

# TOWARDS A SOCIAL SCIENCE OF LANGUAGE

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VOLUME 2

## SOCIAL INTERACTION AND DISCOURSE STRUCTURES

Edited by

GREGORY R. GUY  
CRAWFORD FEAGIN  
DEBORAH SCHIFFRIN  
JOHN BAUGH

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### Byplay: Negotiating Evaluation in Storytelling\*

Marjorie Harness Goodwin  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Labov's early formulation of the importance of evaluation in narrative (1972: 366-375) stimulated the investigation of evaluation in storytelling by a wide range of scholars, including folklorists (Bauman 1975:290-234; Robinson 1981), linguists (Polanyi 1979), and anthropologists (Watson 1973). Labov argued that *evaluation*, the means by which the narrator indicates "the point of the narrative, its *raison d'être*: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at" was perhaps "the most important element in addition to the basic narrative clause" (Labov 1972:366). In this paper I want to explore the notion that evaluation is a critical component of a story's telling by not only investigating the procedures through which a narrator evaluates events she is recounting (cueing her recipients as to her alignment and affect towards these events), but also how recipients themselves may shape the evolving telling event by offering their own, sometimes competing, evaluations.

#### 1. Introduction

Much research on discourse deals largely with the actions of the **SPEAKER**. For example the main focus of traditional speech act theory has been the speaker's intentions and utterances. In traditional speech act theory if the hearer is considered at all it is in terms of speaker's projection about the hearer. Here I want to consider the possibility that the basic unit of analysis could instead be talk-invoked **PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS** (Goffman 1981:137) in which the

hearer is just as active a coparticipant as the speaker. The concept of participation framework includes the talk in progress, as well as alignment to it, of both speaker and hearer. I will explore a range of different kinds of RECIPIENT STRUCTURES, participation frameworks that provide recipients with various sorts of options for dealing with talk in progress, including possibilities for dealing with it that actively *oppose* the interpretive frameworks proposed by speaker. Recipients' renderings of talk can effectively shape the meaning of the speaker's talk and even its status as central or subordinate talk on the floor.

This paper examines the construction of performances of commentary on ongoing talk subordinate to a main storyline (which serves to delineate the principal conversational activity in progress), or what I'll call BYPLAY. Forms of "subordinate communication" which Goffman (1981:133-134) distinguishes include "byplay" (a form of subordinated communication of a subset of ratified participants who make little effort to conceal the ways in which they are dealing with the speaker's talk), "crossplay" (communication between ratified participants and bystanders across the boundaries of the dominant encounter), and "sideplay" (respectfully hushed words exchanged entirely among bystanders). Goffman's model of participation includes the notion of ratified participants who can be distinguished from "bystanders". At dinner all those around the table are potential ratified participants, though through gaze direction and body orientation a speaker may select certain individuals as principal addressed recipients, and recipients may choose to attend or disattend a speaker's talk in a variety of ways.

In discussing the organization of listener participation in conversation Goffman (1981:28-29) argues that participants who do not officially have the floor may interject their "evaluative expression of what they take to be occurring" through "asides, parenthetical remarks and even quips, all of whose point depends upon their not being given any apparent sequence space in the flow of events" (1981:29). In the course of a description or a storytelling, participants (those who are not principal speakers) may elect to deal with talk in progress in other than story-relevant ways. Rather than displaying appropriate enthusiasm for current descriptions or stories through questions, exclamations, or brief comments, participants may open up a complex conversational floor which is simultaneous yet subordinate to the main floor being managed by the storyteller and principal addressed recipient(s), through byplay — teasing, heckling, or playfully dealing with a description or story. These different footings (Goffman 1981) which recipients assume with re-

spect to the talk can affect the development of a story. Playful commentary about talk in progress can provide for two simultaneous lines of talk, even embellishing what speaker is saying, while repair-like moves that critique speaker's talk can lead to the closing up of a story.

This paper will focus on several critical issues regarding the construction of byplay: 1) How do people collaborate in allowing it take place? 2) What are the vocal and nonvocal ways — the contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982) — through which participants in byplay mark their talk as either a) attemptedly nonintrusive such that the principal speaker disattends it and it is not disruptive of the storyteller's line or b) designedly "on the floor" available for others, including principal speaker, to react to in the midst of speaker's talk? 3) How can such talk open up frameworks for participation alternative to that of speaker/audience? In examining such issues I want to describe byplay as a negotiated feature of interaction, showing how participants' footing may change through the course of a telling.

## 2. Alternative Trajectories of Byplay

Two sets of examples will be presented, the first set showing the range of possible types of byplay and the second set dealing with negotiated features of byplay. All the data are drawn from a videotape of an American suburban family dinner. All of the instances involve stories being told by 'Fran', who has been away working with a group called the Christian Coalition and has visited a mansion of one of its members. The participants in the encounter will be referred to by alphabetically sequenced pseudonyms, with respect to their seating positions from left to right around a round table: Al is father of Cathy and Fran, Bob is boyfriend in good standing of younger daughter Cathy (aged 18), Dianne is mother of Cathy and Fran and principal bread-winner of the family, Ed is current (though by no means exclusive) boyfriend of Fran (aged 20). Figure 1 shows these seating positions.

It will be important in this analysis to consider that those in the encounter participate in different ways during it and assume different types of footings vis-à-vis the talk. Fran is the party who may be considered principal speaker, or storyteller. With respect to her talk participants take up different types of alignment toward what they are hearing. In response to stories generally recipients have multiple options: they may (1) actively attend the talk in

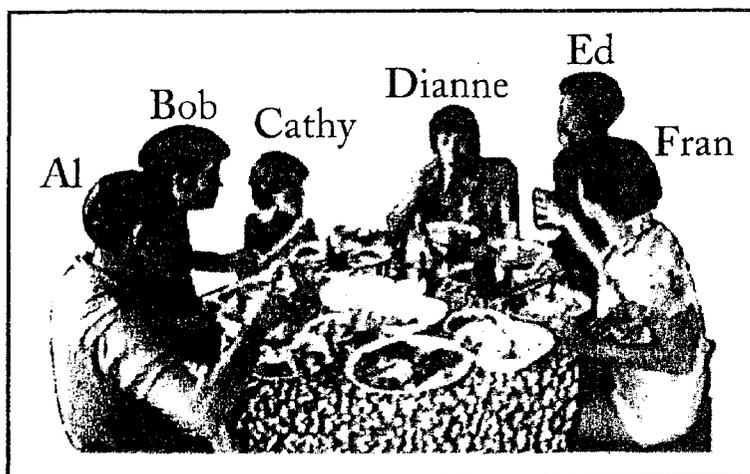


Figure 1. Seating positions of participants

progress in the manner proposed by speaker and take on the position of the principal addressed recipient, (2) disattend the talk by engaging in activities alternative to it such as eating, food distribution, child care, or initiating a competing focus (creating a second conversational floor) resulting in the fissioning of the conversational group, (3) distance themselves from the talk by superimposing metacommentary on the main focus (not processing talk as it is unfolding) or (4) embellish the talk by exploiting possibilities for playful rendering, reframing it while appreciating it. Moreover, as Goffman (1974: 528) argues, in replaying past experience the present speaker maintains both the identity of teller to listeners in the present and animator of "cited figures" within it. During the course of this particular dinner Dianne, Fran's mother, takes up the position of principal addressed recipient, while Bob, Cathy, Ed, and to a lesser extent Al (her father) engage in byplay during its course.

Some examples of byplay which display the range of types of participation possible in byplay exchanges will now be examined. In each of the sequences to be analyzed, in the midst of a description recipients treat the talk by primary speaker in ways other than it was intended. That is, rather than displaying interest in what speaker has to say they instead initiate comments on focal participants' talk which can overlap the description while maintaining two simultaneous lines of talk (as in example 1) or take over the sequence

and close it down (example 2). Yet in that the talk on the floor is presented as a story, it nonetheless remains a point of focus which can be returned to following simultaneous talk (see M. Goodwin 1982).

In the transcriptions to follow elapsed time in tenths of seconds is indicated by numbers in parentheses (0.5) or dashes within parentheses (-). Stress is marked by underlining. Tildes (~) indicate rapidly spoken speech. Whispered talk is indicated by degree signs (°). Inbreath is shown by asterisk (\*h). Double obliques (/) indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk overlaps the talk of another. An alternative system is to place a left bracket ([) at the point of overlapping talk. Punctuation marks are not used as grammatical symbols, but mark intonation. A period indicates falling intonation. A comma is used for falling rising intonation. Question marks are used for rising intonation. A colon indicates that the sound preceding the colon has been lengthened. When one strip of talk follows another with noticeable quickness an equal sign is placed between the two utterances. Vocal data are transcribed according to the system developed by Jefferson and described in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974:731-733) while nonvocal data are transcribed using the system developed by C. Goodwin (1981:46-53).

In the first example Fran is describing a table in a mansion belonging to the Christian Coalition group she is a member of which she recently visited.

- (1) G.126:P:648
- |    |        |  |
|----|--------|--|
| 1  | Fran   | <u>They</u> have a <u>huge lon::g</u> table in the <u>middle</u> |
| 2  |        | that would seat *h I~don't-know                                  |
| 3  |        | <u>how~many~people.</u> =[ *h And <u>then they</u> have- a       |
| 4  | Bob: → | [ <u>Hundreds.</u>   |
| 5  | Fran:  | <u>little</u> [ dining room <u>table</u> at the e:nd.            |
| 6  | Al: →  | [ ° <u>Hundreds~at~least.</u> )                                  |
| 7  | Fran:  | Which [ is the~size~of <u>ours.</u>                              |
| 8  | Ed: →  | [ ° <u>King Arthur:</u> 's. <u>table.</u>                        |
| 9  | Fran:  | *h <u>BY</u> [ their <u>ba:y window.</u>                         |
| 10 | Bob: → | [ <u>Was it rou:nd?</u>  |
| 11 | Fran:  | Y'know? <u>Plus</u> they have- *h in <u>all</u> their            |
| 12 |        | <u>bedrooms</u> they have: <u>what~are</u> they                  |
| 13 |        | called.= <u>Window seats?</u>                                    |

In describing the table Fran uses a rhetorical device to indicate the table's expansiveness. When she says "\*h I~don't-know how~many~people" she is indicating the large size of the table and evaluating it (as seeable from

nonvocal appreciative lateral head shakes) rather than asking help in locating a specific number; as shown by the “=” (latched talk) sign following her sentence completion she continues quickly on with her talk, not dwelling on the number. Nonetheless this talk is hearable as a perturbation and constitutes one sort of conversational object which regularly engenders entry of recipients in a byplay mode. Bob playfully treats “I don’t know how many people” as the initiation of a *word search*. Providing a candidate solution — “hundreds” — he overlaps her continuing talk (as indicated by the bracket) with a guess at the number and looks toward Ed, signaling his invitation to him to coparticipate in commentary on the talk. Al speaks next in a low voice looking towards his plate; rather than attending to Fran, he builds on and elaborates Bob’s guess with “Hundreds-at-least.” This theme now gets developed into fanciful versions of the table with Ed’s “King Arthur’s table.” (produced looking toward Bob with his head in an arched mode; see Figure 2) and Bob’s subsequent elaboration built on the King Arthur theme with “Was it round?” (talk addressed directly to Fran with no attempt made to modulate it).

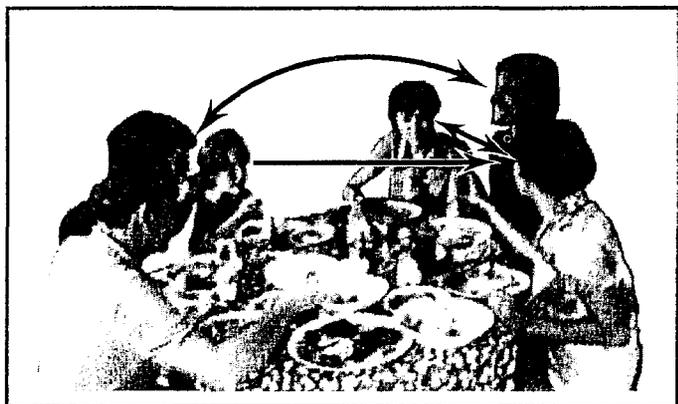


Figure 2. *Alignment axes of participants*

Fran’s original attempt to indicate the expansiveness of the table has been extracted for treatment in ways that are not relevant to the story and becomes a point of departure for an extended playful sequence that occurs simultaneously with the continuation of her description. Indeed another important feature of byplay is the timing of byplay with respect to the story

proper. Both Al and Ed chain their talk to Bob’s commentary rather than advancing talk in the way Fran proposes. Rather than attending to Fran’s currently relevant utterances they instead deal with talk of Fran which occurred earlier; time lag in dealing with talk on the floor is frequently a feature of byplay.

Though technically the byplay overlaps speaker’s continuing talk, byplay is produced in such a way as to not intrude upon it. It is spoken with lowered volume, as indicated by a degree “°” sign, and participants exhibit a particular spatial organization of gaze and gesture. As Ed says “King Arthur’s- table” he angles his head (tilting it backwards; Figure 2), projecting an arc over the official talk space so as not to intrude upon it, thus partitioning off two separate alignment axes, one between Ed and Bob and the other between Fran, her principal addressed recipient, Dianne, and Cathy.

Despite the byplay Fran provides no official recognition of the fact that byplay is occurring. However, during the byplay, in line 5 as she says “little dining room table” Fran leans her body towards Dianne, her addressed recipient, and increases her volume and the expansiveness of her gestures over “BY their bay window.” (She draws an elaborate half moon circle to illustrate a bay window.) Such moves display attempts by the speaker to secure enhanced recipient response from her recipient Dianne in the midst of simultaneously occurring talk.

The next example (2) provides an instance of a kind of byplay which presents a different alignment towards talk on the floor and verges upon heckling. Despite the fact that Fran (line 4) initiates the story sequence in response to a request for a story — “Tell us about whatshernames.” — the commentary on talk which follows (lines 8-29) displays little interest in it and leads to a temporary closing up of the story. Commentary begins here during the “orientation” (Labov 1972:364) section of speaker’s story. Video camera icons locate the frame grabs that will be examined in Figure 3.

(2) G.126:P:425

- |   |        |   |
|---|--------|---|
| 1 | Cathy: | Alright. <u>Tell</u> us about whatshernames.= |
| 2 | Fran:  | =Okay.  |
| 3 |        | (0.6)   |
| 4 | Fran:  | [ <u>We go driving,</u>                       |
| 5 | Bob:   | [ <u>Okay,</u>                                |
| 6 |        | (0.4)   |



- 7 Fran: uh:m,  
 8 Ed: You went to a drive in,  
 9 Al: Yea r p.  
 [redacted] II  
 10 Bob: [redacted] What~are~you~doin~in~a drive in.  
 11 Cathy: Wi r th who.  
 [redacted] III  
 12 Al: [redacted] Mm hm.  
 13 Ed: Uh huh.  
 14 (0.8)  
 [redacted] IV  
 15 Cathy: Su r re.  
 16 Ed: [redacted] All the Christia//ns go to~the dirty  
 17 movies together. // That way they don't think  
 it's a si:n.  
 18 Bob: Maybe THA:T'S what Pete- Pete Derrick wanted.  
 19 Cathy: h h h h huh uh huh- uh huh

Following the perturbations in Fran's talk — the (0.4) second pause and the "um," — Ed playfully mishears "We go driving," as "going to a drive in". Other recipients build on this interpretation providing queries about and characterizations of the speaker's activities which are at odds with those of the Christian Coalition group that the teller and story characters belong to. In contrast to utterances in the previous example produced with lowered volume while avoiding speaker's gaze, these utterances are spoken in a normal voice tone while looking toward speaker.

As this example shows, the placement of byplay during the initiation of a story can be threatening to the story's production. Recipients' commentary rather than speaker's story becomes the focus of interaction. A visual inspection of speaker's posture displays her orientation towards progressive loss of the floor. She collapses her body tonus at junctures in the commentary; she first relaxes her wrist (line 9), then her head rests on her hand (line 11), and finally she bends over her plate and re-engages in eating (line 14). However, in that a story has been requested, it is possible for this to be reintroduced at a later point, which indeed occurs.



[redacted] I  
 Initiates Story



[redacted] II  
 Relaxes Wrist



[redacted] III  
 Rests Head  
 on Hand



[redacted] IV  
 Moves from Talk  
 to Eating

Figure 3. *F's changing posture during byplay.*

These examples provide instances of alternative directions commentary on talk may take. In example (1) despite playful talk the speaker proceeds, disattending byplay. By way of contrast in example (2) commentary becomes the principal focus for talk on the floor and the telling is abandoned. The only party who has not participated in byplay is Dianne (Fran's principal addressed recipient).

Given the possibility for disruption of ongoing talk I now want to look more precisely at how participants might work together to construct non-intrusive playful commentary. In the next section I examine more precisely how commentary on talk may engender alternative forms of participation given the ways in which the principal speaker's main recipient(s), as well as the principal speaker herself, choose to deal with it.

### 3. Procedures for Inviting Coparticipation in Byplay

Two examples of byplay will be examined in some detail to investigate how through body posture, gesture, and speech the activity of byplay is interactively achieved. Non-vocal data are transcribed in the following way. Gaze is indicated by the presence of a line above speaker's talk or by a line adjacent to a letter standing for recipient. The specific party toward whom gaze is directed is indicated by an initial on the line. Movement of gaze toward a recipient is indicated by periods; movement of gaze away from recipient is indicated by commas. The absence of a line above a speaker's name indicates the absence of gaze toward the party eventually or previously gazed at. The presence of a letter without a gaze line indicates that that party makes only a brief glance at the party who is initialed. Relevant nonvocal activities of participants are indicated within parentheses.

In example (3), Fran describes her arrival at the gate of a mansion. The byplay utterances of interest in these data occur in lines 10 and 14 with Bob's comment to Cathy — "The other entrance you can go in. °Clever." — inviting her coparticipation. While providing a metacommentary, this talk is produced in such a way as to not bid for the floor or intrude upon speaker's talk.

- (3) G.126:P460
- |   |       |   |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | Fran: | Well it <u>e</u> nded up *hh we <u>ca</u> -uh followed our      |
| 2 |       | <u>m</u> ap wrong.=Of course we'd been lost                     |
| 3 |       | f'so <u>l</u> ong 'n we <u>c</u> ame in the <u>w</u> rong       |
| 4 |       | <u>e</u> ntrance.=cuz the <u>o</u> ther <u>e</u> ntrance, (0.2) |

- |    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| 5  |       | you could go i:n, *hh So I get outa             |
| 6  |       | the <u>ca</u> :r // you know I haf tuh open the |
| 7  |       | thing open the <u>ga</u> :te,=                  |
| 8  | Bob:  | (hmp!)  |
| 9  | Fran: | [ So I-   |
| 10 | Bob:  | [ The <u>o</u> ther [ entrance you can go in.   |
| 11 | Fran: | [ I told us ta y'know Jenny "Come               |
| 12 |       | <u>o</u> n <u>th</u> rough."                    |
| 13 |       | (.)   |
| 14 | Bob:  | °Clever.  |
| 15 | Fran: | *hhh <u>A</u> n uh:m,                           |
| 16 |       | (1.0)   |
| 17 | Fran: | <u>W</u> e drive up t'this place, (0.4)         |
| 18 |       | I thought we were inna °museum er something.    |

Although the byplay utterances provide talk about primary speaker's story, this talk is not fitted to what the storyteller is currently saying. While Fran is describing the activity of getting up to the entrance of a mansion (during the "orientation" section of the story), having to open the gate, and then beckoning Jenny through (lines 5-7, 11-12), concurrently Bob deals with talk of Fran which occurred a bit back, in lines 3-5 — Fran's having "come in the wrong entrance.=cuz the *other* entrance, (0.2) you could go i:n,". He selects out part of speaker's prior utterance (a part which can arguably be heard as repetitious with respect to speaker's prior talk) and repeats it, thereby marking *it* rather than ongoing current talk as talk to be commented upon and then provides an explicit evaluation: "°Clever." While with his repetition Bob is setting up the reference of his current comment to Fran, he is also remarking on it (Goffman 1981:43), as will become evident when the nonvocal head bobbings he produces in his talk's midst are discussed.

Bob ties his talk to a part of speaker's talk which is not the current focus of attention in much the same way that recipients operate on talk by selecting out part of a speaker's prior utterance and repeating it, thereby marking it as talk to be repaired, mimicked, countered or disagreed with. The form of alignment or attentiveness which Bob gives to speaker's talk is markedly different from that of Dianne, who acts as the principal addressed recipient of speaker's story and deals with speaker's talk as it is ongoing. To understand the differences in Bob's and Dianne's orientations toward speaker's talk, we will first examine in more detail what Dianne is doing. As the story proceeds Dianne gazes at Fran and provides visual displays of acknowledgement in





Figure 4. Alignment axes during F's talk

speaker to participate in Bob's talk. In the face of this minimal attention given his byplay, Bob terminates it. However, as he does so he intensifies and makes explicit his alignment toward principal speaker by putting his hand to his head in a stereotypic gesture that Morris et al. (1979:31) argue is conventionally understood to mean "something wrong with the brain" and at the same time ironically commenting on speaker's talk by saying "°Clever."

However despite the elaborateness of his commentary Bob performs it in such a way as to not disrupt and only minimally intrude on principal speaker's talk. First, he produces "°Clever." with lowered volume, as indicated by the "°" sign. Second, he quickly returns his gaze to principal speaker. Finally, he slots his talk at a juncture in speaker's talk.

Principal speaker, for her part, collaborates in letting the byplay run its course. She actively disattends the activities of Bob and Cathy. Not only does she never explicitly address the fact that there is talk going on during her own; but, in addition, she averts her gaze from those involved in byplay through most of its duration. Figure 4 above shows Fran's talk and gaze during the byplay with respect to the actions of other participants. Of particular importance are Fran's actions in conjunction with Bob's:

(3d) G.126:P460

D \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fran: \*hh So I get outta the ca:r [ you know I  
 Bob: F \_\_\_\_\_ (hmp!) \_\_\_\_\_

Bob: \_\_\_\_\_ (smile).  
 Al: F (eating) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fran: D \_\_\_\_\_, B, ..., A, ..., B,  
 Fran: haf tuh open the thing open the ga:te,  
 Bob: ..... C \_\_\_\_\_  
 (head bobs...)  
 Al: F (eating) \_\_\_\_\_

When Fran gazes in the direction of Bob over "thing" and is in a position to observe Bob's head bobbings away from storyteller (Fran) toward Cathy, she withdraws her gaze from Bob and looks toward Al over "open". Even though she has lost one recipient, the integrity of having an attending recipient has not been called into question, because she is able to redirect her gaze to another party. However, Al provides no visible displays of acknowledgement as had, for example Dianne, with her gaze and nods; instead he occupies himself with eating. Given Al's minimal participation in her line, Fran moves past Al to Bob once again. She finds, however, that Bob is still engaged with Cathy. Fran quickly cuts off her talk — "So I—" — and then moves toward Dianne, a recipient who has been systematically attending her (see 3e below).

In producing her talk "So I- I told us ta y'know Jenny 'Come on through,'" Fran makes her body a locus for gaze through the motions she does with her hands (see Figure 4 above). Her right hand is extended in space as she produces a beckoning hand movement on "So I- I told us ta y'know Jenny 'Come on through.'" Her left elbow is held out during "I told us ta y'know Jenny" as she puts her hand up to her hair and head in a preening gesture. The extension of her elbow in space provides a kind of momentary barrier partitioning off space, so that Fran and Dianne are in one alignment axis while Bob and Cathy are in another.

(3e) G.126:P460

*elbow extended*

<i>hand</i>	<i>hand</i>	
<i>beckon</i>	<i>beckon</i>	<i>hand to tea</i>
B, .	D _____, .	
Fran: [ So I- I told us ta y'know Jenny "Come <u>on through</u> ."		
Bob: [ The other entrance you can go in.		
Dianne: F _____ ( <i>nods</i> ) _____		

As example (3e) shows, in response to Fran, Dianne not only gazes toward speaker but also nods, showing solidarity with her talk. When Dianne stops gazing toward speaker, Fran removes her gaze from Dianne shortly afterwards. In so doing, instead of looking out toward those who beforehand had not been attending her, she re-engages herself in a task-relevant activity. Directing her gaze toward the table while stirring her iced tea and turning away from the direction of Bob and Cathy she manages to skillfully disengage from byplay before reintroducing her story once more.

Though speaker never explicitly acknowledges the byplay between Bob and Cathy, she demonstrates an orientation toward byplay having occurred. An examination of the visual record has shown how she averts her gaze from those involved in byplay, never officially recognizing what takes place between Bob and Cathy. We find a similar phenomenon occurring in the organization of talk. The conversation Fran produces in overlap is treated as a form of side sequence in the midst of her story. As she resumes her description (line 11) she makes use of the connective "and"; this establishes that what she is about to say is tied to prior talk. As she continues, with "We drive up t' this place," she recaps the actions which she had described prior to the onset of simultaneous talk.

As has been seen with this example, byplay provides a form of running commentary upon what principal speaker is saying. It makes possible for recipients of a story a selective form of listening which deals with the story in ways other than those which principal speaker displays she wants the story to be treated. Initiators of byplay can propose a certain way in which they want primary speaker's talk to be treated. However, in that such proposals can be responded to in various ways, recipients of byplay can influence the ways in which the byplay sequence as well as the storyline will be developed.

#### 4. Stepwise Entry of Principal Addressed Recipient and Speaker into Byplay

In the sequences we have examined thus far byplay has been actively disattended in an official way by principal speaker. With the next example we can begin to examine how critical the principal speaker's orientation toward byplay is for the organization of the participation of others present. As principal speaker progressively escalates her coparticipation in byplay, this has consequences for how others (particularly principal attending recipient) begin to deal with byplay.

To begin to examine speaker's step-by-step attending to byplay it will first be relevant to consider how byplay is initiated in the particular example to be looked at. In the following example Fran is describing bedtime with the Christian Coalition group. She opens with a preface stating that recently something remarkable happened to one of her dorm-mates in the group, Yeager, while she was getting into her bunk bed. In this particular sequence Dianne's identity as the mother of Fran and Cathy is important for understanding the stance she takes in the face of intrusions into Fran's talk by Cathy and her boyfriend Bob.

- (6) G.126:P348
- 1 Fran: Okay. D'you wanna hear?-(0.2) First of~all  
 2 d'you wanna hear what happened to  
 3 Yeager the other night?  
 4 Dianne: [ Yeah.= What~happened~to Yea//ger.  
 5 Cathy: [ Ye:s. Let's:  
 6 Dianne: Let's hear [ what happened~to~you.  
 7 Fran: [ We have the top bunks y'know in  
 8 the uh:m,  
 9 (1.6)  
 10 Cathy: No we didn [ 't.  
 11 Fran: [ In the roo//m?=  
 12 Bob: Mm I don't think [ I wanna hear this.  
 13 Dianne: [ Yeah I knew that.  
 14 Fran: [ °Don't interrupt.  
 15 [ uhuh heh!  
 16 Fran: ((fork to plate clatter during (0.5) pause))  
 17 Ed: [ Eh heh hhu hhu HHUH-uh huh-aa \*hhu::h  
 18 [ I heard that!  
 19 (0.4)  
 19 Ed: eh h:  
 20 (0.3)  
 21 Fran: Anywa:y, (0.4) uh:m, (0.4) We went ta- I  
 22 went to bed really early.

After asking permission to tell a story (line 1) and receiving permission to proceed (l. 4-6) Fran begins her story (l. 7). She then hesitates in her speech, pausing for 1.6 seconds. Before she comes to the pause there are signals of trouble in her talk. Both "uh:m" and the "y'know" which precede it alert



(6b) G.126:P348

F \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bob: (*drops fork*) (*right hand to ear*)  
 | |  
 Al: (*looks at B*) (*Turns back, puts hands on ears*)

By imitating Bob's gesture Al provides a strong form of coparticipation in the byplay that Bob had initiated. Fran attends to Bob's gesture as well. She immediately begins to laugh, looking quickly from Bob to Al (see Figure 6.):

(6c) G.126:P348

Bob: F \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bob: (*hands on ears*)  
 Al: (*hands to ears*)  
 Fran: B \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fran: eh heh hhuh hhuh HHUH-uh huh-aa  
 hhu::h

This time her laughter is both elaborated and escalated; a series of particles are produced with ever increasing volume.

When the speaker begins to coparticipate in byplay, this activity rather than storytelling, becomes the focal activity on the floor. Al's mimicking of Bob's gestures follows shortly after Fran's attention to Bob's byplay. This suggests that speaker's participation in byplay is important. Is there any way we can show in a stronger way that speaker's activity is especially relevant to the coordination of activity in byplay? By looking at the activities of Dianne, speaker's principal addressed recipient, and by examining her gaze and facial expressions throughout the sequence, we can see how Dianne adapts her response to byplay with regard to the position that Fran takes up to it to show that Fran's response is important for Dianne.

We observed in example (3) that despite overlapping byplay talk the main line of talk was sustained through principal addressed recipient's, Dianne's, continued coparticipation to Fran's talk. In this example as well Dianne gives Fran's talk close attention:

(6d) G.126:P348

Dianne: F \_\_\_\_\_

Fran: We have the top bunks y'know in the uh:m,  
 Dianne: F \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fran: (-----+-----)  
 |  
 (*hand gesture*)  
 Dianne: (*nod*.....)  
 F \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dianne: C \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dianne: [ Yeah I knew that.  
 Cathy: [ No we didn' [ t.  
 Fran: [ In the roo [ m?  
 Bob: [ Mm I don't think  
 Bob: [ I wanna hear this.  
 ..... B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dianne: [ Don't interrupt.  
 Fran: Eh heh!

Dianne is gazing at Fran throughout her talk, displaying her alignment as addressed recipient to her talk. In the midst of producing a word search, signaled by "uh:m," and a pause, Fran provides a circular gesture shortly before producing the outcome of the search. In response to the gesture Dianne nods, indicating that though Fran has not made explicit what she was about to say, she had sufficient information to be able to project what was intended (Goodwin & Goodwin 1986).

In dealing with the ongoing byplay Dianne sanctions Cathy's intrusions into Fran's talk with her "Yeah I knew that." and an admonishing look toward Cathy. She follows up this first sanctioning move with a second, "Don't interrupt." directed to Bob. However, when Fran, principal storyteller, through her laughter focuses on the byplay initiated by Bob, Dianne follows suit; the last syllable of Dianne's "interrupt" is produced looking toward Bob. Even before Dianne has finished her action with Cathy, then, she begins to observe the new focus of storyteller's attention, looking toward Bob.

When principal speaker provides more laughter into the byplay, Dianne returns her gaze to the initiator of the byplay, Bob, a second time:

(6c) F.126:P348

(smile .....)

Dianne: .B \_\_\_\_\_, (look to plate)

Bob: (hands to ears)

Fran: eh heh hhuh hhuh HHUH-uh huh-aa \*hhu::h  
(0.4)

Ed: ehh [ ha:

Fran: Anywa:y,

Dianne's actions are quite closely synchronized to those of speaker. Upon hearing Fran's escalated laugh Dianne upgrades the form of her own participation in the byplay, changing her looking into a smile (see Figure 6). This smile is carried over until her look toward her plate which occurs when Fran's talk gets underway once again.

Speaker's coparticipation in byplay is thus consequential for how the byplay is treated. Her own participation is built step by step as participants in byplay, Bob and Al, escalate their involvement, putting their hands to their ears. The type of coparticipation Fran engages in influences the form of coparticipation of her primary recipient, Dianne, who changes her face into a smile in response to Fran's escalated laugh.

Despite the fact that Bob's byplay receives responses from coparticipants, Bob carries off the sequence in such a way as to show only minimal expectation of appreciation of his activity. Bob does not extend gaze towards others. Rather no sooner does he have both hands up to his ears, then he takes them down. He then gazes downward and continues his prior activity of eating. In that Bob puts up no roadblocks to Fran's further continuing of her story, Fran can again return to her story line, having participated briefly in a diversionary time out.

## 5. Conclusion

In the examples we have examined in this paper both principal speaker and her recipients can attempt in various ways to keep byplay from becoming the official focus on the floor. For her part, principal speaker continues her talk with an addressed recipient during the byplay. She avoids glances at those who intrude on her talk. Though her talk may take recognition of byplay

through restarts, shifts in gaze, etc., she avoids any explicit comment upon the talk of those involved in byplay. Initiators of byplay also display an orientation towards minimizing its intrusiveness. In the examples we have examined byplay occurs in turns of relatively short duration. Byplay participants slot their comments on the ongoing stream of talk at junctures in speaker's talk. Then when principal speaker begins to talk, byplay assumes a subsidiary role to principal speaker's talk on the floor. In (3) byplay was produced as its initiator was looking away from speaker. Through avoidance of gaze, lowered volume and various postural positionings byplay participants may attempt to prohibit byplay from becoming the official focus of talk.

In that participants in conversation have available a range of optional ways in which to respond to talk, byplay sequences may take a variety of forms. Although byplay initiators may call for more elaborated coparticipation, as in (3), the sequence may be closed down in short order if others refuse to coparticipate. If principal speaker selects to enter into byplay her coparticipation may affect the alignment of her principal addressed recipient. In (4) principal addressed recipient changes from the position of sanctioner of those intruding into the sequence to a party appreciative of the byplay, smiling into the comments of a byplay participant, when she takes note of speaker's own laughing engagement in byplay. In other instances such as (2) playful commentary may become so intrusive that speaker has to stop her storyline. The status of byplay as a momentary or more extensive activity is negotiated through the types of coparticipation given its invitation and at each point in its development.

The study of activities concurrent to ongoing talk is relevant to theories concerning *participation structures* in conversation (Goodwin 1990; Hanks 1990; Levinson 1987). The type of interactive floor participants maintain in the fragments presented here exhibits an alternative to the model of speaker and audience commonly assumed to be operative during conversation. However the participation structure is not one of two simultaneous competing conversations, as reported for "contrapuntal conversations" (Reisman 1974) or "multiple conversational floors" (Erickson 1982). Neither is it the type of cooperative floor (F2) described by Edelsky (1981) or Kalčik (1975). Rather it is an instance of a floor in which participants may provide side commentary on principal speaker's talk which may invite a range of different forms of involvement in collusive talk, eventually even including principal speaker.

Careful examination of participation structures during talk also has obvious relevance for the analysis of storytelling process. The study of activities

concurrent to storytelling reveals ways in which coparticipants to stories may deal with a telling by separating out parts of the story to be played with, providing realms of discourse allowing for differentiated forms of hearership. In that the talk on the floor is a focused description, it can be readily returned to following time-outs. Indeed an important arena for study, long neglected by students of storytelling, are the optional ways listeners may actively select how they are to attend — not merely promoting the teller's rendering but also providing side comments or even heckling (Sacks 1974:342-343) — thus displaying a variety of forms of alignment during a story's course. Attention to the details of how recipients treat talk in progress provides a view of stories or descriptions as dynamically constructed speech events. It also allows us to view interpretation and evaluation as a negotiated phenomenon. Though a speaker may propose a particular reading of her talk, hearers have available multiple, optional ways of rendering the talk they hear.

From a slightly different perspective, with regard to hearership, Goffman (1961a) defines an individual as a "stance-taking entity". This was first elaborated in terms of the participation possibilities open to inmates in 'total institutions'. In *Asylums* Goffman argued that an institution, such as a prison, mental hospital, or business establishment, demanded particular types of participation from those caught within it. However, rather than fully engrossing themselves in the participation frameworks provided by the institution, inmates could take a stance that distances themselves from the institution, and thus reclaim some of their freedom from it. Thus he argues (Goffman 1961a: 320) that

Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks.

The present analysis suggests that rather than being confined to the analysis of total institutions Goffman's insights are also relevant to the investigation of storytelling and the "role distance" (Goffman 1961b) recipients assume vis-à-vis talk of the moment. While the teller, through narrative evaluation, proposes that her recipients display engrossment in the talk in progress in particular ways, recipients in fact have the ability to distance themselves from such proposals and use speaker's talk as a point of departure for interpretive possibilities and participation frameworks of their own making.

## Notes

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## An Empirical Study of Textual Structure: Horse Race Calls\*

Barbara M. Horvath  
University of Sydney

### 1. Introduction

While the study of phonological variables most closely realizes the vision articulated by Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) of a sociolinguistics focused on language change in progress, the study of narratives (Labov & Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972), of ritual insults (Labov 1972), of apartment descriptions (Linde & Labov 1975) and of therapeutic discourse (Labov & Fanshel 1971) represent early, important steps in the empirical study of discourse. That there is a clear methodological break between sociolinguistic discourse analysis (SDA) and the quantitative analysis of phonological variables has not gone without notice (Lavandera 1978; Labov 1978; Romaine 1981; Schiffrin 1987). One of the fundamental difficulties in the empirical study of discourse modelled on quantitative studies of language is defining the unit of analysis; unlike studies of phonological variation, where the unit of analysis has received a great deal of attention by linguists, studies of discourse variation more often than not require the initial identification and definition of the unit under investigation. Progress on this front requires the study of text types whose structures are fairly simple and with boundaries at the beginning and end that are fairly sharply marked.

The principle of accountability, which assumes that the distributional characteristics of the variable under investigation are understood well enough for the data to be reliably coded, presents another challenge for SDA. (For a