in their own right. In that they are placed not after a speaker's action has come to completion but *while* a speaker's assessment is also in progress, a state of extended simultaneous talk by different participants results (i.e. in length and structure something more than overlap of ongoing talk by continuers or brief assessment tokens such as "oh wow"). This is not, however, treated as a situation requiring a remedy;¹⁴ for example, neither party's talk contains restarts, hitches, or other perturbations, or indeed any displays that problems exist with the current state of talk. Moreover, if the analysis developed above is correct, this simultaneous talk is not the result of an accidental failure to achieve proper coordination but rather something that the participants have systematically achieved through close attention to the emerging structure of the talk and activity in progress. What happens here thus provides further support for the possibility that assessments do indeed constitute ways of analyzing and operating on talk that can be performed while that talk is still in progress. Indeed it appears that constraints which elsewhere exert quite powerful influence on the sequential organization of talk, for example an orientation to one, but only one, party speaking at a time, can be relaxed for assessments. It would thus appear that in a number of different ways the activity of assessing something provides participants with resources for performing concurrent operations on talk that has not yet come to completion.

5.2 Differential access as an organizing feature of concurrent assessments

Though the talk of both the speaker and the recipient in (4) and (5) is assessing the same material, each party in fact says rather different things. Is such variation simply haphazard or does it reveal further aspects of the phenomena the participants are orienting themselves to as relevant for the organization of their activity? Looking more carefully at precisely what is said, it can be noted that in its details the talk of each party attends to the

access each has to the phenomena being assessed. For example, Hyla with her initial "it's" makes reference to an actual movie she has seen, and she assesses it in unequivocal terms. Nancy, however, by saying "that sounds so: goo::d?" attends to what she is assessing as being available only through Hyla's current description of it. Similarly in (4), Dianne, who depicts herself as having directly experienced in the past the pie she is now describing, makes reference to that specific pie. However, Clacia, by putting her assessment in the present tense, deals not with the specifics of that particular pie, but rather with it as a class of phenomena that the pie currently being described instances. A moment later, after Dianne has described the pie in more detail, Clacia says "Oh: *God* that'd be fantastic." Here, by constructing her assessment in conditional tense, she again makes visible in her talk the limited access¹⁵ she has to the phenomena she is assessing. Thus one of the reasons that the assessments of the separate participants differ from each other is that each has different access to and experience of the event being assessed. This feature provides organization for a range of phenomena implicated in the construction of each utterance, such as the choice of particular words and verb tenses. By constructing their assessments in this fashion participants also attend in detail to how they have been organized relative to each other by the telling in progress. For example, the different positions of describer and describee are shown to remain relevant even when both are assessing in a similar fashion the events which have been described. In brief, despite their apparent simplicity, assessments show a view of the assessable as something perceived by an actor who both takes up a particular alignment to it and sees the assessable from a particular perspective, one that may be quite different from that of a co-participant who is simultaneously assessing the same event.

5.3 Making congruent understanding visible

Though the talk of the separate parties shows that each is viewing the assessable from a different perspective, in other ways the assessments produced by each seem to have an underlying similarity. For example, in (4) both the speaker and the recipient assess asparagus pie positively. Thus with their assessments the participants are able to display to each other that they evaluate the phenomena being assessed in a similar way. Moreover, by virtue of the way in which each assessment takes into account the distinctive position of the party making it, these similar evaluations are shown to result from independent appraisals of the phenomena being assessed. In essence, with their assessments the participants show each other that, on this issue at least, their minds are together; they evaluate the phenomena being discussed in a similar way.

Assessments reveal not just neutral objects in the world, but an alignment taken up toward phenomena by a particular actor. Furthermore, this alignment can be of some moment in revealing such significant attributes of the actor as his or her taste and the way in which he or she evaluates the phenomena he or she perceives. It is therefore not surprising that displaying congruent understanding can be an issue of some importance to the participants.¹⁶ Further support for active attention to such an issue is found when a visual record of the actions of the participants in (4) is examined. As Clacia produces her assessment she nods toward Dianne, as shown in the diagram in (4).

(4) Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie
it was s : : so { : goo:d.
Clacia: I love it.
 └─┬─┘ └─┬─┘
 ((nod nod))

With her nods, Clacia proposes that the talk she is producing, and the position taken up through that talk, is in agreement with Dianne's. Indeed, taken as a whole the actions she performs here provide a strong display of agreement. First, with the content of her utterance she states a view of the assessable that is compatible with Dianne's. Second, with her nods she marks that talk nonvocally as an **agreement**. Third, she performs this action not after hearing Dianne's assessment but at the very moment it is being spoken. It is of course true that the talk so far produced provides materials (for example the intensifier) that strongly suggest, and perhaps actually project, a favorable assessment. Nevertheless at the point where Clacia acts, Dianne has not officially stated a position. By placing her talk where she does, Clacia argues that her way of viewing the assessable is so attuned to Dianne's that she is prepared to both commit herself to a position and categorize that position as an agreement without actually hearing Dianne's.¹⁷ Goffman (1959: 87-8) has observed that

There seems to be a general feeling that most real and solid things in life are ones whose description individuals independently agree upon. We tend to feel that if two participants in an event decide to be as honest as they can in recounting it, then the stands they take will be acceptably similar even though they do not consult one another prior to their presentation.

In sum, with the content of her talk, nonvocal displays about it, and its sequential placement, Clacia argues strongly that her view of the assessable is congruent with Dianne's.

We are suggesting that recipients produce concurrent assessments by making projections about events which have not yet occurred. If this is indeed the case, then it would be expected that on some occasions the projections made by recipients would turn out to be inaccurate. Rather

than providing evidence against the position being argued in this chapter, such an event would constitute strong evidence that recipients are in fact engaged in the activity of anticipating future events on the basis of the limited information currently available to them. Example (6) provides an illustration of how a recipient's projection of an emerging assessment can be erroneous, with the effect that the concurrent appreciation being displayed by the recipient is quite inappropriate to what the speaker turns out to in fact be saying:

(6) 1 Emma: *hh I: MA:DE ME A DAHLING
2 DRESS tih WEAR dih the
3 DESERT. God I go_{to} the
4 p-purti-es:
5 Nancy: Didju ::h?
6 (0.2)
7 p-print it's almos'like s:ik
8 but it's euh*hh,h<
9 Nancy: [°Mm:, [°Mm]hm
10 (.)
11 Emma: u evry color' n it's rea:l tiny.=
12 Emma: =i_t's uh kinda psy₁che₁ delic but it's₁
13 Nancy: [°Ooo:.....
14 Emma: -tiny it, I mean ih-u-ih-it
15 Nancy: [°Mm: hm?
16 Emma:: u-Psychedelic isn the word
17 but ih has all the colors 'n
18 God I went'n got blue: sho:es
19 tih go w₁ it °hhhh₁ En yihknow-
20 Nancy: [°Ahhh:..:
21 Emma: =wz so [ho:t there we: w'r₁]=
22 → Nancy: [°A h : : : : :
23 Emma: jist in shorts=I didn' ev'n stay
24 fuh the dinner et theay uh we
25 w'r et the Indian Wo:rd.
26 (.)
27 Nancy: *t oh.:
28 Emma: [°hh]h En I wouldn' ev'n
29 stay fer the dinner it wz so
30 da:mn hot I seh gotta get
31 the heck outta here it wz
32 ji:s so uncomf₁er₁le,
33 Nancy: [°O h : : : : :

In the beginning of this sequence Emma describes a "DAHLING DRESS" that she has made and Nancy replies to her description with concurrent assessments in lines 5, 13 and 20. In lines 19 and 21 Emma starts to move toward a recognizable assessment, following "was" with the

intensifier "so." Right after this happens, Nancy in line 22 starts to co-participate in the assessment by producing an elaborated, appreciative "A h : : : : ." The positive affect displayed by Nancy is quite congruent with the favorable way that the dress has been described in the sequence until this point. However, it turns out that Emma is now moving her talk to a **negative** description of the weather on her trip, i.e. it "wz so ho:t there" that she couldn't wear the dress and didn't even stay for dinner.

By relying on cues of the type being analyzed in the present chapter, Nancy has attempted to align herself to an assessment before it is actually produced, but the talk has progressed in ways quite incompatible with her projection of it, with the effect that she is responding inappropriately to what Emma is saying. Such data provide a strong demonstration of how projecting what another is about to say – so as to concurrently co-participate in it – constitutes a contingent accomplishment. Fortunately the emerging structure of interaction provides resources for moving past and attempting to recover from such a *faux pas*, and in line 33 we find Nancy once again producing a concurrent assessment to Emma's description of the weather, only this time her response is quite appropriate.

Returning now to example (4), we find that Dianne also performs a number of relevant nonvocal actions. As she produces the assessment term she lowers her head into a nod while simultaneously lifting her brows into a marked eyebrow flash. These actions are preceded by movement of her head and upper body in a way that demonstrates heightened orientation toward the recipient over the intensifier, as shown in (4).

(4) Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie

		((lowers upper trunk))	((nod with eyebrow flash))
Dianne:	it was s : : so :		goo:d.
Clacia:		I love	it.
		((nod	nod))

Dianne's nonvocal behavior like her talk seems to display a progression toward heightened involvement in the assessment as her utterance unfolds.¹⁸ These actions become most intense over the assessment term itself and indeed at this point in the talk quite a range of both vocal and nonvocal action is occurring. The ensemble of things done over the assessment does not, however, seem a collection of separate actions, but rather integrated elements of a single interactive activity of assessment.

Moreover, the visible behavior of the speaker, as well as the unfolding structure of her talk and the recipient's participation in that talk, seem to demonstrate systematic movement toward this point through time. In essence one seems to find here an **organized activity** that participants recognize and systematically bring to a visible apex or climax.

5.4 Bringing assessment activity to a close

We will now look at some of the ways in which movement away from the apex of activity might be accomplished. One way to approach this issue is to ask "What can participants do next?" Some actions within conversation have the property of being nonrepeatable (see for example the analysis of summons-answer sequences in Schegloff 1968), i.e. once they have been validly performed they cannot be immediately redone. Assessments, however, are repeatable. Moreover, while some repeatable actions are used to operate progressively on new material, for example a series of questions in a medical interview, so that each instance of a similar action actually deals with separate phenomena, a participant can make continuing assessments of the same assessable. In (4), just after the assessment produced concurrently with Dianne's, Clacia repeats that assessment:

(4) Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie
it wz s:so: goo:d.
→ Clacia: I love it. °Yeah I love that.

However during this second assessment she acts quite differently than she had during the first. Thus the subsequent assessment is spoken with markedly lowered volume (this is indicated in the transcript by the degree sign before it). Moreover, while speaking Clacia actually withdraws from her co-participant, as shown in (4).

(4) Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie
it was s : : so : goo:d.
Clacia: I love it. °Yeah I love that.
↑
((Clacia starts to
withdraw gaze))

Thus, while the initial concurrent assessment was produced within a state of heightened orientation toward her co-participant and the talk in progress, this second assessment is done while Clacia is displaying diminished participation in the activity, and indeed seems to be withdrawing from it.

It is thus found that a **single assessment activity can encompass a range of different types of participation**. The sequencing of participation in these

data – collaborative orientation toward the emerging of the assessment, elaborated participation in it as it is actually produced, and finally a trailing off of involvement in it – is consistent with the possibility that what is occurring here are successive stages of a single natural activity that emerges, comes to a climax, and is then withdrawn from.

5.5 Assessments as resources for closing topics

Instead of just analyzing these different participation structures solely as successive stages of an unfolding activity, it is also useful to examine in more detail how the possibility of investing assessments with different kinds of participation might provide participants with resources for the organization of their activity. For example, assessments are one of the characteristic activities used to exit from larger sequential units in talk such as stories and topics. Indeed one frequently finds strings of assessments at such places. When one examines precisely how such assessments are spoken, it is found that frequently they are operating not only to exit from what was being talked about in the story, but that in addition the different participation possibilities provided by assessments are systematically being used to bring the heightened mutual orientation that such a focused activity has engendered to a close. A simple example is found shortly after the sequence analyzed in (4). In the intervening talk Dianne has described in greater detail the asparagus pie that Jeff made, as shown in (7).

(7) Dianne: En then jus' (cut-up) the broc- 'r
the asparagus coming

((withdraws gaze
from Clacia))
↓
out in spokes. = °It wz so good.

((assessment
headshakes))
↓

As Dianne moves from a description of the pie to an assessment of it, she noticeably reduces the volume of her talk while simultaneously withdrawing her gaze from Clacia. Thus she has not only moved into a different kind of talk (e.g. from description to assessment) but also changed the nature of her involvement in that talk and the structure of her orientation to her co-participant. Despite the apparent simplicity of what Dianne has done, the changes produced are in fact rather intricate. Thus some of what happens – the move from description to assessment, the reduction in volume and the withdrawal of gaze from recipient – seems to clearly indicate that she is proposing topic closure. However, even as she does this she is displaying heightened involvement in the substance of her talk. The

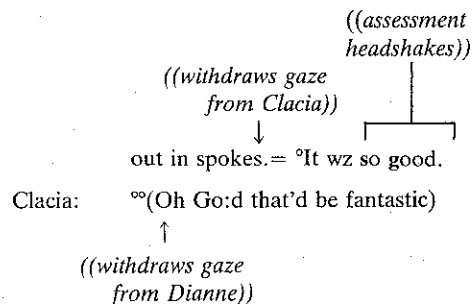
assessment itself, with its “savoring” voice quality (achieved in part through the same lowering of volume that might otherwise indicate move toward closure of the sequence), and the actions of her body during it, such as the assessment headshakes, all display elaborated appreciation of what she has been talking about. In essence the actions Dianne performs seem **both to foreshadow topic closure and to show heightened involvement in the topic.**

At first glance such a combination might appear inconsistent or even contradictory. However, to see this mixture of phenomena in such a way is to implicitly assume that topics run out only because participants lose interest in them. If a topic has in fact engrossed the attention of those talking, this would be a very poor way to end it. On the other hand, one would not want to talk about that topic forever. Thus one might want to look for ways of dealing with talk in progress that show heightened appreciation of it without however proposing that others need continue talking about it forever. Dianne's assessment has precisely these properties. She is able to show her co-participant (for example with her gaze withdrawal) that she is not awaiting further talk from her, while simultaneously appreciating what has just been said. Indeed one of the reasons why assessments might be used so extensively to close stories and topics is that they provide this **mixture of participation possibilities** for organizing the interaction then in progress. Such **activity-occupied withdrawal** is in fact one of the characteristic ways in which participants close down a range of activities within conversation (see C. Goodwin 1981: 106–8).

Some demonstration that the participants themselves might analyze an assessment such as Dianne's as including an ensemble of activity of the type just described is provided by the talk Clacia produces next. In its production features this talk responds to the various elements of Dianne's talk, while ratifying the change in participation status she has proposed. First, as Clacia begins to speak she too withdraws her gaze from her co-participant. Second, her talk is produced with not simply lowered volume but drastically reduced volume (indicated in the transcript in [7] below by the two degree signs before it.) The talk itself is, however, a marked upgrade of the assessment Dianne just made, as shown in (7).

The exchange of affect provided by the exchange of assessments gives the withdrawal the intimacy of a parting touch in which the character of the apparent **referent** of the assessment becomes far less important than the shared affect and co-experience the participants display to each other. In these data the speaker and her recipient, through the details of the ways in which they performed their assessments, have moved away from the substance of the topic in progress while simultaneously showing their ongoing appreciation of it. At the same time they have dismantled the facing formation that had been sustained through that talk. Insofar as no new topic is yet on the floor the state of disengagement which has thus

- (7) Dianne: En then jus' (cut-up) the broc- 'r
the asparagus coming



been collaboratively entered through this process of phased withdrawal¹⁹ is quite appropriate to their current actions.

Rather than looking at the talk, intonation, and body movement that occur in these data as different channels of behavior to be analyzed separately, it seems more profitable to conceptualize what is happening as a single **interactive activity** of assessment that the participants collaboratively recognize and bring to a visible climax or peak and then withdraw from. Being able to work together to come to such a peak is precisely why it is relevant for a recipient to be able to **project** what is about to happen next.

In brief, instead of taking any single element of this process – language, nonverbal behavior, participants, type of ‘speech action’ in progress, etc. – as the primary object of interest, it seems more appropriate to focus on an **interactive activity structure** which the participants collaboratively accomplish by deploying as resources talk, intonation, body movement, etc.

Several features of such an activity structure deserve further comment. First, in a manner quite consistent with Garfinkel’s analysis of the “documentary method of interpretation” (Garfinkel 1967: 78; see also Heritage 1984a: 84–97), participants use their ability to recognize an underlying pattern – the activity of assessment – as a resource for the further accomplishment of that very same activity. Thus a recipient sees the intensifier as evidence for a larger pattern that is not yet complete (an assessment utterance), and on the basis of such analysis produces behavior (her own concurrent assessment) that further elaborates and accomplishes the guessed-at activity.

Second, the recipient’s behavior provides visible evidence for how she has analyzed the talk and other events in progress. Such analysis is not, however, neutral – for example, simple recognition of some “intention” that a speaker has; it is rather an aspect of embedded praxis, a way of

helping to accomplish the very same activity that is being analyzed. Moreover, this analysis encompasses not only what a speaker has already done but also what is about to happen. By virtue of the way it is embedded within an ongoing sequence of interaction, the process of analysis that a recipient is engaged in has prospective as well as retrospective components.

Third, time is an integral feature of the organization of an activity; the activity emerges and is shaped through a dynamic process of interaction. Indeed, one of the strong contributions that study of human interaction can make to general social theory is the way in which it permits, and indeed requires, the analysis of social organization as a dynamic process.

Fourth, an activity knits an array of heterogeneous phenomena – syntactic position, intonation, body movement, displays of agreement, differential access to a world beyond the activity, etc. – into a coherent course of collaborative action. By looking at how strips of talk are embedded within activities, it becomes possible to see how diverse phenomena within the utterance – the placement of intensifiers, changes in intonation and volume, etc. – are attended to by participants in a way that is relevant to the tasks at hand. The activity itself, and the articulation of the interaction through which it is accomplished, constitute a self-explicating system of meaning and relevance. This is not surprising. In order to achieve coordinated action participants must display to each other the intelligibility of the events they are engaged in, including what activities are in progress and what they expect to happen next (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984a; Kendon 1990, this volume).

The data examined here have enabled us to investigate a range of issues relevant to how assessments are organized as an activity within the turn at talk. One of the very interesting things about assessments is the way in which they integrate a range of phenomena occurring within the turn that are frequently studied quite separately. Insofar as assessments are achieved through the collaborative action of multiple participants, they provide an elementary example of social organization within the boundaries of the turn. At the same time they constitute a key locus for the display and achievement of congruent understanding, and thus are quite relevant to the study of cognition as a practical, everyday activity. In addition they provide an example of how affect and the display of emotion are organized as interactive phenomena. In accomplishing this activity participants may pay close attention to what other participants are doing, the details of what is happening in the stream of speech, and the recognizable structure of the activity itself. The study of assessments thus permits analysis in an integrated fashion of a range of phenomena relevant to the organization of language, culture, cognition, and emotion in the midst of actual interaction.

6 Invoking larger activities within the turn

Analysis has so far focused on the organization of activities that emerge, run their course, and terminate within the boundaries of the turn itself. However, events within the turn are both informed by, and consequential for, larger activities that extend far beyond its scope. We will now briefly investigate some aspects of this process by focusing on events that occur within a gossip-dispute activity called "he-said-she-said." The exchanges that will be examined are from the talk of a group of urban black pre-adolescent girls who were recorded as they played with each other on the street in front of their houses.

One of the speech activities that the girls engage in is a gossip-dispute that they call **he-said-she-said**. In the confrontation stage of this activity (analyzed in more detail in M. H. Goodwin 1980a, 1990), one girl uses a highly structured accusation statement to charge another with having talked about her behind her back. Insofar as these disputes center on the offense of talking about someone in their absence, the offended party is not present when the offense is committed. They must therefore learn about it from some third party.

The third party, though not a direct participant in the confrontation, in fact occupies a crucial position in the structure of this activity. By going to someone and telling them that someone else has been talking about them, such a third party can promote a confrontation. Indeed the girls themselves sometimes call this activity **instigating**. The activity of reporting to a recipient what was said about her in her absence thus constitutes an important preliminary stage to confrontation. It is the point where the absent party's talk becomes socially recognizable as an actionable offense.

Informing the offended party of what was done to her is typically accomplished through use of structured descriptions of past events or "stories" (Sacks 1974). We will now investigate one instigating session, focusing on the way in which assessments and evaluations are used both to formulate the character of relevant participants and to elicit a public commitment to initiate a confrontation in the future. These data will give us an opportunity both to look at how a framework of events extending well beyond a particular turn can be constituted within it and to investigate phenomena such as the negotiation of congruent understanding and shared assessments within more complex, multi-party participation frameworks.²⁰

6.1 Instigating

The talk to be examined occurred when three girls, Pam, Florence, and Maria, were sitting on Maria's steps. After Pam alludes to something involving Maria and Terry (who is absent), Maria asks "Isn't Terry mad at

me or s:omp'm." Since the data to be examined are quite complex, we will briefly outline what happens in the sequence before presenting the data.

After Maria raises the question of Terry being mad at her Florence says that Terry is always mad at somebody. Pam and Maria then collaboratively recall a series of related incidents involving Terry's treatment of Maria that occurred at school. Pam tells Maria that Terry has said that she was "acting stupid," and they both recall incidents in which Terry refused to add Maria's name to a bathroom pass. Pam portrays herself as having acted to defend Maria in such encounters, for example snatching the bathroom pass from Terry. Eventually Maria says about Terry, "I'm a tell her about herself today." Throughout all of this Florence has been talking about Terry's character in more general terms, e.g. "Terry always say something. When you jump in her face she gonna deny it." The first sequence closes with Pam suggesting that Maria "should say it in front of her face."

A second sequence occurs 45 seconds later, after Maria has left. Pam now talks about things that Terry said about Florence ("Florence, Florence need to go somewhere") to which Florence replies "Well you tell her to come say it in front of my face. And I'll put her somewhere."

This is followed by considerable further talk between Pam and Florence about Terry which is not reproduced here.

This brief overview in no way captures the subtlety and intricacy of this talk. However, we hope that it will make the sequence itself more accessible to the reader.

(8) ((Pam (12), Florence (13), and Maria (12) are sitting on Maria's Steps.))

- 1 Pam: **How- how- h- um, uh h- h- how about me**
 2 **and Maria, *h and all them um, and**
 3 **Terry, *h and all them-**
 4 Maria: **Isn't Terry mad at me**
 5 **or s:omp' m,**
 6 **(0.4)**
 7 Pam: **F'on' kn/ /ow.**
 8 Flo: **Terry~always~mad~at somebody.**
 9 **I'on' care.**
 10 Maria: **Cuz- cuz cuz I wouldn't, cuz she**
 11 **ain't put my name on that paper.**
 12 Pam: **I know cuz, OH yeah. Oh yeah.**
 13 Flo: **An next she,**
 14 **(0.2)**
 15 Flo: **talk~bout~people.**
 16 Pam: **that- (0.8) if that girl wasn't**
 17 **there-You know that girl that always**
 18 **makes those funny jokes, 'h Sh'aid if**
 19 **that girl wasn't there you wouldn't be**
 20 **actin, (0.4) a:ll stupid like that.**
 21 **°Sh-**
 22 Maria: **But was I actin stupid w_ith them?**
 23 Pam: **Nope, no, =And**

- 24 she- and she said that you sai:d, that,
 25 "Ah: go tuh-" (0.5) somp' m like ^ltha:t.
 26 Maria: ^lNo I
 27 didn't.
 28 Pam: She's- an uh- somp'm like **that**. She's-
 29 Flo: Te_rrry always say somp'm.=When you=
 30 Pam: ^lShe-
 31 Flo: =**jump** in her **face** she gonna **deny** it.
 32 Pam: Yah:p Y₁ahp.=An she said, *h An-
 33 Maria: ^lRight on.
 34 Pam: and she said, hh that **you** wouldn't be
 35 **actin like that** aroun- around **people**.
 36 Maria: So: **she** wouldn' be actin like **that** wi'
 37 that **other** girl.=**She** the one picked **me**
 38 to **sit** wi'them.=*h She said ^l"Maria you
 39 Pam: ^lY:ahp.
 40 Maria: sit with her, *h and I'll sit with her,
 41 *h an Pam an- an Pam an-
 42 an an ^lSharon sit together."
 43 Flo: ^lSHE TELLIN Y' ALL WHERE TA SIT
 44 AT?
 45 (0.2)
 46 Pam: An so we sat together, An s- and s- and
 47 so Maria was ju:st s:ittin right
 48 there.-An the girl, an- an- the girl:
 49 next to her? *h and the girl kept on
 50 getting back up. *h Ask the teacher
 51 can she go t'the bathroom. An Maria
 52 say she don' wanna go t' the bathroom
 53 w'her. An m- And Maria w'just sittin
 54 up ther actin- actin:, ac- ac- actin
 55 sensible. An she up- and she up there
 56 talking bout, and she- I said, I s' d I
 57 s'd I s'd "This is how I'm- I'm gonna
 58 put Maria **na:me** down here." Cu- m- m-
 59 Cuz she had made a pa:ss you know. *h
 60 She had made a pa:ss.
 61 (0.2)
 62 Pam: ^lFor all us to go down to the bathroom.
 63 Flo: ^lY'all go down t'the bathroom?
 64 Pam: For ALLA- yeah- yeah. Yeah. For u:m, (0.4)
 65 for- for alla us- t'go to the
 66 bathroom.= I s'd- I s'd "**How: co:me** you
 67 ain't put Maria name down here. *h So
 68 she said, she said "That other girl
 69 called 'er so, she no:t wi:th u:s, so,"
 70 That's what she said too. (0.2) So I
 71 said, s- so I snatched the paper

- 72 wi'her. I said wh- when we were playin
 73 wi'that paper?
 74 Maria: I'm a I'm a **tell** her about herself
 75 toda_y. Well,
 76 Pam: ^lHuh? huh remember when we're
 77 snatching that ^lpaper.
 78 Flo: ^lAn she gonna tell you
 79 another story **anyway**. // (Are you gonna
 80 talk to her today?)
 81 Pam: But she ain't even put your **name** down
 82 there. I just put it **down** there. Me
 83 and Sharon put it down.= An I said, and
 84 she said "Gimme-that-paper.=I don't
 85 wanna have her name down here." I s- I
 86 s- I s- I said "She woulda allowed you
 87 name (if you star:ted)."
 88 (1.0)
 89 Maria: I said "Terry °how come you ain't put my
 90 name."
 91 Flo: Here go P₁am, "uh uh uh well-"
 92 Maria: ^l"You put that other girl (name down)
 93 didn't you. I thought **you** was gonna
 94 have- owl: a hall pass with that other
 95 girl." That's °what Terry said. I said
 96 (What's~her~problem.) "OO:r'mind me a-
 97 you old b:aidheaded Terry."
 98 Pam: I should say it in fronta her face.
 99 (0.8) Bal: head.
 100 Flo: Hey member when what we did th(h)e
 101 o(h)ther ti(h)me.
 ((The following occurs 45 seconds later, after Maria has gone inside.))
 102 Pam: She shouldn't be writin things, about
 103 me. (0.5) an so- An so- so she said
 104 "Florence, Florence need ta go
 105 somewhere."
 106 (1.0)
 107 Flo: Well you tell her to come say it in
 108 front of my fa:ce. (0.6) and I'll put
 109 **her** somewhere. (3.8) An Florence
 110 ain't got nuttin t'do with **what**.
 111 Pam: **Write-** um doin um, that- that thing.
 112 Flo: ^lWhat do y' **all** got
 113 ta do with it.
 114 Pam: Because because um, I don't know what
 115 we got to do with it. Bu,t she said-
 116 Flo: ^lWill she

- 117 don't know what *she* talkin' bout.
 118 Pam: But- but she- but we *di:d* have somp' m
 119 to do because we was *ma:d* at *her*.
 120 Because we didn't like her no more.
 121 (0.6) And *that's* why, (0.6) Somebody
 122 the one _{that use-}
 123 Flo: _{So, she got anything t'say she}
 124 come say it in front of my face. (1.0)
 125 I better not *see* Terry today. (2.5) I
 126 ain' n gonna say- I'm~a~say "Terry *what*
 127 *you say* about m.e." She gonna say "I ain't
 128 Pam: _{((whiny))(Nyang)}
 129 Flo: =say nuttin."

In this talk Pam tells both Maria and Florence about offensive actions that Terry has committed against them, and both Maria ("I'm a I'm a tell her about herself today," lines 74-5) and Florence ("Well you tell her to come say it in front of my face. (0.6) And I'll put her somewhere," lines 107-9) state that they will confront Terry. Such a process has a clear relevance to specific future activities, such as the initiation of a he-said-she-said confrontation. Indeed, when Maria later fails to confront Terry, others use her actions in the present exchange to talk about the way in which she had promised to tell Terry off but then did nothing.

- (9) Pam: Yeah and Maria all the time talking
 bout she was gonna tell whatshername off.
 And she ain't do it.

Alignments taken up in the midst of an exchange such as this can thus be interpreted as public commitments to undertake future action for which parties may be held responsible by others.

Assessments are central to the organization of this process. In her stories Pam uses evaluations to portray her own character, as well as that of her addressed recipient and the absent party who offended that recipient, in ways that are relevant to the activities currently in progress. Thus in lines 53-5. Maria is depicted as just "sittin up there actin actin:, ac- ac- actin sensible," while Terry in line 20 is reported to have said that Maria was "actin, (0.4) a:ll stupid like that." By portraying Maria in a positive fashion and Terry in a negative one, Pam makes implicit assertions about her own alignment, and indeed the processes of evaluation found in this sequence go beyond explicit assessment terms to include reports of **actions** displaying a party's alignment for or against different protagonists. For example, in lines 57-67 Pam describes herself as confronting Terry for not having included Maria's name on the bathroom pass.

Providing evaluation through action descriptions is quite consequential for the process of eliciting from a recipient a promise to confront the

offender in the future. On the one hand pejorative actions performed by the absent party can be interpreted as explicit offenses against a current recipient. On the other hand a speaker's description of her own actions in response to such offenses, i.e. confronting the offender, can provide a recipient with a guide for how she should act toward that party. Thus Maria's statement that she will confront Terry (lines 74-5) occurs right after Pam has described both how she confronted Terry in the past in defense of Maria, and a response to that action by Terry that included further attacks on Maria. Reports of actions in the past can thus lead to commitments to perform relevant answers to them in the future.

The narratives used to do instigating contain extensive reported speech (Vološinov 1973) as speakers animate (Goffman 1974: 516-44) the characters in their talk. One consequence of this is that a current participant, who was absent when the things said about her were reported to have been said, can now answer those charges. Thus after Pam in lines 23-5 cites Terry as having said that Maria said to Terry "'Ah: go tuh-' (0.5) somp'm like that," Maria replies with a denial to this charge "'No I didn't'" (see also lines 36-42, in which Maria counters charges purportedly made by Terry by animating her version of what Terry said in the past). Current participants are thus able to address actions attributed to absent parties at another time, and reconstitute the actions of such figures in the talk of the moment. The present encounter now encompasses a dialogue between participants and events in the present, and those from previous encounters, as a present participant answers charges made by someone who currently exists only as a cited figure in the talk of another speaker.

No simple reporting of past events is at issue here; rather the incidents being recounted from the past are being constituted and shaped within the interaction of the moment in terms of the interests and projects of current participants. Indeed the constitutive elements of this process are vividly illustrated by the way in which participants in an instigating session will not only cite past events but also project the events that will occur in future encounters. Thus in lines 125-9 Florence not only says what she will tell Terry when she confronts her, but also how Terry will answer her.²¹ We can thus see how participants within the talk of the moment can invoke and shape events from the past in ways that have import for future encounters. Crucial to this process is the way in which cited figures and actions are evaluated in the present. The actions of cited figures, and the responses of present participants to them, are part of the process through which coalitions and alliances are forged among the girls. The events that are occurring here thus have political consequences for the social organization of the girls' group as well.

It was noted earlier that in building their talk one of the things that participants pay close attention to is the differential access they have to the events being talked about. The present data permits further investigation

of this process. Initially Pam has two recipients, Maria and Florence. However, her talk does not involve each of them in the same way. Maria is one of the principal protagonists in Pam's stories but Florence never appears as a character. Moreover, the incidents Pam describes – offenses committed by Terry against Maria – have a relevance to the party being talked about that they do not have for others. Maria and Florence are thus implicated in the field of action created by the talk in very different ways, and indeed each attends to such positioning in the talk that they produce. Thus Maria addresses the particulars of the charges raised in Pam's talk, openly denying some (e.g. "No I didn't" in lines 26–7), inviting Pam to dispute Terry's negative assessments of her ("But was I actin stupid with them?" in line 22), providing her own version of the events under discussion ("She the one picked me to sit wi'them. =*h She said 'Maria you sit with her, *h and I'll sit with her, and Pam and Sharon sit together'," lines 37–42), etc. Florence, however, never deals with the particulars of what is being talked about, or threatens to confront Terry, but instead uses present tense to formulate Terry's negative character in general rather than specific terms. For example:

- "Terry~always~mad~at somebody." (line 8)
- "Terry always say somp'm. =When you-jump in her face she gonna deny it." (lines 29–31)
- "An she gonna tell you another story anyway." (lines 78–9)

Though Maria and Florence are both audience to the stories that Pam tells, their talk systematically differs. On the one hand Maria has access to the events being talked about that Florence lacks; she can, for example, answer Terry's charges with her own version of the incidents at issue. On the other hand these events have differential relevance to the current situation of each participant; while Maria's character has been called into question Florence's has not. Maria, unlike Florence, thus has both motivation and standing to answer the charges raised by Terry. From a slightly different perspective, the structures used by Terry provide a creative solution to the problem she faces of talking into the event that is currently on the floor, helping to constitute it in the talk of the moment, despite the fact that this event does not involve her in the way that it does the others present. In brief, the talk of the moment creates a field of relevance that implicates those present in a variety of different ways, and this has consequences for the detailed organization of the action that each party produces.

A short time later Maria leaves and Pam changes the structure of her stories so that Florence (rather than Maria) becomes the character that Terry is saying things about (e.g. "And so she said 'Florence, Florence need to go somewhere.'" lines 103–5). At this point, instead of talking about Terry's character in general terms, Florence responds in the way that

Maria had earlier, for example threatening to confront Terry (e.g. lines 107–9, lines 123–9). Such events shed light on a number of different aspects of the ties between talk and context. First they provide some demonstration of how changes in recipients can lead to related changes in the character structure of the narrative events in progress at the moment. Second, as characters change, the responses of recipients located (or not located) as characters also change. Recipients are not simply listening to the talk but dealing with it in terms of how they are positioned by it. Finally, in these data the incidents being described, the characters involved in those incidents, and the responses that recipients make, all have implications for events beyond the current exchange. The internal organization of the story can elicit particular types of responses from current recipients (e.g. statements that they will confront the party who talked about them). On the one hand such a process of instigating can lead to a confrontation. On the other hand, if someone who has said that she will confront the party who offended her does not do so, she can be held accountable for failing to perform that move. Though this larger activity extends beyond the immediate encounter, it is shaped, constituted, and negotiated within the current talk.

7 Conclusion

Assessments provide an example of a small activity system that can emerge, develop, and die within the boundaries of a single turn, while also having the potential to extend over multiple turns, and to bound units considerably larger than the turn. Assessments also provide participants with resources for displaying evaluations of events and people in ways that are relevant to larger projects that they are engaged in. Of crucial importance to the present chapter is the way in which this activity provides participants with resources for both accomplishing social organization within the turn, and negotiating and displaying congruent understanding of the events they are dealing with.

The activity of performing an assessment is intrinsically social in that it can provide for the collaborative, but differentiated, participation of multiple actors. This has a number of consequences. First it provides further demonstration of how the turn, and events occurring within it, are intrinsically interactive (C. Goodwin 1981). Second, the presence of such coordinated action poses the question of how participants are able to accomplish it. Attempting to answer that question has enabled us to look in some detail at phenomena that participants are not only attending to, but actively using as a constitutive feature of the events they are engaged in within the turn. One aspect of what participants orient themselves to in performing assessments is the unfolding properties of the activity itself. As a coherent activity, assessments have a recognizable structure, including

(1) a peak of involvement that is preceded by (2) visible precursors of that peak that participants can utilize to coordinate their arrival at the peak, and (3) procedures for withdrawing from this state of heightened mutual involvement. The presence of such an activity structure has consequences for the way in which participants deal with the talk that is occurring within the turn. In order to co-participate in an appropriate fashion at an appropriate moment, recipients track in fine detail the unfolding structure of the speaker's utterance, paying close attention to not only the projective possibilities made available by its emerging syntactic structure (e.g. the type of unit that is **about** to occur), but also the precise way in which it is spoken (e.g. lengthening of sounds within words and intonation changes). The detailed organization of the talk occurring within a turn thus constitutes a most important aspect of the context that participants are attending to, both to make sense out of what is happening at the moment, and as a resource for the organization of their subsequent action. The study of activities such as assessments thus provides one way of analyzing talk and context as dynamic, interrelated phenomena.

From a slightly different perspective the activity of performing assessments constitutes one of the key places where participants negotiate and display to each other a congruent view of the events that they encounter in their phenomenal world. It is thus a central locus for the study of the "shared understandings" that lie at the heart of the anthropological analysis of culture.²² Indeed it permits the analysis of such shared understandings on two very different levels: (1) the procedures participants use to coordinate their perspectives with each other; (2) the products of those procedures, i.e. particular agreements (or disagreements) about how specific events should be interpreted and evaluated. In the past many ethnographies have focused largely on the second of these levels (i.e. "the people of X culture believe Y"). However, particular interpretations of events in the world may be far less important than the structures used to accomplish such congruent interpretations as a social activity in the first place. Paying close attention to what participants actually say, and focusing analysis on the underlying structures and procedures they employ to accomplish the events they are engaged in, is quite consistent with Goodenough's (1965) call for methods of analyzing culture that increase the rigor of ethnographic description.

Finally, it is interesting to speculate about what import the phenomena being examined here might have for broader issues. We will therefore briefly consider how the interactive organization of assessment activity might be relevant to the study of the way in which language and culture are acquired.

Assessments provide for the possibility of collaborative participation in an emerging utterance. Moreover, someone can display appropriate

participation without producing a complete syntactic sentence. Recipients' concurrent assessments frequently consist of sounds such as "mhm::" whose main function seems to be the carrying of an appropriate intonation contour, which can in fact be both quite elaborated and shaped in fine detail to fit the utterance it is responding to (C. Goodwin 1986). Even very young children are capable of producing such intonation contours and of tying them to the intonation contours of the speech being directed to them. For example, the Nova film *Benjamin* contains a sequence in which a mother swings a two-month-old child in her arms while counting "one two three:::" Immediately after the mother stops speaking the child responds with a cry that replicates the distinctive intonation pattern found in the mother's "three:::" More generally, Keenan (1983) has noted the importance of children matching the sounds of others in language development.

Assessments provide an opportunity for a child to produce such behavior in a rich linguistic environment that is both socially organized and highly structured. The way in which the behavior of the child in this activity is tied in detail to the behavior of others creates a framework within which the child's behavior can be guided through ongoing feedback as the utterance emerges. Moreover, as analysis in this chapter has demonstrated, producing concurrent assessments at appropriate moments requires that one pay close attention to emerging structure in the stream of speech (and again some of this structure, such as intonation patterns and the lengthening of sounds, can be recognized even before the child can understand the syntactic and semantic structure of the sentence). The child is thus placed in a situation where first, noting relevant distinctions in the stream of speech is consequential for its own behavior, and second, the child's developing perception can be guided by feedback from "experts" who are participating on a moment-by-moment basis in the very same activity structure that encompasses the child. Furthermore, the possibilities for creative learning within the structure provided by assessments are not restricted to the infant. As analysis in this chapter of phenomena such as congruent understanding demonstrates, producing assessments poses the task of coordinating one's perception and evaluation of the phenomena one encounters with that of co-participants throughout life. In addition, as the girls' instigating demonstrated, this basic process can be turned to the service of other social projects, such as forging coalitions and alliances. Vygotsky and his followers have stressed the importance of both social phenomena and activity structures in the development of the child (see for example Wertsch 1981, 1985a, 1985b). Though they use the term "activity" in a more technical sense than we are using it here, structures of the type being analyzed here seem quite relevant to the issues they raise about frameworks embedded in practical activities that make possible the social and linguistic development of the child. The activity structure provided by

assessments might thus constitute a fruitful locus for investigating the development of language and culture within a framework of dynamic social action.

In brief, despite their apparent simplicity, assessments provide an arena within which language structure, cognition, affect, and social coordination can be investigated in fine detail as integrated components of a single process. Because of this they have a clear relevance to larger issues posed in the analysis of language, culture, and social organization.

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Notes

- 1 For more detailed analysis of the data and the means used to obtain it see C. Goodwin (1981) and M. H. Goodwin (1990).
- 2 For other relevant analysis of how assessments are organized within conversation see C. Goodwin (1986), M. H. Goodwin (1980b), C. Goodwin and M. H. Goodwin (1987) and Pomerantz (1978, 1984).
- 3 Frequently the left boundary of an assessment is especially difficult to delimit precisely. Later in this chapter we will investigate how participants interpret the intensifiers, etc., that precede assessment segments as the beginning of involvement in the activity of assessment. In other work we are currently investigating how prior talk can "seed" a subsequent assessment by foreshadowing an evaluation that is about to occur.
- 4 With respect to the close ties between evaluation and intonation, note that Pike, in his seminal study of English intonation (Pike 1945), argued that the principal function of intonation was to show the attitude of the speaker toward what he or she was saying. While such a view of the function of intonation is clearly inadequate as a general analysis of the work that intonation does, it does capture and highlight the way in which intonation can tie together phenomena being talked about with the speaker's alignment to, and experience of, those phenomena. Such analysis of the way in which intonation can display the speaker's evaluation of the talk being produced is most relevant to the structure and organization of assessment actions.
- 5 In his analysis of narrative, Labov (1972) classifies **evaluation** as one distinct element of narrative structure, but also notes that unlike other features of narrative which occur at specific places within the overall structure of a narrative (for example the coda occurs at the end), evaluation can pervade the

narrative. Such analysis supports the argument about the distribution of assessment signals that is being made here.

- 6 For more detailed analysis of how assessments contrast with continuers in terms of their precise placement relative to the talk of another see C. Goodwin (1986).
- 7 For more detailed analysis of the way in which such a headshake is used as an assessment marker, see M. H. Goodwin (1980b).
- 8 For other analysis of actions spanning multiple speakers see Ochs, Schieffelin, and Platt (1979).
- 9 Constructions such as this, in which an entity is introduced in a first structure, and then commented on in a second, have been the subject of extensive analysis from a number of different perspectives. Thus linguists have studied such structures both in terms of syntactic processes such as left dislocation (Gundel 1975, Ross 1967), and in terms of how topics, and comments on these topics, are organized with respect to the contrast between "given" and "new" information (Chafe 1976, Li and Thompson 1976). More recently students of discourse (Duranti and Ochs 1979; Ochs and Schieffelin 1983a, 1983b) have begun to investigate their pragmatic organization, focusing on phenomena such as how the "Referent + Proposition" structure can be used to organize and focus a recipient's attention, and the way in which such structures might be fruitfully investigated as **discourses** (i.e. sequences of communicative acts) rather than as single syntactically bound units (Ochs and Schieffelin 1983a). Such a pragmatic focus is quite consistent with the analysis developed here. It should however be noted that treating assessments as utterances whose primary function is to provide "new" information does not seem to be the most appropriate way to conceptualize what they are doing. Thus, as will be seen later in this chapter, in many cases the recipient collaborates in the assessment, operating on it even before the speaker has explicitly stated her position. Instead of simply marking new information, such a structure invokes a framework of heightened mutual focus on, and co-participation in, the talk containing the assessment. Though the current analysis emphasizes the organization of participation structures, rather than the transfer of information, it seems quite compatible with the emphasis in previous analysis on foregrounding the material in the comment or proposition. The present data thus provide an opportunity to expand the dimensions and frames of reference that have so far been employed to study structures of this type. On a more general level, we think that it is quite important that study of the functional organization of linguistic and discourse structure not be restricted to issues of information management, but also include the multifaceted activities and participation structures that are invoked through talk.
- 10 Where the assessment occurs in the stream of speech relative to the assessable is marked in the fine detail within these utterances. Thus in (1), in which the assessment preceded the assessable, the clause containing the assessment was introduced with "this" (i.e. "this beautiful Irish Setter") which established its upcoming referent as an available object for commentary, while in (4) the anaphoric term "it" presupposes the prior establishment of the referent as available within the discourse.
- 11 See Heritage (1984b) for more detailed analysis of how the particle "oh" functions within interaction.

- 12 The intensifier is clearly part of the **assessment activity** and it would be wrong to suggest that the assessment does not begin until the adjective explicitly states an evaluation. It is however quite useful to distinguish the intensifier from the assessment adjective in order to demonstrate how participants collaboratively work toward achieving heightened mutual focus over the assessment adjective. The distinctions made at the beginning of the chapter between **assessment segments** and **assessment activity** were drawn precisely to deal with situations such as this. The intensifier is an **assessment segment** in its own right, but one that can be clearly distinguished from the **assessment adjective** that follows it.
- 13 For other analyses of how the way in which recipient projections about the future course of a sentence are relevant to the organization of the recipient's interaction with the speaker see Jefferson (1973) and Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). For analysis of how deictic terms dynamically modify emerging context as an utterance unfolds see Hanks (1986).
- 14 For analysis of how participants can negotiate speakership within overlap see Jefferson (1973) and Schegloff (1987).
- 15 For other analyses of how the structure of talk displays the type of knowledge that a speaker has of the event being talked about see M. H. Goodwin (1980b) and Pomerantz (1980). For extensive analysis of how access is relevant to the organization of talk, and deictic systems in particular, see Hanks (1990, this volume).
- 16 For other analysis of displaying congruent understanding see C. Goodwin (1981: 114-16) and Jefferson (1983).
- 17 It may be noted that the placement of this strong agreement is almost the mirror image of one of the ways in which impending disagreement is displayed sequentially. Pomerantz (1984) describes how recipients prepared to disagree frequently delay a response to what has just been said.
- 18 In that the recipient's nods begin after the speaker's body displays heightened orientation toward her over the intensifier, one might be tempted to argue that the nods are solicited or at least triggered by the body movements the speaker has just made. However, it seems more accurate to say that the recipient is responding to the emerging activity of assessment, something visible in a range of different ways, e.g. the intensifier itself, its placement in the talk so far produced, the way in which it is articulated, the visible actions of the speaker's body relevant to it, etc. Arbitrarily segregating interactive events in terms of whether they are produced vocally or nonvocally seems neither helpful analytically nor to accurately reflect what the participants are doing.
- 19 For more extended analysis of the organization of engagement displays and entry into disengagement see C. Goodwin (1981: Ch. 3).
- 20 See M. H. Goodwin (1982) for more detailed analysis of instigating.
- 21 For more detailed analysis of how such "future stories" provide insight into the underlying cultural models being used by participants to construct events such as he-said-she-said confrontations see M. H. Goodwin (1982).
- 22 Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), with its emphasis on analysis of the procedures participants utilize to reflexively constitute and understand the events they are engaged in, has great relevance for the issues being dealt with here, and indeed the analysis of culture in general. For an interesting discussion of such issues, and of ethnomethodology in general, see Heritage (1984a).

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