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CONVERSATIONAL FRAGMENTATION: NATURALLY-OCCURRING GROUPINGS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

City University of New York PH.D. 1980

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CONVERSATIONAL FRAGMENTATION:

NATURALLY-OCCURRING GROUPINGS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

by

RICHARD PARKER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1980

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IN MEMORY OF

ZYGMUNT PISARCZYK

Abstract

CONVERSATIONAL FRAGMENTATION:

NATURALLY-OCCURRING GROUPINGS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

by

RICHARD PARKER

Adviser: Professor Lindsey Churchill

Formal features of conversational interaction have been studied by researchers in sociolinguistics and a variety of other social-scientific disciplines. Most research to date, however, has drawn empirical data from interpersonal communication in rather orderly settings, leaving interactional complexity open to speculation.

In this exploratory study we examine the social organization of fragmented and rather complex interaction. We find that conversationalists are guided by norms of interpretation which make complexity comprehensible. These norms warrant selective attention to, and selective participation in, speech within distinct groupings. The same norms serve us as indispensable analytic resources.

Of special interest in this study are instances in which a setting characterized by a single conversational focus becomes transformed into a setting in which two or more conversations co-occur. We find that norms and regularities previously observed in single-conversation settings cannot be generalized to multiple-conversation settings.

We conclude by considering interaction which is ambiguous or problematic for conversationalists, and observe their negotiations with one another over the patterns which their actions should properly follow. We arrive at a perspective in which both the regularities and uncertainties of conversational interaction are traced to the essential renegotiability of social-interactional definitions.

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Finally, I deeply appreciate the generosity of the anonymous conversationalists who permitted me to record some of their interactional ingenuity.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"That men build a society means that they live for the attainment of their purposes in definitely formed interactions. If there is to be a science of society as such, it must therefore abstract those forms from the complex phenomena of societary life, and it must make them the subject of determination and explanation."

-Georg Simmel

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"-so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

-Lewis Carroll

This study is concerned with the interpretation of verbal interaction. Although our data are reproductions of naturally occurring speech events, it is not our purpose to develop findings about language or speech as such. Rather, our concern is with speech as a medium of social interaction. Our data serve, then, as documentary evidence of social actions and, to the extent that persons' verbal actions can be shown to be related, as evidence of emergent social relationships.

In methodological terms, the study can be characterized as an exploratory ethnography into the interactional regularities of everyday life. Materials were collected as part of a search for aspects of social interaction which had been neglected by social scientists in spite of their potential theoretic interest. The approach can be understood as "inductive," or as an initial attempt to identify and account for observed regularities rather than a testing or elaboration of existing theories or hypotheses. While our materials are drawn from a variety of particular contexts, our aim has been the development of characterizations of formal or socially structured features which transcend (to some degree) the particulars of each context, even though they are dependent upon context for their intelligibility. The findings can thus be understood as "context-free" and simultaneously "context-sensitive" (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974).

While this study is not directly tied to a particular theory, it has been developed within an intellectual tradition and was inspired by a particular methodological approach. This chapter will be devoted to a brief sketch of the present study's intellectual ancestry and methodological orientation, together with a description of the data collection process.

The specific research problem to which this study is addressed will be introduced in Chapter II.

Studies of Verbal Interaction

The search for general principles of social interaction has been a concern of many social scientists. It has also long been recognized that interaction is essentially a process of communication. Professionals and laymen share interests in the communicative features of speech, gestures, use of non-human objects, and so on (see Speier, 1973). Speech occupies a central place in this regard because, unlike other actions which we may consider to have communicative potential, verbal actions are generally assumed to have communicative substance. Nevertheless, serious attention to the empirical details of everyday conversation is lacking in most contemporary approaches, even those ostensibly concerned with verbal behavior. Some scholars, such as exchange theorist George Homans (1961), assert the significance of "elementary social behavior" while giving their attention to abstract models which are said to account for such behavior but are not grounded in detailed empirical study. Others, such as William Foote Whyte (1955), profess interest in "trying to build a sociology based on observed interpersonal events"(p. 358), but offer as data recollected speech which is reconstructed by the ethnographer some hours or even days after its occurrence.

Among researchers concerned specifically with speech, there has been surprising inattention to its interactional features. Linguists and anthropologists often collect data geared to the development of a generalized grammar or the identification of local dialects, but their

focus is typically on the individual as informant or object of study. Theorists such as Chomsky (1972) have treated the "surface structure" of overt speech as an epiphenomenal reflection of the "deep structure" of language as it operates in the mind. As Turner (1970) has pointed out, linguistic performance is often seen as a theoretically uninteresting byproduct of linguistic competence. In any event, the value of much writing in this area is limited by a tendency to use empirical data interchangeably with invented or hypothetical utterances thought to be representative of actual speech events. That is, the focus of attention is shifted from the actual speakers to an idealized speaker.

Attention to the details of actual speech can be found in the work of a number of sociolinguists and sociologists of language (see Trudgill, 1974). This attention is directed primarily to the identification of differences in the production of sounds, words or phrases by individuals, and to attempts to correlate differences of linguistic usage with socio-demographic variables such as social class, ethnicity, and the like. While this research is valuable in accounting for individual verbal actions, it is of limited relevance to analysis of interactional issues.

Among contemporary students of social interaction, Erving Goffman has most effectively offered insight into the dynamic nature of interpersonal communication. He points out that:

> "Talk is socially organized, not merely in terms of who speaks to whom in what language, but as a little system of mutually ratified and ritually governed face-to-face action, a social encounter" (Goffman, 1964:136).

While Goffman's observations invariably provide useful starting points for the analysis of a wide variety of everyday interactional activities, we find (and will demonstrate later) that some of his observations lead him to develop premature generalizations inconsistent with our empirical observations. Goffman's insight has yet to be systematized as a method for the collection of data, so that his work rests essentially on personal intuition and creativity. Moreover, in a recent paper on conversational interaction (1976), Goffman makes no effort to distinguish between actual and hypothetical utterances used to document his analysis.

A number of empirical social scientists have attempted to develop systematic procedures for the recording and classification of observations of verbal interaction. While some collect data by making audiotapes as an initial phase of research, few actually subject the detailed information on these tapes to analysis. Rather, the typical procedure involves coding speech acts as examples of certain <u>classes</u> of action, such that the occurrence of units of a class rather than actions themselves becomes the focus of attention. Hare (1976) offers a rationale for this strategy by explaining that, in producing a complete transcript of the details of interaction, the observer

> "...uses the most complete category system he has---language. However, a complete language is not a very efficient category system since so many of the words mean almost the same thing and since there are too many categories to make quantitative analysis of the data possible"(p. 398).

Hare observes that the resulting concern of researchers in this area is with "problems of development and use of category systems."

One of the major figures in this research, R. F. Bales (1950) offers a description of the coding procedure he employs:

> "The observer, sitting with the observation form in front of him, looks over the list of twelve categories and decides that this remark is most relevant to the problem of... In this one operation, the observer has isolated a unit of speech or process which he considers a proper unit for classification, and classified it..."(p. 259).

Bales also indicates the source of his categories:

> "The set of categories...are brought into working relation to other bodies of theory in terms of the frame of reference. The key assumption which provides this articulation is the notion that all ...systems of human interaction...may be approached for scientific analysis by abstracting from the events which go on within them in such a way as to relate the consequences of these events to a set of concepts formulating what are hypothetically called 'functional problems of interaction systems'."

We do not suggest that such categorizations are without theoretic interest. We mean to point out, however, that they are <u>theoretically</u> rather than empirically generated, and that the "data" made available in such research reflects the interpretive abilities of theorists and coders rather than the actions of particular speakers. That is, the materials subjected to analysis are themselves products of a scientifically motivated analytic process rather than a natural interactional process.

One striking feature of much research on social interaction is the degree to which actions are described in terms of abstract analytic conceptions rather than common-sense ideas which the actors themselves would employ. Alfred Schutz (1953) suggested that social scientists mistakenly treat the subjects of their studies as homunculi or puppets who must act either irrationally or in conformity with pre-established courses of action. Harold Garfinkel has elaborated on this theme by criticizing the treatment of persons as "judgemental dopes"(1964, 1967)

who act exclusively in compliance with courses of action which are determined by psychological or cultural models. Persons are seen as products of the social world rather than its creators. In this regard, common-sense conceptions, when they are recognized at all, are treated as the "poor relations" of scientific conceptions. (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970). Garfinkel and others have proposed that social science would be enriched by the development of an "interpretive" sociology (see Wilson, 1970) which considers the interpretive abilities of interactants as well as the role of interpretive processes in the production of scientific findings. Accurate description of the particulars of interaction is seen here as a necessary point of departure for systematic inquiry, and formal structures are understood as being created by interactants themselves rather than by social scientists.

This general position has inspired a variety of theoretical and empirical studies which have come to be identified by the term ethnomethodology and which have collectively gained considerable notoriety. While a definitive account of this school has yet to be developed, evaluations of its significance have ranged from criticism as a belaboring of obvious and intuitively available features of everyday life (as in Lewis Coser's 1974 Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association) to praise as a revolutionary scientific paradigm (see Turner, 1974). Insofar as this school has influenced our research, it has done so primarily as a justification for the expenditure of analytic energies in the exploration of mundane matters.

One emergent research enterprise which is recognized as a form of "ethnomethodological work" and has been a direct influence on this study has come to be called conversation analysis. While it would be difficult to characterize concisely the defining features of all studies labeled with this term, a set of characterizations used recently by Schenkein (1978b) to describe a collection of essays he has edited might well serve as a characterization of the field:

> "These studies restrict their corpus of data to naturally occurring interactions; they share materials drawn from a wide range of circumstances in which conversations among the English-speaking, white, middle class take place; they ground their analytic concerns in detailed observations instead of preformed models; they are oriented toward conversation as an essentially interactional activity; they focus on the sequential emergence of turn-by-turn talk; they offer conceptual schemes for characterizing the interface between local context and abstract culture; they employ a standard transcript technology stimulating close attention to the productional details of conversational utterances; they share a commitment to building nonintuitive descriptions of the phenomena under study; and they offer an array of findings on the organization and artfulness of natural conversation"(p. 6).

Aside from the homogeneity of persons whose conversations are considered, which reflects the common backgrounds of researchers in this field, these characterizations summarize unifying intellectual and methodological orientations with which the present study is in essential conformity.

The original inspiration for the study of conversational interaction was the teaching and writing of the late Harvey Sacks, and much of the current research in this area is being conducted by persons who have been his students and associates. The system of conventions for the transcription of conversation was developed by Gail Jefferson in association with Sacks (see Appendix). A recent paper by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) is a seminal work which has been routinely cited in subsequent studies as both conceptual inspiration and methodological exemplar, and indeed it was

both for our research. In addition, certain findings in Sacks' early work have become guidelines for substantive investigations which followed. In his discussion of "hearers' maxims," Sacks (1972b) demonstrated that even the most elementary and informal utterances rely for their intelligibility on a system of norms of interpretation which conversationalists bring to bear on them. This implies that a conception of casual conversation as disorganized, random or irrational necessarily misses underlying rationalities available to participants, and it encourages research aimed at uncovering such rationalities. In a discussion of "membership categorization devices," Sacks (1972a) also demonstrated that conversational activity both reflects and sustains regularities of social structure and social identity. Following these leads, conversational research has explored the regularities of conversation as an activity in its own right and also the uses of conversation as a medium of social organization.

In spite of methodological and conceptual commonalities evident in research into conversational interaction, the substantive concerns of empirical studies are quite varied. Certain formal studies have considered conversational openings (Schegloff, 1968; 1977) and closings (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; see also Adato, 1975). Others have demonstrated that the course of a conversation is made formally coherent by participants' orientations to the type of interactional sequence which is in progress at a given time (see Chapter II). This point has been underscored in detailed studies of question-answer sequences (Churchill, 1973; 1978), summons-answer sequences (Schegloff, 1968), story- and joke-telling sequences (Sacks, 1973; 1974; 1978; Ryave, 1978; Jefferson, 1978), sequences involving the elicitation, delivery and receipt of compliments (Pomerantz, 1978), and so on. Participants' sequential orientations are

demonstrated also in cases of the expansion of a projected sequence (Jefferson and Schenkein, 1977), or of insertions (Schegloff, 1972) or side-sequences (Jefferson, 1972) which occur during the course of a recognizedly ongoing sequence. Troubles such as conversational errors and their correction (Jefferson, 1973; 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977) and even quasi-linguistic phenomena such as laughter (Schenkein, 1972; Jefferson, 1979) have been shown to be systematically organized by speakers.

The nature of conversation as a medium of social organization has been explicitly addressed in studies of the ways in which talk is used to convey identifications of people and places (Schegloff, 1972; Twer, 1972; Schenkein, 1971; 1975; 1976; 1978c; 1978d), and to accomplish and provide for the recognition of a variety of motivated actions such as snubs (Turner, 1970) and insults (Labov, 1972).

Formal patterns of conversation have been examined for their interrelationship with organizing features of discourse often thought to be more abstract, such as topics (Adato, 1978; Maynard, 1977), with non-verbal factors such as gaze direction (Goodwin, 1975), and with acoustic matters such as differences in the amplitude of individual utterances (Goldberg, 1978).

Perhaps the most basic findings about conversation from the perspective of social organization have been those which demonstrate that participation in conversation is anything but random and unpredictable; rather, it is governed by a complex set of norms regarding speaking, hearing and turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; Speier, 1973).

Much conversational research to date has been of a "basic" nature, that is, has been geared to generating findings about formal conversational structures. A number of studies point to the potential of conversation research for clarification of traditional social-scientific conceptions such as socialization (Schenkein, 1978d), ethnicity (Moerman, 1968), status and role (Sacks, 1972a; 1972b). There is also evidence that this kind of research will yeild findings relevant to substantive issues and practical matters. Insights have already been offered into the conduct of business or service operations (Merritt, 1976; Frankel, 1977; Schenkein, 1971; 1978c), psychotherapy (Turner, 1972; Bleiberg and Churchill, 1975) and criminal interrogation (Sanders, 1974), and also into "social problem" areas such as gender role inequality in American society (Fishman, 1978; Parlee, 1979). While this research tradition is still in its infancy, its potential appears to be great.

Procedures Used in This Study

The empirical research for this study began with the production of audiotape recordings of approximately 100 hours of conversational interaction. Tapes were made in a variety of settings and with varying numbers of participants, although the typical setting was a sociable gathering of from three to eight related persons or friends. (In all cases the conversationalists were at least acquainted, and most could be described in terms of some pre-existing social relationships.) Some early tapes were made without the knowledge or consent of the conversationalists. This stratagem was employed in the interest of

capturing naturally occurring talk uninhibited by an intrusive recorder, but was later abandoned because of ethical considerations, so that all of the examples reproduced in this study were drawn from tapes made with the knowledge and consent of conversationalists. Although persons did occasionally demonstrate orientations to the tape recorder, we found no evidence that their awareness was in any way consequential for the processes described in the study, and we could find no formal differences between interactions which took place with awareness of the presence of a recording device and those which took place without such awareness.

Detailed transcripts were made from the audiotape recordings according to transcribing conventions (listed in the Appendix) which have been described in detail by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and by Schenkein (1978a). Special care was taken to reproduce as closely as possible the formal and substantive details of conversations, since we treat these transcripts as "the 'hard data' without which sound empirical investigations are not feasible"(Speier, 1973:76).

Because this study was intended as exploratory, no attempt was made to collect materials according to a systematic "sample" which would be representative of sociologically relevant categories of persons or groupings. Given that the universe of conversations of this type is extremely large, and that no currently available theory offers a basis for systematic sampling, such an effort appeared premature. Future research may offer principled bases for conversation sampling, or may suggest qualifications to the generality of our findings. Characterizations of persons and places which we offer in connection with each of our examples are intended only to provide the reader with a sense of context, although inferences that certain processes are associated with certain classes of persons or settings cannot be ruled out.

After an initial, unmotivated examination of a number of extended transcripts, we began to focus on particular recurrent processes of interaction exhibited in our data, specifically instances of concurrent speech caused by fragmentation of gatherings into subgroups (see Chapter II). We then selected segments from our extended transcripts in which these processes could be observed, and subjected these segments to careful scrutiny. Our findings consist, then, of formal characterizations of the segments studied. (Several of the segments reproduced were drawn from other sources, such as others' published research, material given us by friends and associates, and in one case an audiotape made from a televised movie.)

In each of the segments reported below, the privacy of conversationalists was protected by the use of pseudonyms for speakers and for many of the persons and places to which they referred. Although this procedure carries the potential for certain kinds of analytic losses (see Jefferson, in press), there was no discernable effect on our findings.

In most of the materials we offer, the transcript will have been produced by a researcher who was also a participant in the conversation. Although conversation research may be subject to certain forms of bias inherent in the process of "participant-observation," we found no evidence that participant-observers either behaved differently from other participants in any manner relevant to our focus of study, or reproduced utterances inaccurately as a result of their participation. We find that the transcribing process is simplified when speakers and setting are familiar to the transcriber, and while accurate transcription of talk by strangers in unfamiliar settings is certainly possible,

difficulties in identification of speakers and utterances appear to become more pronounced prcisely in cases of concurrent speech, for example, and these cases were of particular interest for this study.

Formal Analysis of Sociability

The conversational interaction on which this study was based occurred in sociable gatherings which were not staged or designed for some research purpose but rather took place as part of the everyday life activity of the participants. The settings include informal luncheon and dinner gatherings, get-togethers, persons chatting on their front steps or porch, and the like. Topics of conversation range from domestic trivia to matters of serious consequence for the parties involved.

The conversation segments reported below are not unusual or exotic. On the contrary, they occur in mundane settings of a type which the reader is likely to recognize. Following Harold Garfinkel (1967), we suggest that it is precisely the mundaneity of these processes which causes them to be overlooked by many researchers. Our curiosity about these interactions is grounded in our common sense concern with them as members of the society in which they take place, although we are motivated by the additional aim of developing scientifically valid descriptions and conceptualizations.

We are concerned with sociable interaction not as a topic in its own right, but rather as a setting in which general patterns of interaction may be discovered. Concern with both formal sociology and the study of sociability can be traced originally to Georg Simmel (1902; 1910). Simmel's aspirations for the development of a formal

sociology were first developed in a seminal essay (1902) in which he explored interactional differences between the dyad and triad as social forms. His interest in sociability was closely related to these aspirations because he felt that, in sociable interaction, persons' practical or instrumental activities were subordinated to a process of interaction "for its own sake" which would most clearly illustrate the "pure essence of association, of the associative process" (1910:255). Simmel also suggested, although without detailed examples, a convenient focus for formal study:

> "In what measure sociability realizes to the full the abstraction of the forms of sociological interaction otherwise significant because of their content... is revealed finally in that most extensive instrument of all human common life, conversation"(1910:259).

Simmel proposed a distinction between speech occurring as a feature of "pure sociability" and speech exchanged in instrumental contexts. We find that the concept of "pure sociability" is an idealization which may not be observable in reality, either because practical matters have a way of intruding into sociable conversation, or because even apparently purposeless actions may be interpreted to have practically motivated features (see Goffman, 1959). On the other hand, interactants certainly distinguish sociable from instrumental speech in many cases. For example, Turner (1972) observed a psychotherapy session in which one member of the group complained that the arrival of the therapist ended a "nice conversation" in progress. Turner demonstrates that in group therapy situations there is an orientation to the "beginning" of the session even though the conversation which precedes the official beginning may not be markedly different from the talk to follow.

Other studies which explore such interactants' distinctions include one of the placement by a salesman of his "sales pitch" in the course of other talk (Schenkein, 1971), and another in which the participants at a meeting orient to its re-commencement after a period of conversation during a coffee break (Atkinson, Cuff and Lee, 1978). While conversationalist routinely orient to such distinctions, they also recognize cases in which distinctions may be blurred, as in the mixing of business with pleasure.

For the moment, our findings appear to be highly general. Characterization of our materials as drawn from sociable interaction is intended to offer the reader a sense of context, but it leaves open issues related to possible formal differences between various gathering-types. While we have not been able to offer a serious examination of this issue, we will point out areas in which it becomes relevant to our analysis as the analysis is developed.

CHAPTER II

MULTIPLE CONVERSATION

In the course of research we discovered that sociable gatherings often exhibit co-occurring conversations among persons who remain in one another's presence, a circumstance we will call multiple conversation. We present here an illustration of the kind of complexity with which we were confronted, and introduce our conceptual apparatus (in connection with the kinds of analytic problems to which it was addressed) together with a clarification of interpretive processes which guide our analysis.

Apparent Conversational Disorganization

In the process of transcribing and examining conversations (see Appendix), we observed interactions such as that reported in Segment 1 (page 18) which initially appeared disorganized and somewhat incoherent. Specifically, there are instances of two or more persons speaking at the same time, it is often difficult to determine who is speaking to whom, logical connections between utterances are not always evident, and so on. Since these cases were found in ongoing interaction which was generally more orderly, one might suspect that they constitute a "time out" from orderly interaction in which the usual norms and constraints do not apply. Typical of speculations about disorderly interaction which we discovered in the literature is a suggestion by Erving Goffman (1955):

Segment 1

((Members of an extended family are conversing while eating a holiday dinner.))

Cynthia [Ma, I changed my mind.
Tom [Everybody- almost everybody vote for // themselves.
Rachel Whatta you want,
// sweetheart?
Charles Is <u>that</u> right?
Tom So no one // (know I-) so no one knew I vote for myself.
Vera [(Look at his teeth.)
Rachel [You don't want it? Then don't eat it.
[Just leave it on your plate, don't eat it.
Sharon [Himself.
Tom [I just put Tom Williams.
Charles Is <u>that</u> right?
Rachel [Okay?
Tom [( ) myself.
Vera [Sharon?
Sharon What?
Vera He has teeth just like <u>you</u> used to have. Tommy.
Sharon They're not crooked.
Charles Not crooked.
Vera Not crooked, but...

> "...when a set of persons are on familiar terms and feel that they need not stand on ceremony with one another, then inattentiveness and interruptions are likely to become rife, and talk may degenerate into a happy babble of disorganized sound"(p. 40).

On the other hand, the attribution of "disorganization" is all too often directed to a situation prematurely, and tends to obscure the fact that no serious examination of the situation has been attempted. In countless "community studies," for example, researchers have studied areas thought to be disorganized, only to discover a previously overlooked complexity of organization (see Whyte, 1955; Gans, 1962). As our research proceeded, we discovered that these materials were anything but "babble," and that the interactants were oriented to complex organizational features.

We began our inquiries by considering three possible sources of the apparent disorganization in our materials. First, these cases might represent "deviant" or unusual patterns of interaction. Second, our method of transcribing these utterances might be ill-suited to the task of illustrating their essential features. Third, our tacit conception of <u>conversation</u> (drawn from both common sense and the available literature) might be inadequate for the study of complex interaction. Each of these matters will be considered in this chapter.

Interactional deviance can only be identified in contrast with normal or preferred forms. Much of the essential orderliness of conversation has been documented in the classic study by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, (1974). One of the basic features of conversation which they treat as both a social norm (that is, a sanctionable expectation) and a custom (an empirical regularity) is: "In any conversation...overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time"(p. 700). While instances of two or more persons

speaking at the same time are not uncommon, they are typically quite brief. Conversationalists' orientations to the one-at-a-time norm are thought to account for this brevity, and such orientations are often illustrated by "remedial work" (aborted utterances, repeats, apologies, etc.) in cases of the norm's violation (pp. 723-724). Furthermore, a substantial percentage of overlaps (instances where a person begins to talk before the prior speaker has finished) occur at "turn-transition-relevance-places," which are points in any utterance at which potential next-speakers may reasonably anticipate that the utterance is complete. The overlap results because the current speaker continues speaking beyond the point of expected completion, rather than because of intended deviance by the subsequent speaker (see Jefferson, 1973).

Co-occurring speech can be observed through the early course of Segment 1. Simultaneous starts by two or even three parties (as indicated by large brackets) and overlaps (indicated by dual oblique lines at the point in the first utterance at which another person begins to speak) characterize this example, and only one of the first thirteen utterances goes to completion without concurrent speech. Moreover, there are no obvious instances of remedial work, and considerable evidence of apparent insensitivity to transition-relevance (that is, the second speaker begins before the first reaches a point of projectable completion).

While the conversationalists initially produce talk which appears to be in violation of the one-at-a-time norm, they demonstrate in the final five utterances that they are capable of conformity to conventional one-at-a-time turn-taking. Since the co-occurring talk cannot be accounted for by sheer conversational incompetence, and since it proceeds without overt negative sanctions for norm-violation, we must consider the

possibility that it represents a legitimate and sanctionable variation.

Harold Garfinkel (1967) has pointed out that persons do not follow norms in a rigid and unthinking manner, but rather by using their interpretive abilities to recognize circumstances where norms apply and determine the specific actions which constitute conformity in a particular context. Every norm, according to Garfinkel, carries with it an implicit et cetera property (p. 73), according to which the norm can be invoked where appropriate and ignored where it is not appropriate. In the case at hand, the early section of Segment 1 may represent not a lapse in orientation to the one-at-a-time norm, but rather an orientation to its irrelevance to the current context. Alternatively, persons may be oriented to a variation of the norm that is currently preferred to its simplest form. In either case, an attribution of deviance will be erroneous.

In many gatherings, conversationalists will anticipate an orientation by all parties to a single focus of attention. The notion of a single or central focus is often essential to researchers' conceptions of conversation as a process. For example, Goffman (1955) explains that

> "These rules of talk pertain not to spoken interaction as an ongoing process, but to an occasion of talk or episode of interaction as a naturally bounded unit. This unit consists of the total activity that occurs during the time that a given set of participants have accredited one another for talk and maintain a single moving focus of attention (p. 35).
>
> A single focus of thought and visual attention, and a single flow of talk, tends to be maintained and to be legitimated as officially representative of the encounter"(p. 34).

While Goffman's model of conversation appears somewhat idealized (the notion of a "single focus of thought," for example, would be at least empirically questionable), conversationalists may be observed to

distinguish extraneous talk from that which is part of their mutually recognized interaction. A comparable distinction permits Atkinson, Cuff and Lee (1978), for example, to identify the re-commencement of a meeting in utterances set against the "general background noise" of a coffee break. The "noise" to which they refer, however, is actually the co-occurrence of a number of separate conversations which are sanctionable during the break. In other words, the meeting and break are both accomplished via talk, but the norm calling for a single focus does not operate in both contexts.

The norms of conversation would appear to be embedded in norms for types of gathering in which conversation occurs. When multiple conversation, that is, two or more co-occurring conversations, legitimately occurs in a gathering, the norm of one person speaking at a time is not irrelevant, rather it takes a new form in which the case of only one person speaking will actually be dispreferred! This is the case because the conduct of each component conversation requires actions which multiply speech at the level of the gathering as a whole. Specifically, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) note that turn-transitions are expected to occur without a noticeable gap between consecutive utterances, such that the overall course of talk will be continuous. Where multiple conversation occurs, we propose that by extension from the "one-at-a-time" and "no gap" norms, the norm for n conversations will be that n persons speak at a time (that is, one current speaker in each current conversation). Consequently, more or less than one person speaking at a given time will be deviant for an individual conversation, and more or less than n persons speaking at a time will be deviant for multiple conversation. Stated differently,

two or more persons speaking concurrently would represent competition for a turn within a single conversation, but n persons may speak concurrently in multiple conversation because there are n turns to be taken and the speakers are not necessarily in competition. If the interaction in Segment 1 can be characterized as an instance of multiple conversation, individual utterances can be assigned to component conversations rather than to the gathering as a whole.

While the possibility and legitimacy of multiple conversation have been recognized by a number of researchers, little or no analytic attention has been paid to the phenomenon. Indeed, only one example of multiple conversation could be found in the literature (in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974:713-714), and that example goes unanalyzed in the report which contains it (the example is reproduced below as Segment 14). To some extent this neglect has been due to an attempt by investigators to formulate the most general model of conversation prior to analysis of conversational complexities. Another cause has been a focus on types of interaction or gatherings in which multiple conversation is either technically unlikely (as in telephone conversations) or situationally dispreferred (as in group psychotherapy). Our concern here is not simply that such research has ignored multiple conversation, but that generalizations about "conversation" drawn from settings in which certain conversational forms are effectively excluded significantly oversimplify the interactional process.

It has been suggested that, as the number of parties to a conversation increases, so does the likelihood of conversational bifurcation, if only because the increased numbers place greater demands on the system for distribution of speaking turns (Sacks, Schegloff and

Jefferson, 1974:713). On the other hand, we have observed extended interactions in which as many as eight persons maintain a single conversation without breaking off into separate groupings. We conclude that, while conversational fragmentation is a systemic possibility, it will be facilitated or inhibited depending upon current circumstances. In group therapy settings (from which many of the studies we cite have drawn data), the effect of numbers is limited by expectations that a single conversation will persist, that all talk will be available to all parties, that one of the parties (the therapist) occupies a privileged status and can sanctionably constrain other parties to conform to situational expectations, and so on. In family get-togethers, cocktail parties, and other unfocused interactions, multiple conversation will often be preferred over a single focus of attention., and egalitarian norms may prevent any individual from engineering a single conversational focus. The unit "a single conversation," in our emerging conception, is one form of conversational activity, and not necessarily a preferred form in all circumstances.

In all of our materials, single and multiple conversation appear to be equally sanctionable, so that persons are observed to participate in both forms over the course of their interaction. Our consequent aim has been identification of processes which result in one from the other, that is, the characterization of shifts from single to multiple conversation, and vice versa. Where multiple conversation emerges from more focused interaction, we will attempt to account for the bifurcation of an original single conversation, and to examine the course of component conversations until (as often happens) persons later restore a single focus.

Problems in Transcribing Multiple Conversation

As we begin to develop a conception of multiple conversation, we need to reconsider our approach to transcription of the verbal events which comprise it. We noted earlier that Segment 1 appeared incoherent on first observation, and now propose that this was so because the format used is inappropriate for depicting multiple conversation. The procedure in which utterances are listed one after the other in a single progression is appropriate where conversationalists are likely to monitor all utterances for their meanings and relationships, and to take note of who-is-speaking-to-whom as a matter of course. In multiple conversation, however, each utterance is of direct concern only for the subset of persons involved in the component conversation in which the utterance is heard to take place. Consequently, consecutive utterances in the gathering as a whole will be products of different groupings and therefore have no necessary relationship to one another. In other words, co-occurring talk which would be overlapping or competitive in a single conversation will be selectively attended by participants in multiple conversation. As Speier (1973) points out:

> "Every time you see a place on a transcript or hear a place in a conversation (or a tape of it) where the rule 'one speaker at a time' seems to be violated, you cannot describe it as an interruption without further investigating how the overlap was organized by the speakers as an intended violation... This is so because it may very well be that speakers are not overlapping by violation of the rule, but because there is more than one conversation taking place at a time in a gathering... Obviously, two conversations going on at once is nothing more than acoustic overlapping, such as a tape recorder might pick up, but not confusing or interruptive to speakers themselves"(p. 103).

Speier's comments fail to address an important issue, namely, how are we to distinguish co-occurring speech which results from multiple conversation from co-occurring speech which results from interruptions or competition for a turn in a single conversation? Since the tape recorder collects talk without regard to social differentiation, the analyst must reconstruct the groupings according to which the conversationalists were separated. In order to accomplish this, the analyst must recognize patterns of utterances which can be inferred as those patterns constructed by interactants. This requires an assumption of correspondence between interpretive procedures shared by conversationalist and analyst.

We will, for the moment, suggest that the analyst is inevitably an"outsider" in relation to observed interaction, while the conversationalist is an "insider." We make this distinction as a heuristic device intended to aid in our exploration of possible differences in the interpretive tasks faced by each. (The case of an analyst who has been a participant in the conversation studied is interesting because such a person can be seen to take an insider's and outsider's perspective at different times.) Each appears to face both advantages and disadvantages in interpreting conversational activity. The participant obviously has access to biographical and non-verbal information which relates both to the meaning of utterances and to the connections among utterances and between utterance and speaker. In addition, the participant can respond directly to ambiguous talk by attempting some form of clarification. The non-participating analyst lacks certain information and faces what Schegloff (in press) calls an "overhearer's problem" with regard to ambiguous talk. On the other hand, the analyst can interpret any given utterance

by drawing on later talk which is unavailable to the participant at the time the utterance occurs. The participant must develop an instant interpretation and may be held accountable for its propriety in subsequent interaction. Goffman's notion of a "babble of disorganized sound" suggests the perspective of an outsider who lacks access to organizational matters available to participants. If we consider the experience of a person who arrives at a cocktail party and opens the door to a senseless congeries of utterances, such a person will begin to make sense of talk as he begins to participate. The analyst must penetrate into the situation without participating and, unlike the incoming participant, must attempt to make sense out of all talk, not just that of a subgroup. The participant who later attempts to analyze conversational data may bring inside information to bear on an interpretation, and may benefit from hindsight by discovering features that were not evident at the time of an initial interpretation, but once removed from the original setting may not recall all relevant contextual features and will not have had access to features of component conversations in which he did not participate.

In spite of these differences, we propose that the participant and analyst share an interest in interpreting, that is, properly hearing and understanding, a series of utterances, and that both will take advantage of certain organizational resources available in the talk itself in order to accomplish this task. This interpretive process will involve such matters as identification of what is said, by whom and to whom it was said, the relationship of what is said to other things said previously and subsequently, and so on. Misinterpretations and misunderstanding are systemic possibilities for participant and analyst alike.

The analyst initially confronts these basic interpretive issues in producing the transcript. We considered a number of alternative transcript formats which appeared to offer a clearer picture of the same kind of interaction as that reported in Segment 1. One of these formats (which was suggested by Lindsey Churchill and Richard Frankel) is illustrated in Segment 2 (page 29). Segment 2 is actually a rearrangement of the same interactional events reported in Segment 1. This transcript should be read in the manner of a musical score, with the solid horizontal lines separating events which actually occur in a temporal flow. If the panels are separated and placed end-to-end, the entire participation of each person will be located on the same horizontal plane. For example, Rachel's "Just leave it on your plate, don't eat it" is a continuous utterance which happens to be distributed between the second and third panels of the segment.

We have made no further use of this particular transcribing format in this study because another format (employed in all remaining segments) provides a more effective display of the particular processes with which we are concerned. We introduce it here because it illustrates the "flow" of conversation in a manner which highlights a number of issues in conversational interpretation with which we will be concerned in the remainder of this chapter.

We propose that an essential issue in conversational interpretation is the following: <u>For any and every utterance in conversation, how is it possible for the observer to determine who is speaking to whom?</u> The term "observer" is used to include both participant and analyst, and the term

Segment 2

Cynthia Ma, I changed my mind.

Tom Everybody- almost everybody vote for themselves.

Rachel Whatta you want, sweetheart?

Charles Is that right?

Vera

Sharon

Cynthia

Tom So no one (know I-) so no one knew I vote for myself. I just put Tom Williams.

Rachel You don't want it? Then don't eat it. Just leave it on your plate,

Charles

Vera (Look at his teeth.)

Sharon Himself.

Cynthia

Tom ( )myself.

Rachel don't eat it. Okay?

Charles Is that right?

Vera Sharon? He has teeth just like you used to have.

Sharon What?

"conversation" is used to include situations of both single and multiple conversation. While we might hypothesize that the determination would be more difficult for analysts than for participants, and in cases of multiple conversation as compared with single conversation, for the moment we intend to direct attention to the issue as a general one.

In a single conversation, misinterpretations of who-is-speaking-to-whom take two basic forms. In the first, a hearer does not hear an addressed utterance as such. For example, in a conversation between three persons driving cross-country and seated next to one another in the front seat of an automobile, a lapse in talk was followed by:

A: So how d'ya feel.

B: Who, me?

A: Yeah.

B: Not too bad.

In this instance, person B is seated within three feet of person A but cannot assume that he is being addressed. (In many other cases there would simply be no response by the person addressed.) The question initially posed by A eventually receives an answer, but only after the inserted sequence "Who, me?"-"Yeah." (This brief exchange is an example of a general class of sequences which we might characterize as composed of a "mutuality-verification-request" and "mutuality-verification.")

A second common form of misinterpretation involves a hearer who incorrectly perceives an utterance as directed to someone other than the person to whom it is actually addressed. For example, we

observed two persons with the same given name entering a gathering at approximately the same time when the following occurred:

Ken: Oh look, there's Sam. Haya, Sam.
Sam A: [Hi.
Sam B: [Hayadoin'

In this case, both persons named Sam make an assumption (warranted for only one of them) that they are the particular Sam being addressed.

In describing the determination of who-is-speaking-to-whom as a general interactional issue, we do not suggest that errors of this sort are the only places at which the issue is attended. Rather, we would propose that this determination is an everpresent issue, attended at the occurrence of every utterance, and most often made by participants without difficulty or ambiguity. In cases of multiple conversation, each hearer will be responsible for making this determination only for utterances recognized to be part of the conversation in which he is a participant, and he may sanctionably disattend many others (see Chapter III), while in cases of single conversation the hearer may be held accountable for making the determination for every utterance. The analyst, however, must make this determination in virtually every instance, and must search the details of interaction for such interpretive resources as are available to members of the culture in which the interaction takes place.

Our interpretive procedure involved inspecting the individual utterances in Segment 2 for interrelationships, and rearranging the data in such a manner as to differentiate three distinct conversations, as illustrated in the transcription format in Segment 3 (page 32).

Segment 3

Cynthia	Ma, I changed my mind.
	(0.5)
Rachel	Whatta you want, sweetheart?
	(0.5)
	You don't want it?
	Then don't eat it.
	Just leave it on your plate, don't eat it.
	(1.0)
	Okay?

Tom	Everybody- almost everybody vote for themselves.
Charles	Is <u>that</u> right?
Tom	So no one (know I-) so no one knew I vote for myself.
Sharon	[Himself.
Tom	I just put Tom Williams.
Charles	Is <u>that</u> right?
Tom	( ) myself.

Vera	(Look at his teeth.)
Vera	Sharon?
Sharon	What?
Vera	He has teeth just like <u>you</u> used to have, Tommy.
Sharon	They're not crooked.
Charles	Not crooked.
Vera	Not crooked, but...

Conversational Norms as Guides to the Interpretation of Talk

The arrangement of data in Segment 3, we propose, more effectively illustrates the perspective of the participant in a situation of multiple conversation than either Segment 1 or Segment 2. The participant does not hear all utterances as co-occurring and overlapping, as in Segment 1. Neither does he hear all utterances as part of an undifferentiated flow, as in Segment 2 (although this may be reflective of the analyst's initial hearing of the interaction). Rather, he hears a subset of all utterances as belonging to the conversation in which he is participating, and hears other utterances as belonging to other conversations. Nevertheless, he must be able to distinguish utterances which belong from those which do not, just as the analyst does in arranging the data. This is no easy matter since, as we shall see in later chapters, persons can and do shift their participation from one conversation to another.

We begin with the superficial observation that conversations are coherent to the degree to which individual utterances appear to be interrelated or to "follow" one another. This does not appear to be a requirement that we are imposing on our materials for analytic purposes, because the non sequitur is as troubling in conversation as in philosophy. The coherence of certain groupings of utterances may not, however, be clearly identifiable. Consider a hypothetical example:

A: What is the capital of New Jersey?

B: Let me think. It will come to me.

((A and B are joined by C))

A: Well, let's go to class.

B: Trenton is the capital of New Jersey!

C: Huh?

Our understanding of the sense of "Trenton is the capital of New Jersey!" is based on its relationship to A's initial request for information. If we were to begin to observe the interaction after the occurrence of the original request we would, like person C, be puzzled by B's remark. In principle, moreover, any current utterance may depend for its intelligibility on relationships hearers can identify between that utterance and other (not necessarily immediately prior) utterances, between the utterance and features of shared experience of the participants, and so on. (Anthropologist Susan Philips, cited in Parlee, 1979, describes a Native American custom of persons not giving any indication of having heard a question at the time it is asked, and then offering its answer unsolicited as much as a week later.) Conversation analysts who necessarily lack information on speech exchanged prior to the data they have collected face a serious limitation here, and it is small consolation that the problem is shared with newcomers to groups and persons with bad memories.

In spite of the potential limitations to the process of interpretation of conversational coherence, we were able to assign each of the utterances in this initial segment (and most of the utterances in our later segments) to particular conversations, and to determine with some confidence the matter of who-was-speaking-to whom in nearly every case, which suggests that the resources we relied

upon were empirically available and that the interaction was, in fact, socially organized. In this process of interpretation we were oriented to a variety of norms of interpretation which we share with these conversationalists. While the norms themselves are possible to state in a rather straightforward manner, the manner in which they operate cannot be as easily stated.

The concept of social norm has been widely used in the social sciences to refer to rules which guide behavior in interaction. The sense of what a norm is and how it operates, however, varies considerably depending on the particular writer using the term. In a recent issue of the journal Current Anthropology (vol. 20, September 1979), Richard Feinberg attempted to summarize the theory of culture developed by David Schneider, in which the concept of norms plays a pivotal role. In the same issue, fourteen other social scientists were invited to comment on Feinberg's paper, and several of these extended comments focus explicitly on Schneider's or Feinberg's conception of norms. Although the fifteen different positions taken represent too complex a range of conceptions to be summarized here, even a casual reading of the exchange makes evident the conceptual disarray surrounding the most fundamental issues in social science(see Feinberg, 1979; the commentary, especially the remarks by J. Gray, A. Mark, P. Ravenhill, and K. Watson-Gegeo; and Feinberg's reply).

In sociology, the classic Durkheimian position appears to be that norms operate as external constraints imposed on interactants by the culture in which they participate. An alternative position taken by Garfinkel (1967) suggests that interactants themselves project a sense of norms onto their experiences in order to give those experiences

coherence. Interaction proceeds, in this view, through persons' use of the "documentary method," whereby the individual attempts to understand particular occurrences as reflective of an underlying pattern (p. 78). Garfinkel often illustrates this process by "making trouble," that is, by involving persons in experiments in which their normal attributions are called into question. His point, however, appears to be that interactants' attributions are typically validated (or at least not challenged) by their own and others' subsequent attributions, which gives rise to a sense of shared norms, and it is such local validation which permits interaction to proceed. Because the norms are projected by interactants themselves, persons are better understood as "norm-users" than as "norm-followers"(see Churchill, 1973).

We propose that talk is governed by conversational maxims, norms which operate as rules-of-thumb rather than as external constraints or as rigid rules which permit no flexibility(the inspiration for this can be found in Sacks' 1972b, concept of "hearers' maxims"). The most general of these we call interpretation maxims, and their function is to permit us to project order onto utterances in order to make them intelligible. Interpretation maxims permit conversationalists to make sense of one another's speech, and permit the analyst to make sense of conversation after the fact. We will propose a number of these maxims in this chapter.

Beyond simply making sense of talk, the conversationalist (but perhaps not the analyst) must also use a variety of other norms which govern his immediate involvement. We propose that a second category of conversational maxims, which we call attention maxims, guide the interactants' mutual orientations (see Chapter III) and a third category,

participation maxims, guide their actual involvement in talk (see Chapter IV).

The conceptual scheme described to this point, and the related development of transcribing conventions, each reflect our efforts to comprehend verbal interaction of the kind evident in Segments 1, 2 and 3, and it is this interpretive process to which we now turn. If we consider a particular utterance, for example, the first of two occasions on which Charles says "Is that right?," we may observe that in Segment 1 this utterance is listed after and slightly overlapping Rachel's "Whatta you want, sweetheart?" While Charles' utterance follows Rachel's in an acoustic sense, it does not appear to follow it in any interactional sense. While we could treat Charles' utterance as a random remark, we find ourselves compelled to search for some sense it might contain. We propose that an effort to make sense of interaction is a requirement which persons typically set for themselves, and can be summarized in the following fundamental interpretation maxim: (1) On the occurrence of any utterance, attempt to hear it as interactionally sensible, unless it has been pre-defined as interactionally insensible. The hearer will be exempted from responsibility for making sense of talk that has been defined as "schizophrenic," as "speaking in tongues," and the like, which is to say that he may attempt to make sense in these cases but cannot be held accountable for doing so. Under ordinary circumstances, the hearer will be expected to at least make an attempt.

Once the relevance of a search for interactional sense is operative, the hearer is self-guided by the following maxim: (2) Attempt to hear the utterance-in-progress as related to prior talk or action.

This maxim establishes the relevance of a retrospective search, but does not establish the kind of relationship that will be sought. With regard to Charles' first "Is that right?," then, we find that the utterance is itself constructed in such a way that it emphasizes a retrospective relationship, that is, it is responsive to some "that" in prior talk, Yet, its possible relationship with Rachel's prior utterance, particularly that part of her utterance which is complete when Charles begins to speak ("Whatta you want,") is not evident. If there were no other prior talk to be inspected for its possible relationship with Charles' utterance, conversationalists could hear the utterance as a non sequitur but, in line with maxim (2), would be obligated to seek some conceivable relationship with Rachel's utterance. In the segment under consideration, however, Charles' utterance is preceded by a number of other utterances. This offers the hearer the opportunity of selecting from prior talk such utterances as may be related to that in progress. While this may be seen as a hearer's (and analyst's) resource, it is one which requires interpretive work in multiple conversations which can be largely avoided in a single conversation. That is, the hearer must search for a relationship with prior talk, but recognizes that not all prior talk is part of the same conversation, which makes his selection problem more complex.

When we examine the data as displayed in Segment 2, we observe that three prior utterances can be selected as related to Charles'. Of these three, we selected Tom's, and we grouped those two in Segment 3 as occurring within the same conversation. At the same time, we grouped Cynthia and Rachel's utterances together as occurring within a different conversation. Moreover, we have shown these data to many other persons,

professionals and laymen, who are unanimous in their agreement with our inference. We note this not as validation of our inference, which may of course be erroneous in spite of this convergence, but rather as an indication that the interaction itself displays features which permit a particular interpretation. This raises the question of precisely which features of the interaction lead us to our interpretation.

Our proposed interpretation maxims appear to operate in conjunction with the specific regularites of conversation suggested by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). Specifically, they suggest that transitions between successive turns should be accomplished without either gap or overlap. In the material at hand, Charles' "Is that right?" occurs shortly after Tom's prior utterance, without either a noticeable gap or any overlap. If we consider the placement of Charles' remark with respect to Cynthia's prior remark we do observe a considerable gap between the two, and Charles' utterance overlaps with Rachel's, which makes a Rachel-Charles interaction less likely. To be sure, the interaction is not so clearcut, so that the fact of Charles' overlap with Rachel's prior remark need not eliminate the possibility that it is responsive to it, especially since the overlap occurs at a point of possible turn-transition. In addition, certain substantive elements of the talk are likely to influence our interpretation. For example, Charles is not likely to be Cynthia's "Ma", which suggests that Charles' remark is not directed to hers. At the same time, we are aware that children occasionally make errors in terms of address, and that responses to utterances occasionally come from persons other than those to whom the utterance is addressed, so that a Cynthia-Charles interaction cannot be ruled out.

Each of the criteria we have suggested appear to be fallible, and the fact that we do not hear "Is that right?" to follow "Whatta you want," even though it occurs immediately after it suggests that some other criterion is relevant.

We propose that our attributions of utterance-relationships are based strongly on the possible co-incumbency of two or more utterances in interactional units which we will call interactional sequences. In an interactional sequence, individual utterances are linked not by mere placement or acoustic adjacency (although those matters are not unimportant) but rather according to some culturally-derived relationship between types of utterances. The occasion of the first type of utterance projects subsequent occurrence of the second type, and so on. A sequence can be as brief as a two-utterance "adjacency pair"(Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) such as a question and answer, or can be a string of utterances which are heard to "go together" in an elaborate or "expanded sequence"(Jefferson and Schenkein, 1977). A conversation can be understood as a progression of interactional sequences as a significant feature of its organization. This organization is facilitated by a maxim which specifies the kind of relationship the hearer should seek: (3) Attempt to hear the utterance-in-progress as part of an interactional sequence. Maxim (3) permits us to hear "Everybody- almost everbody vote for themselves"-"Is that right?" and "Ma, I changed my mind"-"Whatta you want, sweetheart?" as sequentially related.

In order to properly interpret utterances, however, persons need to seek not only the location of a given utterance in an interactional

sequence, but to identify it as a particular utterance-type within a particular sequence-type. For example, if a current utterance can be heard as a "question," this projects an "answer" as an appropriate next action, while if a current utterance can be heard as an "answer," this determination presupposes that some prior utterance can be identified as a "question" which provoked it. Most generally, the hearer does not interpret individual utterances as units. Rather, he uses retrospective and prospective linkages between an individual utterance and those which occur before and after that utterance.

It becomes clear that the maxims we propose are norms of a very general sort which should perhaps be characterized as"meta-norms." Where a more specific conversational norm would provide that, on the occurrence of a question the next utterance should be an answer, our interpretation maxims permit conversationalists to recognize such objects as questions and answers. While the actual progression would appear to be: recognition of type of utterance, recognition of type of sequence, recognition of related utterance-type(s), and so on, the situation in each particular case of interpretation is likely to vary depending on the types of utterance and sequence recognized. In general, we suggest that the hearer would have to first recognize a current utterance and then project or anticipate features of subsequent talk. One maxim that would apply would be the following: (4) If you hear a current utterance as initiating a recognizeable interactional sequence, hear the subsequent utterance as continuing that sequence. In other words, once the current utterance-type is identified, the range of utterances that may properly follow is limited, not in terms of their substance, but in terms of the sequential role which they are expected to play. This process permits

the hearer to make an infinite variety of utterances comprehensible by assigning them to a finite number of functional categories. (For example, we might have no way of anticipating what, specifically, another person is going to say in response to our speech, but if we have asked a question we can anticipate that, whatever else the next utterance contains, it is likely to contain an answer to our question.) This process continues to operate at the termination of a sequence, according to the following maxim: (5) If you hear a current utterance as terminating an interactional sequence, hear the subsequent utterance as initiating a forthcoming interactional sequence. While this maxim is very general, it actually reduces the range of possible next actions considerably in that it limits them to utterance-types which can occur as "first utterances" in some sequence (i.e., excluding such objects as answers, replies, etc.).

Our aim in this section has been neither the elaboration of a complete system of interpretation maxims, which would be a monumental task, nor the specification of a series of barriers to conversational creativity, since violation of these maxims is common. Rather, we hope to have illustrated the broad outlines of a conception of conversational interpretation which is in harmony with the manner in which we made analytic sense of these materials. To the extent that our interpretations of connections between utterances rely on the plausibility of the connections made, we suggest that conversationalists' interpretations rely on a similar plausibility, although, when in doubt, the conversationalist may check his interpretation with others in the gathering.

We also have attempted to convey the importance of interactional sequences as conversational units. We propose that our interpretive process of "matching" utterances as co-occupants of particular sequences parallels interpretations made by participants. In this regard, the sequence appears to have features in common with other conversational units. For example, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) note that conversational turns are organized around "transition-relevance-places." Our investigations suggest that persons orient to transition-relevance-places for sequences as well. That is, when one sequence ends, another can properly begin. The importance of sequence-transition-places for our research has to do with their being, by definition, occasions for one form of interaction to give way to another. Although we will explore this idea in another chapter, it can be noted here that sequence-transition-places appear to be the most common setting for changes of topic and for shifts in the personnel involved in a conversation.

Conceptual Clarification

It may now be noted that an interpretive machinery which permits persons to recognize relationships among utterances also permits them to recognize the absence of relationship. Given the situational propriety of multiple conversation, an additional maxim will permit mangement of unrelated talk: (6) If you cannot hear a current utterance as related to other talk in your conversation, hear it as an utterance in a different conversation. Utterances so defined can legitimately be disattended (see Chapter III), and so are not heard as requiring integration with local sequences. This maxim does not preclude the

possibility than an utterance not intended to be included in one's conversation would be treated as if it were, but it obligates speakers to produce utterances whose sequential relevance is evident so as to avoid being disattended. For example, if we consider the initial utterance by Vera ("Look at his teeth"), we observe that it is not clearly related to prior talk. If it is intended as the beginning of a new sequence, it is also not properly placed, that is, it does not occur at a sequence-transition-place in either of the two currently ongoing conversations (specifically, Rachel has just asked a question of Cynthia, while Tom is in the process of telling a story to Charles and Sharon). The conversation projected by Vera's initial remark is not consummated until she begins again with a specific summons: ("Sharon?") which receives a remark. The summons, although it also co-occurs with speech by two other persons, is placed at a possible turn- and sequence-transition-place, namely Charles' second "Is <u>that</u> right?," which permits Sharon and Charles to treat Tom's story as essentially complete. In summary, Vera's initial remark does not permit others to interpret it as having a relationship with ongoing talk, which permits them to disattend it as possibly part of some other conversation, while her second remark (because of its placement at a transition point and its form as a specific summons) is hearable as having a proper place in ongoing talk, which puts the others under some obligation to respond.

We are now in a position to offer some tentative definitions of concepts that will play a major role in our analysis. First, we define a <u>conversation</u> as an interactional unit which includes at least one interactional sequence. Second, we define <u>multiple conversation</u> as

the co-occurrence of at least two interactional sequences. With regard to the data at hand (see Segment 3), we identify two concurrent conversations between Cynthia-Rachel and Tom-Charles-Sharon at the beginning of this interaction. Vera's initial remark is not included in either of these conversations, but does not constitute a third conversation because it receives no response. By the time that Vera's second utterance has received a response the two prior conversations have been terminated, so that the interaction at the conclusion of this segment is a single conversation consisting of Vera-Sharon-Charles.

The requirement that a conversation contain at least one interactional sequence permits hearers to differentiate a second conversation co-occurring with the one in which they are involved from individual, extraneous remarks, but this determination may become more difficult if there is already at least one other conversation going on. That is, if Vera's "Look at his teeth" had co-occurred with only a single conversation, persons could identify it as an extraneous remark, but in the actual situation reported each person is likely to be aware that there is already a second ongoing conversation in progress, to which Vera's remark might be a contribution.

The importance of each of our proposed conceptions will become more evident as they are brought to bear on a variety of specific problems in subsequent chapters. At this point it may be useful to offer a few remarks placing these concepts in perspective. First, the interpretive procedures we describe were matters of conscious decision

in the allocation of each individual utterance to a particular place in our conception of the gathering's organization. For the conversationalist, on the other hand, such interpretations are likely to occur without conscious deliberation except in cases where the interpretation cannot be made instantly.

Second, we do not mean to suggest that the existence of a norm or maxim eliminates possibilities for deviation or variation in utterance construction. While a question is expected to be followed by an answer, research on this sequence-type suggests that a question is followed by a direct answer in only a small proportion of empirical cases (see Churchill, 1973; 1978). For interactional sequences generally, the initiation of a sequence may be followed by its consummation, or by one of a number of variations such as the abortion of the sequence (e.g.: the unanswered question), insertion of utterance-types not originally anticipated (see Jefferson, 1972; Schegloff, 1972), expansion of the sequence beyond its originally projected course (Jefferson and Schenkein, 1977), or even a transformation of the sequence into a different form altogether (e.g: from a question-answer sequence into an argument).

Third, the sequence as a conversational unit is not necessarily an independent entity. While certain brief conversations might consist minimally of a single sequence, a sequence of summons-answer (as in "Sharon?"-"What?") is invariably a preface to some other business, such that a conversation begun with a summons will consist of at least two sequences (see Schegloff, 1968).

Fourth, there are likely to be organizing units of conversation which coordinate groups of sequences in systematic ways. The topic, for example, is likely to be recognized to be present over a variety of sequence-types, although this is an organizational feature about which we can say little at this time (see Adato, 1978). In addition, social scientists have long recognized a phenomenon termed the definition of the situation (see McHugh, 1968). If a situation is defined as an "interview" or "interrogation," for example, it will be understood that the completion of a question-answer sequence will project not any new sequence but a particular sequence, that is, another question-answer sequence.

Finally, while the formal ordering of sequences gives interaction some predictability, the overall course of any given conversation will be essentially unpredictable. Asking a stranger for the time of day may bring forth a minimal response or may initiate extensive interaction. Moreover, while many attempts at initiating conversation succeed, many others fail (see Fishman, 1978). Social interaction may be understood as involving persons in projecting orderly patterns on one another while they retain the right to modify or ignore projected patterns.

This chapter has focused on issues which, while they reflect conversationalists' interpretive actions, have been developed out of our methodological and conceptual efforts to account for interactional complexity. In subsequent chapters the focus shifts to issues faced more explicitly by conversationalists as they attempt to influence one another's attention and participation.

CHAPTER III

CONVERSATIONAL ATTENTION

A single conversation will occasionally undergo a bifurcation which results in fragmentation of the gathering and a course of activity which we call multiple conversation. This suggests that conditions which give rise to bifurcation can be observed in a single conversation prior to its schism.

Studies of single conversations often refer to a single or central focus of attention. This central focus gives way to multiple foci in multiple conversation. We have examined instances of the transformation of a single focus of attention which resulted in bifurcation and also considered parallel occurrences in conversations which did not bifurcate. Our findings suggest that the conception of a single or central focus of attention is an idealization which cannot be taken as an empirical description of conversational activity in general. In fact, any single conversation is likely to exhibit recurrent shifts of attention. Some shifts, as when first one speaker and then another gains attention, are consistent with a single focus, and we might speak of a "moving" focus. Others, however, demonstrate that persons may exchange speech as one of a number of involvements, such that any current talk will receive only partial or divided attention. It would appear that a central focus of attention is

an achievement which participants cannot take for granted. This achievement is set against a variety of tensions, including occasionally simultaneous and conflicting demands on an individual's attention.

Attention and Disattention

Conversationalists regularly monitor one another's actions for evidence that speech is being attended. Hearers are expected to demonstrate attention by appropriate verbal or non-verbal responses, and we will restrict our conception of attention to such overt verbal displays. We will also examine instances of disattention, in which persons are not simply ignoring or inattentive of a given utterance (they may in fact be listening) but rather overtly fail to demonstrate attention to it either by failing to respond or by producing subsequent talk which is insensitive to it. Our concern is with the process according to which attention is paid, withheld and recognized. In this regard, any gathering may be described in terms of a particular social organization of attention which it exhibits at each point in its course.

In Segment 4 (page 50) we observe a conversation in which two parties, Sharon and Carl, have been taking most of the turns at talk while two others, Walt and Rob, have either remained silent or offered brief comments indicating their attention to Sharon-Carl exchanges. This segment begins with a question by Sharon which is followed by simultaneous utterances from Carl and Walt. Carl demonstrates his continued attention to Sharon by offering an answer to her question.

Segment 4

(While sitting on the front steps of their apartment building, Rob and Sharon are discussing childrens' religious training with Carl, a neighbor, and Walt, Rob's father.)

Sharon But does Alison have to
go to church every Sunday?

Carl No they don't ( )

Sharon No?

Carl ( ),
were your children
baptized in that church?

Sharon My children aren't baptized
// period.

Rob heh, heh

Carl O:h.
(1.0)

Rob They're- they're
// p- pagans.

Sharon We'dn' know which way
wi gonna go.

Walt They're pagans.

Walt Listen, I wanna see-
I wanna see those
Mazdas-
I wanna see how those
n- ingines look.
(1.0)
Let's go and
we just-

Walt, however, exhibits only a limited form of attention to Sharon. Specifically, his utterance does occur at a point of turn-transition, that is, at the completion of her utterance. On the other hand, the completion of Sharon's utterance is not a point of sequence-transition, because it is a question and projects an answer as a proper next turn. Not only is Walt's utterance not an answer, but it proposes a new course of action and new topic, and is therefore interactionally out of order.

Walt's proposal is constructed with a conventional attention-getting device ("Listen,"), a statement of his interest in individual terms ("I wanna see- I wanna see those Mazdas-"), a specification of his interest ("I wanna see how those n- ingines look"), and, after a gap in the conversation, an invitation to one or more others to join in some collaborative action ("Let's go and we just-"). We can find no evidence in concurrent or subsequent talk by Sharon, Carl and Rob that any of them are attending to Walt. Not only is there no overt response to Walt, but Carl and Sharon continue to speak without sensitivity to the fact of Walt's speech or to its sequential features. Rob does not speak while Walt is speaking, but his later remarks demonstrate attention to the conversation between Sharon and Carl.

Walt's efforts at attracting conversational attention in this segment can be compared with Vera's actions in Segment 3 (chapter II). Both Walt and Vera propose a redirection in the focus of attention of their co-conversationalists, both begin speaking in the course of ongoing interactional sequences, both are initially disattended, and both persist in their efforts by speaking at later points which are potential sequence-transition-places. The fact of Vera's success at gaining

others' eventual attention may be a function of her use of a co-conversationalists name ("Sharon?") as a specifically targeted summons.(although the person addressed is not the only one to subsequently attend), while Walt does not verbally specify the party or parties he is addressing.

It is not possible to be certain whose attention Walt is attempting to attract. If he had said "Listen, everybody" or "Rob, let's go...," for example, those addressed could recognize an invitation to respond and, if the invitation were properly constructed and placed, would be under some interactional obligation to respond. The fact that Walt's utterances are not specifically targeted makes for difficulties for the analyst and also for attention-organizing difficulties for the speaker. If Walt is seeking the attention of all the others, this could result in the topical redirection of talk along with a shift of attention to Walt. If, however, he is seeking the attention of a subset or only one of those present, the result could be the beginning of a separate conversation, that is, bifurcation. Speakers might occasionally have no preference in this regard, and would accept any attention offered. Alternatively, they might seek the attention of a single person and attract the attention of a larger number, as does Vera in Segment 3. One consequence of this complexity is that conversational bifurcation may be an intended or unintended consequence of persons' attention-attracting actions.

We may propose a speculative hypothesis that Walt is attempting to attract Rob's attention, and indeed there is some evidence for this. First, since Walt begins speaking at a point at which Sharon and Carl

are implicated in an interactional sequence, we may describe his action as disattentive of that sequence. On the other hand, Walt tends to abort or reformulate utterances which co-occur with speech by Sharon and Carl, and such actions commonly occur as remedial work in cases of overlapping speech within a single conversation. However, it is rare for remedial work to be followed by continued insensitivity to ongoing talk, which suggests that Walt is not concerned with overlapping speech by Sharon and Carl but is concerned that his utterances are placed in such a manner that Rob will be able to hear them.

Much of Walt's speech occurs during a gap in the conversation between Sharon and Carl. His remarks "I wanna see how those n- ingines look. (1.0) Let's go and" do not co-occur with any other speech, which makes them very noticeably disattended. This suggests that mere placement of talk at proper junctures, such as when no others are speaking, will not guarrantee a speaker attention. On the other hand, this particular point may not be a proper juncture. Specifically, the gap in question is preceded by Sharon's "No?" This kind of utterance, following the provision of information in a prior answer-to-a-question, is neither a sequence-terminating negation nor a simple question. Rather, it is a rhetorical device which indicates concern about the previous utterance and is typically used to elicit further information or explanation. Under these circumstances, a continuation of prior talk is strongly projected and Walt's proposal remains inappropriate.

The propriety of placement of Walt's utterance may be irrelevant given that, as we discovered in the preceding chapter, Walt's talk is not heard as related to the current conversation by Sharon and Carl. Once the precedent of Walt's insensitivity to their talk is established,

Sharon and Carl can hear his remarks as part of some other developing conversation, and specifically as directed to Rob rather than to either of them. Rob, meanwhile, has not been specifically addressed, and either does not recognize that Walt is speaking to him or does not feel that Walt is justified in diverting Rob's attention from the Sharon-Carl conversation. The hypothesis that Walt is attempting to attract Rob's attention receives additional validation by the timing and manner of Walt's re-engagement in the ongoing conversation. Walt abandons his efforts after Rob's laughter indicates his continuing attention to Sharon and Carl, and Walt's subsequent contribution to the conversation is a repeat of something that Rob has just said ("They're pagans") which had been partially overlapped by Sharon and was therefore potentially unheard. Not only does Walt's final utterance demonstrate attention to Rob, however, but the fact that he waits until Sharon's utterance is completed before repeating Rob's suggests that Walt is now reconciled to attending the topic and persons in the ongoing conversation .

Because there is no consummation of the conversation projected by Walt's actions, Walt is, in effect, talking only to himself, and a characterization of multiple conversation is inappropriate. On the other hand, Segment 4 clearly represents a fragmentation in the organization of attention in a gathering, which under other circumstances could easily have resulted in conversational bifurcation. It would appear, then, that the actual occurrence of bifurcation will be only one form of the absence of a central conversational focus.

Attention and Interruption

Conversationalists commonly recognize interruptions to result in shifts of interactional attention. If we define an interruption as a break in the continuity of some course of action, we may observe that conversation consists of a variety of actions which could be seen to be interrupted. These include formal units such as words, utterances and sequences, and substantive units such as topics and activities, each of which have a more or less projectable course. However, most of these units can be interrupted without a necessary interruption of others which are in progress. For example, a speaker may interrupt another's utterance without changing the topic of conversation or, conversely, a speaker may change a topic within the course of a sequence without interrupting another's utterance. While an exhaustive analysis of interruptions is beyond the scope of this study, we will examine the implications of certain forms of interruption for conversational fragmentation.

In Segment 4 we observed actions by Walt which were potentially interruptive of an ongoing conversation. Because Walt was not overtly attended, however, the interruption was never consummated. We would propose that interruptions occur as formal sequence-types in their own right, and suggest the following as the elements of an interruption sequence:

A: Activity in progress
B: Candidate interruption
C: Response to candidate interruption
D1: Resumption of original activity
or
D2: Elaboration of interruption or response

The candidate interruption must cause some suspension of an ongoing activity, and must attain some response as recognition of its interruptive features. The response can be any of a wide variety of substantive actions, including a period of silence. In this regard, Walt's actions in Segment 4 may account for the gap in interaction between Sharon and Carl. We may again compare this with Vera's actions in Segment 3, in which her initial remark can be seen as a candidate interruption which receives no response, while her second remark suspends the continuation of Tom's story, receives a response, and then becomes the ongoing focus of attention in place of the original activity.

In Segment 5 (page 57) we can identify a variety of forms of interruption. Carl's "Where, in Sacred Heart?," for example, overlaps with Saron's prior utterance and temporarily suspends a story she is telling. We would characterize Carl's action, however, as a facilitative interruption, which is inserted into Sharon's story in order to clarify a feature of it. Carl's action operates as a kind of "side sequence" (Jefferson, 1972), which temporarily suspends Sharon's story with the understanding that she will get the "floor" back as soon as she provides the needed clarification. Rather than competing with Sharon's story, Carl's interruption reaffirms his attention to it.

Later in Segment 5 we observe actions by Tom in which he attempts to attract Sharon's attention. Tom's first two attempts involve a specific address term used as a summons ("Ma...Ma:") and are apparently disattended, even though the second is placed at a transition-relevance-place and does not occur with other talk. Tom's third attempt includes

Segment 5

(During the conversation between Sharon, Carl, Rob and Walt, the group is approached by Sharon's small son Tom, who had been playing nearby. Tom has been trying to get his mother's attention as she explains something to the others.)

Tom Ma.

Tom Ma:

Tom Mommy, can I go in Sally's house?

Sharon What're you throwing sand on Pam for?

Tom Can I go in Sally's backyard?

Sharon No.

Tom Plea://::se?

Sharon No.

Tom ((crying //))

Sharon You stay on this side.

Sharon (She'll) have to // wait another year.

Carl Where, in Sacred Heart?

Sharon No, this is in- eh- Jersey.

Sharon So, they gave her special tests-

a specific address term and a request ("Mommy, can I go in Sally's house?"), begins in the course of an utterance by Sharon ("So, they gave her") rather than at a turn-or sequence-transition-place, and causes her to abort her utterance. Tom's action is therefore simultaneously interruptive of an utterance, a sequence, and a topic of conversation. It gains its status as an interruption, however, only because Sharon responds. We conclude that, ironically, interruption is an essentially collaborative activity, an interaction between a would-be interruptor and one or more others who respond, thereby suspending or terminating their prior activity. While this does not ignore the fact that certain would-be interruptors may be difficult to disattend, it does underscore the fact that disattention itself is always a formal alternative.

Candidate interruptions can undoubtedly be handled in a variety of ways. With sufficient numbers, a potentially interruptive action can receive a response from someone not currently involved in ongoing talk, thereby permitting the ongoing talk to continue. For example, in Segment 3 (chapter II), Cynthia's "Ma, I changed my mind" is directed to Sharon, who is involved in conversation with Tom and Charles. She receives a response from Rachel ("Whatta you want, sweetheart?") who is the hostess of the gathering. Rachel has not been an active participant, and is able to, in effect, intercept the candidate interruption. In this way, a potential interruption is attended, but outside the course of the ongoing activity it had threatened to disrupt. In effect, a potential interruption is transformed into an actual bifurcation of the gathering. Since the maintenance of a central focus is of no necessity, Rachel is able to

simultaneously see to Cynthia's needs and prevent Cynthia from interrupting the conversation in which others are engaged simply by consummating a second conversation.

Segment 5 also includes a quite different form of interruption. After finally being interrupted by Tom's request, Sharon responds not with the granting or denial of the request that Tom expects, but with a topically unrelated question of her own ("What're you throwing sand on Pam for?"). It can be argued that Sharon is now interrupting the sequence projected by Tom's request, and disattending the substantive and sequential features of his utterance at the same time as she attends to his presence and the fact of his having spoken. In summary, the very determination of whether interruption or attention are exhibited here is a function of our definitions of (1) the unit we recognize as suspended by an interruption; and (2) the degree to which attention requires sensitivity to an utterance beyond recognition that it has occurred, that is, to its interactional implications.

A number of other features of the complexity of interruption can be illustrated in Segment 6 (page 60). Here an initial utterance by Nancy ("So, by the time I came her, 'n y'know, got myself // ready enall,") is overlapped and cut short of apparent completion by an utterance from Sam ("Robby why don't you get up yourself another sandwich ya look like a bird workin' over that plate"). Both remarks are directed to Rob, who has been attending Nancy's story while picking from his plate some seeds from a roll he had just eaten. Sam's remark appears to redirect the attention of all others present, including Nancy, who suspends her story, Sharon, who offers an excuse for Rob's "looking like a bird" ("No, he likes the, seeds"), and Rob, who reacts

Segment 6

(In the course of an extended family lunch gathering hosted by Sam and Nancy, Nancy is telling Rob about something she had done the week before.)

Nancy So, by the time I came her, 'n y'know
(got myself // ready enall,)
Sam Robby why don't you get up
yourself another sand(wich) ya look like a bird //
workin' over that plate.
Sharon No, he likes the, seeds.
( ) heh heh
Rob heh heh heh (hhh)
(0.5)
Nancy So then I went, and I bought some flowers, right?
That took // some-
Sam Help yourself.
Nancy that took some time.
Rob Uh huh.
Nancy And, I got to the cemetery, ...

with laughter to Sam's characterization.

Sam's utterance is clearly interruptive of Nancy's utterance and story, and also in that it redirects the attention of others. In this case, the interruptor receives responses from persons other than the one interrupted, even though the suspension of Nancy's utterance has already consummated the interruption. That is, the others present are not "intercepting" the interruption as Rachel did in Segment 3, rather they are joining Nancy in the response to it. Meanwhile, the verbal responses to Sam's remark begin before it is completed, but are not interruptive of it in that they demonstrate attention to its substance (the humor of his characterization) and formal properties (the part of his utterance which ends with "...ya look like a bird" can be heard as transition-relevance place at which their reactions should properly begin), and do not result in its suspension.

After a half-second gap in the conversation, Nancy resumes her story and Sam interrupts again with another remark directed to Rob ("Help yourself") which overlaps Nancy's utterance and forces a suspension of it. This time Nancy does not wait for verbal responses to Sam's remark and begins speaking again as soon as he is finished. In this case, however, the actions projected by Sam's interruption do not require a verbal response, since Rob can simply"help himself." as a proper response.

A general point about co-occurring speech may be valuable here. The term "overlap" is regularly used to refer to co-occurring speech within a single conversation. Speier (1973) uses the term to refer to co-occurring speech in multiple conversation as well (see quotation in

chapter II). We would restrict the term "overlap" to the case of a single conversation, because, while overlapping speech shares acoustic properties with co-occurring speech in other circumstances, its interactional consequences and interpretation by hearers is quite different. Specifically, overlapping speech is co-occurring speech,in the context of a single conversation,which is understood as competitive for a turn at talk or potentially interruptive, and which as such is routinely followed by remedial actions or by treatment as an interruption.

In Segment 6 , Rob is subjected to conflicting demands on his attention by the interruption and overlapping speech, in that each of two current speakers expects him to attend to their utterances. This is partially a technical problem and partially a moral dilemma. Goffman (1955) points out that

> "...interruptions and inattentiveness may convey disrespect and must be avoided unless the implied disrespect is an accepted part of the relationship"(p. 36).

Rob is therefore in a moral bind here. Since Sam's interruptions of Nancy might convey disrespect, Rob could either chastise Sam for his deviance or disattend his utterance as out of order. The fact that Nancy aborts her utterance relieves Rob of a decision as to whom to attend. If she had continued, Rob would have had to either attend both Nancy and Sam simultaneously or make a decision to disattend one of them. Even if he were to disattend Sam based on Sam's"disrespect" of Nancy, this would not absolve him from an attribution of conveying disrespect of Sam. Ironically, Rob has not deviated from any conversational norm, yet the current organization of attention puts him in a position where he may inadvertently offend someone.

It would appear that the utterance which overlaps with another is most likely to be interruptive if it makes an additional demand on the attention of a hearer whose attention is already subjected to other demands. This conflict is maximized when the hearer is certain that he is being addressed simultaneously by two or more others (as opposed to cases where at least one speaker can be heard as possibly participating in a different conversation), and when both of the demands on his attention require some display of that attention in a response.

In the case of Carl's interruption of Sharon's story in Segment 5 , however, there is no competition for the attention of the person addressed by the hearer, since the interruptor and person interrupted are speaking to one another. We may speak, then, of intrinsic interruptions, which occur among persons who remain mutually attentive, and extrinsic interruptions, in which a person not previously involved in a conversational sequence attempts to divert attention from one or more of those currently engaged in that sequence. Given a sufficient number of parties for multiple conversation, it is the extrinsic interruption which threatens a redistribution of attention which can result in bifurcation. However, the possibility of bifurcation appears to be greatest when the interruptor addresses a participant who is not directly implicated in a current interactional sequence. That is, in Segment 6 Nancy and Rob are implicated in a story-telling sequence, but Sharon, who is apparently also listening to the story, is not.

This point illustrates the essential difference between attending and listening. Both involve hearing utterances. Listening, however, may be purely a matter of individual volition. Attending, while it

may involve listening, requires a public display in the form of responses for which the hearer may be held accountable. Conversationalists recognize forms of attending without listening, as when a hearer responds to an utterance or story with minimal responses (see Fishman, 1978) but if questioned about the substance of what he has been told may not be able to demonstrate having heard specifically what was said.

Returning to Segment 6 , we find that Sharon and Rob are both listening to Nancy, but only Rob is demonstrating attention. If Sam were to address Sharon, her attention could be diverted without a suspension of the Nancy-Rob interaction. Rob's participation may consist exclusively of utterances such as his "Uh huh," but even those minimal responses are required as demonstrations of attention to the ongoing story.

One general point which emerges from our consideration of these materials is that many forms of interruption, although they may convey disrespect, are essentially integrative and affiliative with respect to the continuation of a particular conversation. Specifically, an intrinsic interruption may be a display of interest in a current topic and an opportunity for more active participation by a previously inactive participant, while an extrinsic interruption may bring a new person into an ongoing conversation, In both cases, while the person or topic that is the focus of immediate attention may change, the centrally-focused nature of the gathering is maintained. It is this feature of interruptions which permits Nancy, in Segment 6 , to anticipate that, while she must temporarily suspend her story and give up the floor to Sam, the attention of those present remains centrally focused and will revert to her story after Sam's interruption is dealt with.

Certain other interruptions, however, are potentially disintegrative in that they project not a redirection of the focus of attention of those participating in a conversation, but rather a diversion of attention of one or more of the current participants into a separate course of action which need not terminate the ongoing conversation. Potential or actually disintegrative interruptions are exhibited by Walt's actions in Segment 4 , and Cynthia and Vera's actions in Segment 3, although the disintegration projected by Vera's action, as we have noted, actually results in a shift of attention by the entire group.

(This particular process may be better illustrated by the transcribing format exhibited in Segment 2 than by the format we are currently using, because that format retains the names of the entire complement of parties in the left margin whether they speak or not, thereby calling attention to "inactive" participants. These persons will tend to be prime candidates for initiation or consummation of conversational bifurcation.)

The variety of phenomena to which the term "interruption" might be applied, and the variation in interruption sequences, depending on numbers of participants, the nature of the response, the subsequent course of interaction, and so on, suggests a topic much too complex to receive systematic treatment here. We hope, however, to have provided a sense of the fragility of something which would be called a "focus" of conversational attention, and the dynamic processes which determine the organization of attention in a gathering at any point.

Fragmentation in the Triad

Previous researchers have either assumed or inferred from their materials that the minimum number of parties among which a conversational bifurcation can occur is four. Thus, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) state that "at least four" persons must be present, and offer the image of "pairs of parties" acting in concert (p. 713). Although this generally appears to be true, it may be instructive to briefly consider interaction in three-person groupings in which some form of fragmentation appears to occur.

There is a film cliché in which a person speaking simultaneously with one party in his presence and another party on the telephone says something like: "You lunkhead!...No, not you dear." An empirical instance of three-party conversation mediated by a telephone (from Jefferson and Schenkein, 1977) is reported in Segment 7 (page 67). Because this example is drawn from a situation in which the parties are not co-present it is not formally comparable with our other materials, but it may be instructive to consider it briefly.

In Segment 7 , Patty appears to be engaged simultaneously in two conversations, one in which she describes Ronald to Gene over the telephone, and another in which she attempts to get Ronald to validate her description. The conversation is segregated to the extent that neither Ronald nor Gene has direct access to the other's utterances. Patty, meanwhile, has access to utterances of both Ronald and Gene, and her utterances are available to both of them. In fact, Patty assumes in her second utterance ("Aren'tchu Ronald") that Ronald has attended her prior utterance, even though that prior utterance was ostensibly addressed to Gene. Ronald's response demonstrates that he did attend it.

Segment 7

(The following excerpt, from materials collected by Jo Ann Goldberg and discussed in Jefferson and Schenkein, 1977, is taken from a telephone conversation between Patty and Gene, during which Patty's son, Ronald, is in the room with her. At some point Gene asks Patty about Ronald, and in responding, Patty is talking about Ronald in his presence when the following occurs:)

Patty: Oh I'd say he's about what five three enna half=

Patty: =Aren'tchu Ronald

Ronald: Five fou:r.

Patty: Five four,

Patty: En 'e weighs about a hunnerd'n thirty five pounds=

Ronald: =AAUGGH! WHADDA-[L-LIE!

Patty: [Well how-=

Patty: =Owright? How much d'you weigh.

Ronald: One twenty five.

Patty: Oh one twenny [five.

[What'r yuh tryina make a fatty out'v'm?

Patty: Hu:h?

Gene: Trina make [a fatty out'v'm?

Ronald: [Y'make me sound like a blimp.

The Patty-Gene and Patty-Ronald exchanges are, however, not distinct conversations, but rather are mutually dependent in a number of ways. First, the intelligibility of each presupposes access and attention to utterances produced in the other. Second, Patty must repeat consequential utterances in one conversation ("Five fou:r"..."One twenty five") in order to transfer information. Third, each of the individual conversations is suspended whenever the other is in progress. When this does not happen, the conduct of speaking or hearing become obstructed, as when Ronald's second utterance interrupts Patty's description, when Gene's overlap of Patty's next-to-last utterance results in a remark which she apparently does not hear (her reaction is "Hu:h?"), and when Gene and Ronald's last utterances make conflicting demands on Patty's attention. While Patty can certainly manage these two conversations, the requirement that the two conversations be managed at all (that is, with repeats, sequence suspension, etc.) would not exist for groupings of more than three persons. We find in this segment the operation of a variation on the one-party-at-a-time norm for single conversations, specifically "one-sequence-at-a-time." Since we have defined multiple conversation as involving two or more conversational sequences occurring simultaneously, this interaction cannot be formally included among our instances of multiple conversation. (To state the distinction somewhat differently, in this case the involvement of Patty with either of the others leaves the party not addressed socially isolated, if only momentarily, because there is only one "channel" of talk for which each party must wait for a turn.)

In Segment 8 (page 70) we may observe a very brief instance of a conversation among three persons who are in one another's presence in which a form of bifurcation occurs. Here Rob is telling a story to Sharon and Walt, who indicate their attention to him (Sharon's "Yeah" and Walt's laughter) with minimal responses while becoming involved in unrelated talk as well. Sharon first responds to an utterance by Tom and sends him away. When Tom leaves, Walt asks Sharon a question and, after a brief pause, she answers. Once Tom has left the area, the interacting group consists of three persons, but the interaction of interest can be described as two simultaneous conversations. In one, Rob tells his story while Sharon and Walt demonstrate their attention. In the other, Walt and Sharon collaborate on a question-answer sequence.

Rob is in a situation somewhat comparable to Nancy's in Segment 6 , where she is telling a story when someone else begins to speak. Rob could suspend his story until the brief Walt-Sharon interaction ends, but he continues, possibly because he does not anticipate that their interaction will necessarily distract their attention to him. This is not to say, of course, that Rob can assume their continued attention, or that he proceeds without making some adjustments for the equivocality of that attention. Indeed, when other talk co-occurs he stammers ("I- I- I asked-"), repeats himself ("hom- homuch is a- is a," and "I asked...I asked"), pauses briefly (after "quarter"), repeatedly emphasizes key ideas ("pretzel," "quarter," "twenny," and "stand for"), and uses specific attention-verification devices ("Y'know?"). While the fact that some of these actions also occur when no other party is speaking suggests that they are personal

Segment 8

(Rob, Sharon and Walt are sitting on their front steps watching the passing scene, which includes neighbors, passers-by, children--including Rob and Sharon's son Tom--playing, etc. In the course of talk on a variety of topics, Rob recalls an incident of his day and begins recounting it to Sharon and Walt.)

Rob Oh the f- the frankfurter man today? It was a- it was a Greek guy, an' he had a little kid about the same size as that Spiro? (0.5) An' he was like- uh- he told him what to say, in English.

Sharon Yeah.

Rob Y'know, the little kid knew, so I- I- I asked- first I had a frankfurter so I asked the guy, hom- homuch is a- is a, pretzel. So the guy said, ah:, quarter. (0.5)

Rob Y'know? So I put it (down) 'n start walkin' away an' the little kid whispers to him, an' he says, twenny cents twenny cents. Heh // y'know like-

Walt heh heh

Rob So the kid tells him like eh- you know- what the people will stand for, you know.

Walt heh heh heh

Tom Ma::, (//)

Sharon (Go play in the back yard)((softly))

Walt (Is that his wife?) ((softly)) (0.5)

Sharon No, ( )((softly))

mannerisms, the fact that they occur more continuously in this story than in others of Rob's that we have examined suggests that the mannerisms are elicited here precisely because of the fragile nature of his hearers' attention. Even though, as we will demonstrate, the threat posed to Rob's story by the Walt-Sharon interaction is formally minimized, the absence of a fourth party who might remain attentive if the Walt-Sharon sequence became prolonged makes Rob vulnerable.

Multiple Involvements and Divided Attention

Segments 7 and 8 both exhibit instances of divided attention. In Segment 7 Patty's attention is divided between Ronald and Gene, and Ronald's attention is likely to be divided between Patty's utterances and his own current activities; In Segment 8 Walt's attention is divided between Rob and others who pass within the range of his visual attention; Sharon's attention is divided among Rob's story, Walt's question, and the passers-by to whom Walt refers; and so on. There is no "officially representative" focus of attention, and both speakers and hearers can distribute their attention in a variety of ways.

If interactants inhabited a world in which persons could do only one thing at a time, then norms such as "Pay attention to those with whom you are conversing" and "Don't keep talking if persons aren't paying attention" would result in social breakdown on the occasion of every distraction. In fact, conversationalists display and expect attention within a larger context of multiple involvements which may sanctionably occur concurrently.

While Erving Goffman has been responsible for a number of "central focus" idealizations of conversational attention (see quotations cited above), he has also (1963) recognized the problem of multiple involvements in his distinction between "main involvements" and "side involvements." Unfortunately, most of Goffman's examples refer to individuals engaged in multiple activities while alone (such as knitting while listening to the radio), so that the determination of which is a main- and which is a side-involvement becomes a matter of individual choice (assuming a choice had to be made). It is likely that persons regularly engage in simultaneous activities which they do not see as of unequal importance, so that no one of their activities will be a main involvement, that is, of any priority. When we move from the solitary individual to the person in interaction, however, we find that there may exist a socially defined main involvement in a particular context. This interactional main involvement will exist to the degree that persons will defer to it and hold one another accountable for attending it.

In Segment 8 , we have no way of knowing which of each person's involvements (telling or listening to a story, watching passers-by, monitoring childrens' activities, etc.) is most important to that person as an individual. We might postulate a perceptual field in which certain matters come to the foreground while others remain in the background, and we might also propose a parallel interactional process in which a conversational grouping brings certain common concerns to their interactional foreground as topics of talk while other concerns are not explicitly treated. In the final analysis, however, empirical

study of this conception must demonstrate that particular conversational actions display an orientation to some priority.

From Sharon's perspective, her attention to Rob's story is diverted first by a summons from Tom and then by Walt's question. In both cases Sharon is subject to conflicting demands on her attention, which offers us an occasion to observe her management of the situation. Here again Erving Goffman (1955) offers a sense of the relevant norms and some insight into the management process:

> "The recipients convey to the speaker, by appropriate gestures, that they are according him their attention... Participants restrict their involvement in matters external to the encounter... Messages that are not part of the officially accredited flow are modulated so as not to interfere seriously with the accredited messages... Nearby persons who are not participants visibly desist in some way from exploiting their communication position and also modify their own communication, if any, so as not to provide difficult interference"(p. 35).

In settings where certain speech is consensually defined as occupying a privileged status (during a lecture, for example), then deference and restrictions on side involvements will be expected. It may also be the case that where no speech is "officially accredited" persons may engage in restricted involvements or other forms of deference which will <u>situationally</u> define particular speech as of priority. In the segment at hand, for example, when Sharon responds to Tom's (partially inaudible) utterance by sending him away ("Go play in the back yard"), she is diverting potential interference with Rob's story and thereby conveying a sense of its priority. (This appears to be a variation of "Go away, I'm speaking with your father.") Moreover, Sharon also exhibits two

forms of "restricted involvement" in her interaction with Tom. Specifically, although her utterance co-occurs with talk by Rob, Sharon produces her remark to Tom sotto voce and also keeps it brief. In this way she keeps the potential interference to a minimum and also displays to Rob that her utterance is an aside, a recognizable side involvement. Both utterances in the subsequent exchange between Walt and Sharon are also constructed with brevity and softness of volume as noticeable features, which suggests continued deference to Rob's story as their main involvement and ongoing focus of attention. (Only Tom, either because of his incomplete socialization or lack of awareness of Sharon's involvement, displays no deference to Rob's story. On the other hand, Tom has never been part of the audience for the story as Sharon and Walt have.) Additional features of the Tom-Sharon and Walt-Sharon interactions which lessen the threat to Rob are: they appear to be matters which are both projectably limited in duration and which require here-and-now treatment. That is, Rob may observe that someone has to deal with Tom, and if Walt doesn't learn the marital status of the couple passing by now they will pass out of Sharon's sight. Rob may further anticipate that these here-and-now matters will be disposed of quickly, after which Walt and Sharon will display renewed attention to him (which is in fact what happens).

In summary, Sharon and Walt provide verbal evidence of continued attention to Rob even though they speak concurrently with him. Rob can interpret this as "justifiable" disattention, and can interpret the actions of Sharon and Walt to mean that attention to his story, while divided, is continuing. In order to integrate this case with

our conception of multiple conversation, we may argue that a bifurcation does occur at one or both of the "side" exchanges, and that during the Walt-Sharon exchange two conversational sequences are simultaneously in progress in interaction among three persons. On the other hand, the interaction exhibits features not found in multiple conversation in larger groups: (1) Rob remains dependent on the personnel in the Walt-Sharon conversation as his hearers; and (2) Walt and Sharon give evidence that their interaction is an "aside," and thereby defer to the "other" conversation.

Segregation of Attention

We have observed conversations in which the flow of communication is restricted such that certain persons will be disattended and excluded from some course of talk. In Segment 9 (page 76) we may observe a segregation of attention in a gathering of five persons. We distinguish here an ongoing conversation involving Walt, Rob, Sharon and Carl, and another conversation in which Tom occasionally attracts Sharon's attention. We consider Tom to be excluded from the larger conversation even though there is a sense in which the others pay attention to him. The form of attention paid, however, is not the interactional sense of attention we have developed in this section. Rather, Tom becomes a topic of conversation (particularly with regard to his current crankiness) and others refer to him as if he were an object or exhibit. His status is comparable to that of a talked-about person who is not currently present rather than a participant in any interactional sequence.

Segment 9

(Sharon, Rob, Walt and Carl have been discussing their childrens' education, but begin discussing Tom as he approaches to make a request.)

Walt	I (haven't) seen him-lately he's so cranky like, right?	Tom	(Where) my bicycle. Plea::se?
Rob	No // oh-	Tom	I'll share-share.
Sharon	He seems-		
Rob	[only like when he's tired.		
→ Sharon	[like two three weeks now he's unbearable.	Tom	I'll share.
Rob	Like this time of day he gets tired. Probly gotta start givin' 'im a nap.	→ Sharon	You'll <u>share</u> it?
( )	( )		
→ Sharon	( ) four in a coupla weeks.		
(Walt)	O::h!	Tom	Mommy says ( )
Carl	Oh is <u>that</u> (what <u>he's</u>)?		
→ Sharon	Yeah. That's why I'm askin' all these questions.		
Walt	Hil be goin' // soon.		
Rob	We were- we were gonna turn Lutheran but they don't have a kinnegarden here, so-	→ Sharon	<u>Share</u> it!
→ Sharon	They- // they would bus them.		

The barrier between these conversations appears to be applied selectively. While Tom is excluded from the larger conversation, Sharon alternates participation between the two conversations. She is an essential participant in the Tom-Sharon interaction (without her responses Tom would be interactionally isolated) and is continuously involved in the larger conversation. Moreover, she is actually sought out for interaction from both sides. In her final two utterances Sharon demonstrates the possibility of speaking in one conversation while simultaneously attending another. Specifically, she instructs Tom to "Share it!" while Rob is speaking, but subsequently indicates attention to Rob by offering an extension of the utterance with which hers co-occurred ("...they don't have a kinnegarden here, so-"---"They- they would bus them"). The barrier between conversations is permeable for Sharon so long as she is a competent and sought-after participant in both.

The orientation to segregation by the participants in the Walt-Rob-Sharon-Carl conversation is exhibited in differential treatment of co-occurring utterances. Specifically, they can be seen to distinguish overlapping utterances (competition for a turn in a single conversation) from co-occurring speech generally (which can be heard as external to their conversation). Sharon's first utterance ("He seems-") is heard by Rob as overlapping his current remark, which he temporarily suspends ("No // oh-"). Sharon also produces a number of other utterances which are heard to occur within the larger conversation in that they are appropriately placed, do not co-occur with other talk, and receive responsive treatment. On the other hand, the two utterances by Sharon which we have identified as occurring in a separate conversation with Tom are treated as external talk. Rob, who is speaking in each of

these instances, gives no indication (by aborting, stammering, etc.) that her talk is heard as overlapping his. Here, in contrast with Segment 8, Rob is left with an audience for his remarks, and Sharon's talk makes no demands on the attention of his intended hearers. Even Sharon, by the brevity of her remarks to Tom and her sensitivity to formal and substantive features of talk by Rob, conveys her continuing attention.

The legitimacy of multiple conversation reflexively both provides for and is based on sanctionable disattention. That is, persons know that they may disattend someone in their presence who is involved in another conversation, and recognize the existence of multiple conversation on the occurrence of talk which is disattentive to theirs.

As we noted in Chapter II, persons make sense of interaction according to norms we called interpretation maxims. We now propose that persons orient to another level of conversational norms, which we call attention maxims, in order to recognize a proper organization of attention and to allocate their own attention accordingly. Unlike interpretation maxims, which relate most directly to the receipt of utterances in coherent sequences, attention maxims have a more active sense, in that they begin to prescribe responses.

We will not attempt to provide an exhaustive system of attention maxims, but will suggest a few working maxims which bear on the circumstances of conversational fragmentation. Perhaps the most general maxim, based on our earlier discussion, is (1) If you are attending to someone's talk, display your attention. This norm provides for public recognition of attention and disattention, for attributions of deviance (a person either not attending talk he is

supposed to or showing evidence of attending talk he is not supposed to attend), and perhaps also for simulation of attention when an intended hearer is not really listening.

A maxim more in line with our current discussion is (2) When a number of persons are speaking simultaneously, attend to their speech selectively. This provides for excuses for disattention such as "I can only listen to one of you at a time," which may often be empirically untrue (consider Sharon's actions in Segments 8 and 9 and other data we offer in which a person is attentive to more than one other), but which cannot be invoked as a hearer's responsibility.

Selectivity will operate according to normative preferences, such as (3) When selecting persons for disattentive treatment in cases of co-occurring speech, prefer those who have other potential hearers. This provides for persons' sanctionable self-exclusion (see Chapter IV) from particular groupings, and protects speakers somewhat from the possibility of interactional isolation (see Segment 10 below).

A related maxim is (4) When selecting persons for attentive treatment in cases of co-occurring speech, prefer those whose talk is related to the conversation in which you are participating and disprefer those whose talk is unrelated to that conversation. This provides for disattention of would-be interruptors and persons in other conversations. (In this regard, disattention of Walt in Segment 4 can be justified by reference to either maxim 2 as "I can only attend to one person at a time," maxim 3 as "I thought you were speaking to X," or maxim 4 as "Were you speaking to us?")

A final norm demonstrates reciprocity in the organization of attention: (5) When selecting others for attentive treatment in cases of co-occurring talk, prefer those attentive to you and disprefer those disattentive to you. In general, both mutual attention and mutual disattention appear to be preferred patterns, as compared with attention to a disattentive person or disattention of an attentive one.

Our orientation to these maxims permits us to allocate utterances to one conversation or another for analytic purposes. That is, we use these maxims as resources in interpreting the organization of a gathering, although we must take into account the place of utterances which conversationalists may have grounds for disattending.

Bifurcation as Problem-Solving

Our initial conception of conversational bifurcation was of a form of "problem" in the cohesion of a gathering. On closer inspection of our materials, however, we observed that bifurcation may be used by interactants as a remedy for other problems in the allocation of conversational attention. This feature can be observed in Segment 10 (page 81). Here Rhoda is soliciting information about the transport of entire houses. Shortly after her initial question-like utterance, three others begin to speak, and although Rhoda's remark may be addressed to a particular other, each of the respondents displays attention and apparently feels that they can offer a relevant answer. Sharon's initial response is aborted and never continued, but Sam and Alice's responses co-occur, both go to completion, and both receive responsive attention from others. (Sam's response is in the form of a general explanation of the process.in

Segment 10

(At the dinner table, members of an extended family are discussing the transport of houses on trailers.)

Rhoda You mean they just picked it up, put it // on uh::

Sharon Yeah they-

Sam Yeah they- they jack the house up, 'n they put it on a long, flatbed, (0.5) tractor-trailer.

Wide load.

Rob Not the foundation // just the,

(Rhoda) No:

Sam Not the foundation just the house // itself.

Rhoda House, yeah.

•
•
•
•
•

Alice (Where) in the country we see somebody bring the house on a truck.

Nancy So maybe they brought that house in the country?

Alice No but this one I don't know because it has (

)

Nancy I mean the house that you said you saw...

•
•
•

question, while Alice's response takes the form of an anecdote illustrating her observations of the process.)

We propose that Sam and Alice's responses are both sanctionable answers to Rhoda's question, even though Sam's begins first. Normally, when no next-speaker has been overtly selected by prior speakers, a person who speaks first at a transition-relevance place will have a right to the turn (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). In this particular case, however, Sam's stammering start resembles Sharon's previous aborted utterance ("Yeah they-"..."Yeah they- they") and Alice's utterance may be offered to repair a problem in the transfer of turns in which no successful response to Rhoda can yet be projected, or where Sam's answer, like Sharon's, will be limited to "Yeah they-."

Regardless of the propriety of the utterances by Sam and Alice, once they co-occur they produce simultaneous demands on the attention of the gathering. It is possible that these two remarks are directed to different hearers, in which case the bifurcation is intended by one or both of the speakers. As we saw in the case of Walt's actions in Segment 4, however, the bifurcation requires consummation in the form of some response. In this case, Sam's utterance gains overt attention from Rob and Rhoda, while Alice gains attention from Nancy, and two conversations result.

On the occasion of co-occurring speech by Sam and Alice, our proposed Maxim 2 legitimates selective attention, but Maxim 4 is of no help to these hearers because both Sam and Alice's responses are related to the topic in Rhoda's question. Fortunately, with at least five parties present, each party can orient to Maxim 3, examine the

setting for each speaker's potential hearers, and make a decision based on an assumption that at least one of the other parties will attend to the speaker whom they disattend.

In this case, bifurcation is an effective remedy for the attention-problem posed for these hearers by the occurrence of simultaneous sanctionable turns in the ongoing conversation. It would be difficult to maintain a single conversational focus without everyone disattending, at least momentarily, either Sam or Alice. Even if the disattention were momentary and the hearers returned to the attention of the momentarily disattended remark, that momentary disattention could convey hearers' priority of attention to one speaker over another, and therefore "disrespect" of the one with lower priority. The bifurcation limits any threat to the dignity of either speaker in that no interactional isolation occurs. Since the parties remain in one another's presence, moreover, the situation of multiple conversation need not be expected to persist. Rather, each hearer can anticipate that there will be some re-engagement of personnel from both conversations into a centrally-focused single conversation, possibly in a few moments, or that one of the exchanges will be treated as a side involvement to be terminated shortly. In summary, bifurcation is here preferred to the alternatives of interactional isolation or conveyance of disrespect occasioned by a turn-taking and attention-allocating dilemma.

It should be clear that, while we have illustrated certain conditions in the organization of conversational attention which may give rise to bifurcation, bifurcation itself is an outcome of choices made by interactants from among alternative ways of managing local

circumstances. Very similar circumstances will at other times be treated quite differently, so that persons may use either sanctioned alternatives (for example, disattending a would-be interruptor) or deviant alternatives (for example, disattending someone who has some right to speak) to accomplish outcomes very different from those we have illustrated. Additional research will be required to determine whether conditions conducive to bifurcation actually do result in bifurcation in a significant proportion of cases.

Finally, we may observe that the boundaries between concurrent conversations are influenced by persons' definitions of which others are, and which others are not, participants in a given conversation. We noted in Segment 9 that Tom, who demonstrated some sensitivity to the large adult conversation in progress (most of his utterances were placed at transition-relevance places in that conversation) was not accorded interactional attention, and was thereby excluded from the larger conversation. In Segment 6 we observed that Sam's interruption served to bring him into the ongoing conversation, if only momentarily. In other cases, persons were observed give up their status as participants in a conversation, as in Segment 3 when Rachel's interception of Cynthia's potential interruption has the effect of excluding her from ongoing talk. We will take explicit notice of the matter of conversational participation in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPATION IN CONVERSATIONAL GROUPINGS

Conversation may be examined from the perspective of an individual's participation in a centrally-focused single conversation or, alternatively, as a complex ecology of co-occurring conversations within a gathering. It remains to be seen whether the interaction between a subset of persons is comparable to the interaction of all parties in conversation. Any individual conversationalist may find himself engaged in interaction with all others and then, after a sudden shift, with some subset.

In this chapter we consider the formation of conversational groupings. We first examine the phenomenon of subgroup collaboration, and consider the possibility that norms appropriate as guides to individual behavior may be inappropriate to the behavior of persons acting in concert. We then examine conversational bifurcation from the perspective of subgroup formation. Participation in conversational groupings is shown to involve a variety of action-types which accomplish the inclusion and exclusion of persons as potential interactants. These actions are hypothesized to be reflective of ongoing social relationships between persons, although the value of a turn at talk is shown to be variable. We also propose a number of working norms which organize patterns which we call participation maxims.

Conversational Teamwork

Georg Simmel (1902) was one of the first social scientists to consider the operation of subgroups in social interaction. Simmel pointed out an essential dissimilarity between the dyad and triad in that, in the latter, the potential always exists for two parties to collaborate in their mutual interest and against the interests of the third party. With increasing numbers of participants, a sociable gathering develops increasing potential for subgroup collaboration of various kinds. While researchers have examined processes of coalition formation in small (generally experimental) groups, we have encountered no empirical study of subgroup formation in naturally-occurring conversation.

The theoretical importance of interactional subgroups has been recognized on many occasions. In discussing the communicative features of social interaction, Erving Goffman (1959) suggests that:

> "Whether the members of a team stage similar individual performances or stage dissimilar performances which fit together into a whole, an emergent team impression arises which can conveniently be treated as a fact in its own right, as a third level of fact located between the individual performance on the one hand and the total interaction of participants on the other"(p. 80).

It may be of heuristic value to speak of certain interactional groupings as teams, and of their identifiable collaboration as teamwork.

The forms of conversational teamwork we wish to consider are those which emerge spontaneously in interaction and which may, but need not, reflect pre-established social role relationships. We will consider

materials in which there is an empirical, situational basis for an attribution of teamwork, that is, in which a "team impression" can be warranted by inspection of observably concerted actions. We do not deny, and our data often illustrate, that persons in complementary role relationships (couples, kin, etc.) will often engage in concerted action which reflects their relationship. However, it would be difficult to develop an exhaustive list of all the relationships on which teamwork might be based, and even an exhaustive list would fail to predict emergent relationships. The set of social roles occupied by each individual in this culture is likely to be quite large, and the possible interrelationships that could be identified in any gathering would be larger still. Moreover, persons collaborating in terms of one relationship (for example, one couple teaming in relation to another couple) may spontaneously alter their interaction such that it will reflect a different relationship (for example, men teaming in relation to women). Persons who enter a gathering having established relationships with certain others present may nevertheless act as individuals, establish interactive collaboration with strangers, and so on.

One common form of conversational teamwork (which often does, but need not, reflect a pre-existing relationship) can be termed an utterance extension, in which a second speaker will "complete the thought" of a first speaker by contributing information in his turn which elaborates on the information provided in the prior turn. For example, in Segment 9 we observed:

Rob We were-
we were gonna turn Lutheran
but they don't have a
kinnegarden here, so-

Sharon They- they (would) bus them.

Sharon's utterance can be heard as a candidate extension for Rob's, subject to his subsequent treatment of her talk as appropriate to that purpose.

Another variation on this process is the teamed utterance, in which at least one of the utterances is dependent on others for its intelligibility. Schenkein (1972) offers a piece of data from a group therapy session in which a new member (Jim) is being introduced to the group. As the introductions end, attempts are made to fill Jim in on the course of the discussion preceding his entry:

Ken We were in an automobile discussion,
Roger -discussin the psychological motives fer
( ) hhh//hhhh hh
Al -drag racing on the streets.
Jim Hmh!

Here three persons have collaborated in providing information based on their common membership prior to Jim's entry. Jim would normally be expected to respond after the first provision of information (something like "Oh really?" perhaps) but in this case each of the prior members exercises their right to provide some part of the information without waiting for others to complete a full turn.

While teamwork in conversation may be an expected and sanctioned phenomenon, persons guided by collaborative expectations may find themselves in conflict with norms generally understood to apply to speakers acting as individuals. This can be illustrated in the very brief interaction reported in Segment 11 (page 90). We would describe this case as a teamed sequence, which develops as a variation of a question-answer sequence. We do not propose that this interaction is either rare or deviant in conversation. Nevertheless, it is somewhat at odds with current theory and research on question-answer sequences.

Questions are observed to be very powerful interactional devices in that they project an answer as an immediate response and often give the questioner a significant role in the maintenance or direction of conversation. Harvey Sacks (1972b) has proposed that questions activate a "chaining rule," in which the preferred consequence of a question is that the person to whom it is addressed gives a direct answer and then returns the "floor" to the questioner. If the questioner uses his next turn to pose another question the pattern will be repeated, such that many interactions begun with questions will result in a chain of question-answer sequences (question-answer-question-answer-question...) reminiscent of an interview or interrogation. Research on male-female interaction suggests that women ask more questions than men in order to elicit a continuous display of mens' attention (Fishman, 1978). In general, the selection of such conversational strategies is thought to be related to the distribution of power among interactants (Parlee, 1979), although the specific pattern may vary, as evidenced by the exploitation of the chaining pattern by police interrogators (Sanders,

Segment 11

(During a holiday-season gathering, the previous day's gathering which was attended by Sharon and Rob becomes a topic of discussion.)

Charles	So how was it yesterday?
Sharon	[(M h)
Rachel	[Whadjuhave, turkey?
Sharon	Veal.
Rob	Italian.

1974). While Churchill (1973; 1978) has demonstrated that actual behavior will conform to the "direct answer/return of floor" pattern in only a minority of cases, many of the exceptions can be understood as variations which are sensitive to the rule rather than outright deviations. Moreover, while Sacks formulates the chaining rule specifically for two-party conversation, he observes elsewhere (see the quotation later in this chapter) that many norms from two-party conversation tend to carry over into larger gatherings either as norms or as empirical tendencies. Specifically, we propose that the norm which states that an answer should follow a question will operate in a gathering of any size, although with greater numbers of parties the potential for empirical variations will multiply (see, for example, the problem of two simultaneous answers following a question in Segment 10). In addition, the chaining pattern will carry over as an empirical tendency or bias, such that two parties engaged in question-answer alternation will monopolize the conversation for some period of time (see examples in Segments 4 and 14 , and discussion below) in many cases.

In Segment 11, Charles begins interaction by posing a question addressed to Sharon and/or Rob. His question is followed by two utterances which begin simultaneously, some form of response (or the beginning of one) by Sharon and another question directed to Sharon and/or Rob by Rachel. Sharon then offers an answer to Rachel's question and Rob follows with another answer to Rachel which appears also to be an extension of Sharon's answer.

We may observe initially that Rachel appears to deviate from the normal turn-taking expectation for question-answer sequences by speaking before Charles' question has been answered, with an utterance which is clearly not an answer. Based on our normal interpretive resources (see Chapter II) we might suspect that she is involved in a different conversation, except that later responses indicate a single focus of attention. Even if Sharon's barely audible response to Charles is a complete utterance rather than an aborted version cut short by Rachel's simultaneous start, Rachel should wait for an answer to occur before she speaks.

We propose that, on the occasion of Rachel's remark, a team framework for turn-taking is substituted for the individualistic framework that would otherwise apply (and that Sharon appeared to expect based on her initial response). The teamwork is not based on role relationships between the parties, although they are both husband-wife couples, but rather on the common absence of Charles and Rachel from the gathering in question, which causes them to collaborate in eliciting information, and the common presence of Sharon and Rob at the gathering in question, which causes them to collaborate in providing information. The teamwork in this case, however, extends beyond the fact of members of each team being engaged in a common interactional activity. Specifically, the teamwork involves the transformation of a question-answer sequence into a question-question-answer-answer sequence.

The utterance by Rob is particularly significant. If the common, individualistic framework for turn-taking were operating here, the turn following Sharon's "Veal" answer would be open for self-selection by anyone. If the chaining rule were operating, the floor

would revert to Rachel following Sharon's answer of Rachel's question. The fact that Rob takes the turn following Sharon is not coincidental, we would argue, but rather results from the application of a form of consistency rule (see Sacks, 1972a; Speier, 1973) to the interaction by all parties. Rachel's question-following-a-question momentarily legitimates consecutive utterances by members of the same team for doing team business, in this case eliciting information, and therefore makes it projectably legitimate for Sharon and Rob to speak consecutively in doing their team's work, namely providing information. While Rob is not required to add anything to Sharon's answer, he is at least given the opportunity to speak before the Charles-Rachel team regains the floor, and is probably expected to say something.

We are not proposing that the particular expectations associated with teamwork in this instance can be generalized to any degree. The egalitarian distribution of speaking turns suggested here would be totally inappropriate for other teams (for example, lawyer-client teamwork in the courtroom). Moreover, we will see shortly that teamwork can be identified in cases of team members speaking to one another rather than to members of an alternate team, in cases where team members participate in different conversations, and so on. The topic of teamwork is a complex one and we are just scratching its surface in order to gain a perspective on conversational fragmentation. In general, however, we find that a significant difference in situational definition will exist between the case where conversationalists A and B are understood to be acting as individuals, and the case where the same persons are understood to be acting as a team. We will consider the

implications of situational definitions for the course of interaction again in a later section (see Chapter V). At this point we suggest, however, that the orientation to teams results in a different set of expectations with regard to such essential conversational processes as the distribution of turns as compared with an orientation to persons as "soloists." Moreover, the shift from one situational definition to another can be accomplished implicitly and locally, in the course of a single utterance (as in the case of Rachel's question). This suggests a much more complex conception of social definition than is exhibited by writers who assume that definitions are pre-established for given settings. In our view, definitions are set and re-set in the course of interaction, and are momentarily subject to change. The situational definition will be reflexively tied to a particular series of utterances in conversation. That is, orientation to a particular definition will cause persons to construct and place their utterances in particular ways (for example, we infer that Rachel is motivated by orientation to teamwork to place her question immediately after Charles' question), and the occurrence of a particular pattern will serve as documentary evidence (see Garfinkel, 1967) to persons that the situation is currently defined in a particular way (for example, the question-question pattern telling Rob that others are oriented to a teamwork definition).

Teamwork and Multiple Conversation

To this point, our discussion has been concerned with teamwork as it develops within a single conversation. In other materials we have observed instances of teamwork which contribute to the bifurcation of a single conversation or to the merging of two conversational streams into a single conversation. Both of these processes are illustrated in Segment 12 (page 96).

The bifurcation in Segment 12 occurs at the conclusion of Sue A's initial utterance, at which point both Sue B and Katie begin speaking simultaneously. This creates competition for the attention of the two other parties present, and the bifurcation is consummated when Sue A responds to Sue B and Peg responds to Katie. While the Katie-Peg interaction appears to be subsidiary to the Sue A-Sue B conversation (particularly since Katie was not addressing Peg in her bifurcation-inducing question), we cannot characterize it as a simple aside, since it occurs at full volume, consists of more than a single exchange, and cannot be unambiguously projected as a transient issue.

We will focus attention on teamwork between Katie and Peg, beginning with her initial "rescue" of Katie from the kind of disattention accorded to Walt in Segment 4. To be sure, Peg's response is not an answer to Katie's question, but rather a challenge to its propriety. On the other hand, even a criticism may be preferable to outright disattention, since it keeps the questioner involved in the interaction and keeps the substance of the question "alive" as a topic of conversation. In addition, a response activates the chaining process described above, thereby giving Katie another turn. Finally, Peg's response ("That's not something you're supposed to answer people")

Segment 12

(Four related women are discussing a mutual friend who regularly imposes on them. Sue A is telling a story about his having asked her to prepare a dinner for him.)

Sue A I wouldn't mind him- havin' 'im over as a guest but the way he, put that in a way like I hadda make it, I didn't, like it, at all.

Sue B See its a different idea when he comes over here.
(0.5)
Like it's Harry's friend, 'n you know, he knows he's always welcome.

Sue A Oh I like him, I do, I think he's a real nice guy. I'd- really do.
[Excepting-

Peg [(Sue), my mother said-

(0.5)

Peg I'm sorry.

(Sue A) [(Uh-)

Peg [My mother said, "How much do you make a year."

Katie (How much do you make a year), Sue?

Peg That's not something you're supposed to answer people.

Katie ( )

Peg W'yeah but she ( )

Katie Ask her, ( )

occurs at a point at which others' disattention to Katie (given the ongoing talk by Sue B) is likely to be evident, so that Peg is giving a justification for such disattention. (It is no accident that she says "answer" rather than "ask," since it points to something which is apparently not happening; that is, it focuses on the lack of response rather than the impropriety of the question.)

Not to be put off, Katie apparently defends the propriety of her question and eventually suggests that Peg ask it. Here Katie is proposing teamwork between herself and Peg in which they will collaborate in eliciting the information which Katie desires. Peg's "(Sue), my mother said-" is directed outside the Katie-Peg conversation (thereby terminating it) and into the Sue A-Sue B conversation, thereby re-engaging Peg as a participant in that conversation and re-establishing a centrally-focused single conversation. Peg's re-engagement into the Sue A-Sue B conversation is interesting in a number of ways:

(1) The device "my mother said" is an essential feature of Peg's re-entry, as evidenced by the fact that she repeats it a second time, after her first abortive attempt at gaining attention, instead of simply asking her mother's original question.

(2) One function of the device "my mother said" is to absolve Peg in advance from responsibility for any attribution of impropriety to the question she is about to ask. She is acting as her mother's spokesperson, and simply "forwarding" a question for which someone else is responsible. In this regard, she is serving notice that although she is collaborating with Katie in eliciting this information she is a reluctant member of the team.

(3) Another function of the device "my mother said" is to

initiate a repair sequence. It can be heard to introduce an utterance which has already occurred and was originally attended by Peg, but which could have been attended by others as well, including the person to whom Peg is now addressing it. Repetition of the utterance together with explicit formulation as a repetition indicates that it should now be attended by those who disattended it earlier. While the problem overtly remedied is the disattention of Katie's remark, the formulation also serves to justify the disattention by Peg and Katie of the Sue A-Sue B conversation while two conversations were in progress. That is, Peg is suggesting a definition of her interaction with Katie, rather than being an independent conversation, as subsidiary to her attention to Sue A and Sue B and limited to the retrieval of Katie's disattended utterance.

(4) Peg's re-entry is constructed also as a repair on the fragmentation of participation in the gathering. First, in justifying the Katie-Peg interaction and placing it in a subsidiary status, Peg is suggesting that neither she nor Katie had intended to exclude themselves from the conversation. Peg's action is an attempt not only at self-inclusion (see later section on conversational inclusion and exclusion) into the ongoing conversation but, insofar as it calls for a response to Katie's question, actually an attempt by one party to accomplish the inclusion of two parties. That is, it is simultaneously an utterance-in-their-conversation in its own right, and a direction of attention to another person's utterance as properly an utterance-in-their-conversation as well.

(5) Peg apologizes ("I'm sorry") for attempting to re-enter the Sue A-Sue B conversation with an utterance which co-occurs with talk

by Sue A. It is initially not clear that an apology by Peg is called for in this instance, because her utterance is sensitive to turn-transitional features of Sue A's speech. That is, Sue A's prior utterance appears to have reached completion, and her unanticipated continuation ("Excepting-") is explicitly projected as a qualification of the evaluation she has just offered. Although Peg cannot have anticipated Sue A's continuation, and although Sue A aborts her utterance long before Peg does, Peg aborts her attempt, waits a half-second, and then apologizes before she begins again.

We might speculate that, on the occasion of simultaneous starts, the right to a speaking turn may properly belong to the party who is continuing a turn (even if that continuation was not anticipated), over any subsequent starter. This issue is not resolved by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) in their comprehensive study of turn-taking. In listing interactional rules governing turn-transfer, they observe that:

> "If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects"(p. 704).

We cannot interpret this rule to suggest any priority, and indeed in the examples these authors offer to illustrate this point the person attempting to continue invariably aborts and defers to the next speaker. Peg would therefore appear to be apologizing for a turn to which she has as much right as Sue A.

There are a variety of speculations we might offer to account for Peg's apology, none of which are adequately addressed in the

literature. One possibility is that an utterance which initiates a new topic should defer to an utterance which continues a prior topic. Adato (1978) has examined the organization of "unanticipated topic continuations" in some detail but has not suggested a specific relationship between this form and the organization of speaking turns. A second possibility is that utterances which are of questionable propriety should defer to those of expectable propriety. In the materials at hand, Peg may feel that the possible impropriety of the question she is about to forward makes it a weaker candidate for the turn than whatever Sue A has to say. A third possibility, which bears on issues of direct consequence to this study, is that Peg and Sue A have differential status with regard to their membership in a current conversational grouping. In a sense, Peg's "rescue" of Katie from the fate of interactional isolation involved a sacrifice of her own status as a member in the ongoing interaction involving Sue A and Sue B. Katie's original question was attentive to, and was a candidate utterance for, the ongoing conversation. Peg's response, on the other hand, was directed to Katie in particular, rather than the group as a whole, although it occurred at a transition-relevance-place and may have been intended for general availability. The Katie-Peg interaction as a conversation was overtly disattentive to substantive and formal features of Sue A-Sue B talk, and involved no invitation for the participation of Sue A or Sue B. The mutual disattentiveness of the two interactions, if only for a few moments, constitutes their distinctiveness as separate conversational groupings. In this regard, Sue A is speaking as a continuous participant in her conversation, while Peg is speaking as a candidate for re-entry into that conversation after a period of exclusion from it. In other words, it would appear that a person speaking in a conversation in which

he is an accredited participant will have priority in competition for a turn with a person who is either joining the conversation for the first time or re-entering after a period of exclusion, even if the person joining or re-entering has been a party to the same gathering as the accredited conversationalists.

Participation in Conversational Groupings

We propose that a conversational grouping, however ephemeral, is a recognizable unit of a gathering's organization. The membership of a grouping is constituted by those persons who recognize one another as participants at a given moment, and who will be oriented to certain other persons as non-participants at that moment. The barrier between "insiders" and "outsiders" will also be recognized by non-participants to the extent that there is agreement on the current membership of the grouping. That is, the responsibility for the social control of participation is entirely locally organized, and persons may or may not enforce grouping boundaries. The current membership of a grouping will collaborate in extending or restricting membership in many cases, although actions by any individual may change the current definition of membership. In Segment 12 , then, Peg is oriented to her non-membership at the time she competes for a turn with Sue A, but Sue A's aborted utterance permits Peg to re-establish her participation.

The individual's perception of membership at a given moment may involve an intangible "sense of belonging." The test of membership status, however, is the production and treatment of overt utterances, and it is this evidence of participation which will be our concern.

Consequently, we can speculate that persons who do not take turns at talk over some course of interaction but remain overtly (albeit nonverbally) attentive to talk by others will be recognized as members of the grouping in which that talk occurs. On occasion this recognition will be demonstrated in actions by speakers in reference to non-speakers, such as invitations of their verbal participation. Moreover, the fact of not speaking is regularly consequential for the definition of membership, so that not taking a turn can be grounds for complaint by others regarding one's non-involvement, and not getting a turn can be grounds for a complaint by the individual that he is being excluded.

The relationship between turn-distribution and accreditation of membership is a reflexive one. That is, turns will be offered and recognized depending on persons' recognition of others' current membership status, and membership status will be inferred largely from the occurrence and treatment of speaking turns. A conversational bifurcation may result when a particular distribution of turns either does not enable certain persons to establish their membership in a current grouping or conveys to those persons that they are being excluded. A bifurcation-inducing distribution of turns may be one that is completely restrictive, that is, limits turns to some subset of persons, or may simply appear inequitable to the persons involved. An inequitable distribution, moreover, may result from certain formal features of conversation rather than from any conscious desire to restrict membership. One such feature is the "chaining" pattern described above, and this pattern is itself a consequence of a general tendency for prior speakers, particularly the one just prior to any current speaker, to speak again before others get

an opportunity. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) describe the tension between turn-taking tendencies and an equitable distribution of turns:

> "...the turn-order bias of 'last speaker being next speaker becomes a relative distributional bias with three or more parties. With four or more parties, a possible check on it is introduced by the possibility of schism. If there is an interest in retaining, in a single conversation, some current complement of parties (where there are at least four), then the turn-taking system's means for realizing that effort involve 'spreading turns around,' since any pair of parties not getting or taking a turn over some sequence of turns can find their mutual accessibility for getting into a second conversation...(p. 713)
> In that regard, an interest in retaining the full complement of parties encourages a distribution of turns different from the distributional product of the turn-order bias...
> But it should also be noted that this schism as a 'check' on turn-distribution is equivocal---since turn-distribution can, by the same measure, be used as a means by some parties for encouraging schism by others"(p. 714).

Segment 13 (pages 104 and 105) contains interaction in which we may begin to identify issues of conversational participation. These data are, unlike our other materials, drawn from staged rather than naturally-occurring talk, and therefore are not intended to stand as <u>evidence</u> of conversational processes. We propose, however, that this interaction is not outside the range of recognized variation, and is thus suggestive of certain common-sense conceptions available to filmmaker and audiences as members of a shared culture.

In this segment, persons A, B and C discuss the success of a play in which they have been involved, and are reminded by person D, a policeman who has just detained two of the three for possible arrest, that "THIS IS A <u>POLICE</u> STATION!" As they continue talking among themselves, D asks "How about the case?" Eventually he begins pleading "Pay a <u>little</u> attention to <u>me</u>!"

Segment 13

(These data are from an audiotape of a scene from the 1940 film version of S. N. Behrman's "No Time for Comedy." In this scene playwright B and director C have been brought to a police station by officers D and E for fighting outside the theater during the opening of their new play, and the play's star, A, has come to bail them out. The humor in the scene is related to the fact that more than one person is speaking at almost every point, so that much of the dialogue is inaudible.)

A: What happened to you two?

B: (Why,) how'd it go over?

A: Very nicely. Seven curtain calls.

B: Seven curtain calls!

C: (Quite unusual)

A: ( )

D: THIS IS A POLICE STATION!

B: Well look, did anybody // ( ),

D: How about the // case?

A: ( )

B: That scene on the staircase, did it get laughs.

A: (Laugh, laugh,// laugh, laugh.)

D: Pay a little attention // to me!

A: Oh Morgan, where did you get that eye.

D: This is a police station.

B: Never mind my eye. ( )

D: ((turns to E)) We can talk a little shop too!

( )

(continued on next page)

(continuation of Segment 13)

.	.
.	.
.	.
.	E: ( )
.	
.	D: Oh, nothing exciting. Coupla holdups, some traffic violations.
.	
.	E: Any homicides?
.	
.	D: Not <u>yet</u>.
.	
B: (What,) do we have to stay here? Let's go // ( )	
A: That's a good idea. Come on.	
((A, B and C begin to leave))	
D: <u>HEY</u>! (0.5) Where do ya think <u>you're</u> going.	
A: Beg <u>your</u> pardon.	
D: Now how about it. Wouldja like to prefer charges?	
.	
.	
.	

Persons A, B and C are certainly disattentive to person D. Not only do they fail to respond to his utterances, but they do not suspend their own conversation when he speaks. In naturally-occurring conversation it is not unusual for a subset of persons to disattend a would-be participant, and this case resembles the disattentive treatment accorded talk by Walt in Segment 4 (Chapter III). The plight of the disattended person is humorous here, rather than pitiable, because as a policeman-in-a-police-station his status is ordinarily expected to give him some control over interaction. Not only are A, B and C insufficiently aware that D intends to discuss "the case" with them, but they do not even accord D a turn in their conversation in which to pose the topic. However, disattention of person D in this segment can be interactionally justified in the same terms in which we justified disattention to Walt in Segment 4, in that D's utterances do not exhibit sensitivity to either the substantive or sequential features of the ongoing conversation, are not specifically addressed, and can be heard as not intended as directed into the A-B-C conversation (only the audience knows better). That is, D is not constructing his utterances as proper turns in the A-B-C conversation and, from the perspective of the persons in that grouping, D may be sanctionably disattended by reference to attention maxims (see Chapter III) which routinely govern decision-making in cases of simultaneous speech. Although D does speak, the fact that his utterances are disattended constitutes his exclusion from participation in the A-B-C grouping.

D's next utterance, "This is a police station," is minimally attended by A, B and C in that they suspend their interaction while he speaks. Like his previous utterances, this one is topically irrelevant to their conversation and occurs following a question to which it is

not responsive and is therefore sequentially irrelevant as well. In naturally-occurring conversation, we might expect that the persistence of a would-be participant might "pay off" with some response, although not necesarily the response sought (see Sharon's response to Tom in Segment 5). In this instance, however, person D deliberately forfeits the attention he has just gained. Instead of using the turn he has achieved as a turn-in-the-conversation involving A, B and C, he turns to person E (another policeman) and coyly suggests that (because "This is a police station") "We can talk a little shop too!" That is, he responds to the fact of his prior exclusion from the A-B-C conversation by initiating a new and equally exclusionary conversation. Since D's forfeiture of his turn in their conversation absolves A, B and C of any need to respond, they resume that conversation in a completion of the unfinished question-answer sequence which preceded his remarks, and the scene then consists of distinct co-occurring conversations.

We do not propose that the forfeiture of attention (particularly attention so persistently sought) is common in naturally-occurring conversation. Indeed, the irony of D's actions is a source of humor in this scene. On the other hand, attention-forfeiting is a recognized feature of conversation, most common in leave-taking and conversation terminations (Adato, 1975; Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). Also, persons at cocktail parties, for example, may be observed attracting the attention of one or more others in a grouping (perhaps their dates, mates or "rides") precisely to let them know that they will be interacting with some other grouping for a period of time.

The matter which concerns us here is the fact that a turn at talk may be used for the establishment or demonstration of the inclusion of the speaker as a participant in a conversational grouping or for the exclusion of the speaker from participation in that grouping. More generally, the turn-taking system may be used to influence the membership of particular groupings, and to permit conversationalists to indicate to one another any shifts in group ecology which take place or are projected. Any current turn will therefore be potentially consequential for the integration of the grouping in which it occurs, and also for other groupings within the same gathering. Stated differently, each turn will be an occasion for doing group-definitional work.

The Value of Participation

Research on conversation often appears to be based on an assumption that any given conversation is a kind of magnet which attracts participation. Some writers use more or less explicitly economic images (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974:701) so that turns at talk are viewed as scarce resources for which persons inevitably compete. Our research, however, suggests that the value of any particular turn will be highly variable, and that even researchers who recognize that turns may be disvalued tend to ignore processes by which they are avoided or forfeited.

In many situations, the exchange of talk will be a primary or even defining feature of interaction. In some, such as group therapy, there will be a sanctionable preference for talk over other activities in which persons may be engaged, so that not taking a turn will be seen as an indication of a person's alienation from the gathering. However,

there will be many other situations in which the exchange of talk is only one of a number of interactional or personal activities in which persons are expected to engage. The value of a turn at talk therefore declines with an increase in the number of activities which may properly attract a person's attention, and the value of a turn in any particular conversation declines with an increase in the number of conversations currently in progress. Consequently, a situation of multiple conversation and multiple interactional involvements (see Chapter III) constitutes a "buyer's market" in which persons may select from a variety of interactional opportunities. Under these circumstances, any individual's failure to participate in a conversational grouping may reflect a disvaluation of turns rather than restrictions on membership maintained by current participants.

It would, of course, be impossible to identify the intrinsic value of a particular turn or to catalogue the variety of involvements which might compete for a person's attention in place of a turn. In the final analysis, the value of a turn in any particular conversation can only be inferred from the actions persons exhibit which have relevance to the allocation of particular turns. It may be useful, however, to briefly consider the convergence of involvements which influence turn-distribution and participation in a particular case.

Segment **14 (pp. 110-111)** is drawn from a situation in which a variety of activities co-occur, including the display and inspection of a pair of eyeglasses with built-in hearing aid, the making and offering of drinks, the preparation of food, etc. Some of these activities involve concerted action by subgroups of the total gathering, and it may be possible to again observe interactional teamwork in the production of these activities. Some of this teamwork

Segment 14

(Ethel, Ben and Max are visiting Bill and Lori.. They've brought a lot of food, including a salami Max took out of his refrigerator. Ben is wearing his new combination eyeglasses/hearing-aid. At this point, Lori is offering drinks.) (Source: Data collected by J. Schenkein, also reported in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, pp. 713-714.)

Ethel I'll take scotch, if you have it,

Ben You're gonna have to quit yelling, you see,

Ethel Oh lookit his ear!

Lori Oh that's right. You got- I know I noticed when he came in.

Ben Did you notice it?

Lori Yeah how do you like it.

Ben It's fantastic.

Ethel Except the thing presses into his head.

Ben It- it hurts me terrible I have to go down and get it adjusted.

Lori Yeah.

Ben It kills me right here.

Lori It's,

Ben The glasses are tight I feel it.

Max Is the salami dry?

Lori What happens if somebody puts it on,

Bill,

Ben Nothin,

Lori Will I hear it?

Did it get dry?

Will I hear it?

Bill A little bit,

Ben You gotta put this inside the ear.

But it's good that way.

Lori And then will it be real loud?

(Because) all the fat evaporates.

(continued on next page)

(continuation of Segment 14)

Ben	Well, yeah. Probably will be because you're-		
		Ethel	Y'know we had-
Lori	It won't be too loud,		We knew somebody who used to hang-
Ben	Well I could adjust the volume, I have it-		
			Hang it-
	I have it down almost all the way.		Leave it outside all the time
Lori	Okay		So it would dry out
Ben	Yeah. Because see I have perfect hearing in this ear.		The fat would dry all out.

may be inferred from the interaction based on recognized cultural categories or social roles, so that Lori and Bill can be seen to share in "hosting" the gathering, with a division of labor for practical actions such as making drinks and preparing salami, and for conversationally entertaining their guests. In this case the implicit teamwork between Lori and Bill draws them into separate conversational groupings. Other forms of teamwork can be identified which involve overt collaboration across interactional sequences within the same conversational grouping, as in the collaboration between Ben and Ethel provoked by a question from Lori:

	Lori	Yeah how do you like it.
→	Ben	It's <u>fantastic</u>.
→	Ethel	Except the thing presses into his head.
→	Ben	It- it hurts me terrible...

Here the teamwork results in an expanded sequence based on the elaboration of the requested evaluation which is proposed by Ethel.

We can describe the participation of persons in the conversational groupings which emerge in Segment 14 in terms of co-occurring activities or in terms of different <u>topics</u> to which attention may be drawn. For example, Max's initial utterance directs attention to the salami he has brought, but Lori and Ben continue their discussion of Ben's eyeglasses. Ben persists in attempting to raise this topic, but clarifies the potential membership of the grouping he is fostering by preceding his next attempt with a specific summons of Bill, which results in a bifurcation of the gathering and a conversation between Max and Bill. Eventually Ethel, who had been a participant in the grouping having the

"eyeglasses" conversation, becomes involved in the "salami" conversation even though she has not been specifically addressed or invited to participate in that grouping. (This segment can be compared with Segment 3, in which Vera's initial remark is disattended but followed by a specific summons of Sharon, which attracts the attention of Sharon as well as Charles, who had not been addressed.) At the time of her shift from one grouping to the other, Ethel is in a position to select a turn in either of two conversations, and appears to "value" a turn in the Max-Bill conversation over a turn in the Lori-Ben conversation.

Segment 14 is subject to alternative interpretations which illustrate alternative conceptions of the value of turns, each of which influences the analysis of the bifurcation which occurs here. (This point is particularly important because this segment is the only definite empirical example of multiple conversation which we have encountered in the literature.) Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) account for this bifurcation in terms of the "monopolization" of speaking turns by Ben and Lori (see the margin arrows they use to draw attention to this phenomenon). We would propose that their analysis overstates the exclusionary nature of Lori and Ben's actions, for the following reasons:

(1) Ethel does take recognized turns in interaction with both Lori and Ben, so that this interaction is at least a three-party conversation. Moreover, the fact of Ethel's participation serves to indicate to others that, even though Ben and Lori are taking many turns, contributions by others will not be automatically disattended but rather are likely to be accepted as participation.

(2) The notion of turn-monopolization and the attention to Lori and Ben's actions suggests a quantitative measure of conversational participation in which the number of turns taken is treated as a reflection of the significance of a person's involvement. While conversationalists may monitor the number of turns taken or offered, they will also be sensitive to qualities of particular utterances which give them greater or lesser significance. Examples in this culture will be the clever remark at a cocktail party, the meaningful utterance which stands out against a background of idle chatter, the "last word" in an argument, and so on. In Segment 14, Ethel takes fewer turns than either Lori or Ben, but her utterances are highly consequential. Specifically, her "Oh lookit his ear!" causes a shift in a concurrent utterance by Lori ("Oh that's right. You got- I know I noticed when he came in.") and later, her qualification of Ben's evaluation of his new eyeglasses/hearing aid ("Except the thing presses into his head.") causes him to reverse that evaluation (from "It's fantastic." in one utterance to "It- it hurts me terrible" in the next).

(3) While Max's "Is the salami dry?" does serve to initiate a second conversation, we may observe that it is placed at a point of possible turn- sequence- and topic-transition, and that no other person speaks concurrently. This suggests that he has remained sensitive to the Ethel-Ben-Lori interaction and may now be offering all persons present the opportunity of abandoning the "eyeglasses" topic in favor of talk about his salami. The fact that Max is initially disattended reflects possible ambiguity in the composition of the grouping for which

Max's utterance provides an organizing topic (see Chapter III). Specifically, Bill may hear Max's remark as participation in the Ethel-Ben-Lori grouping, while those persons may hear it as fostering a new grouping consisting of Max and Bill. With regard to our current discussion, however, the bifurcation does not necessarily result from persons being "left out" of interaction. Rather, Max evidences interest in a matter other than Ben's eyeglasses, and Ben and Lori evidence no interest in a turn in the "salami" conversation which is projected, even though they are not being "left out" of it.

(4) When Ethel later becomes involved in the "salami" conversation, she can be seen to exercise a choice between potentially consequential participation in the Ben-Lori grouping and participation in the emergent Max-Bill grouping, rather than as being forced out of a restricted grouping.

(5) Bill's participation in the "salami" conversation results only after a summons from Max, so that Bill is being drawn into a second conversation rather than being excluded from an initial conversation. There is no prior evidence of Bill's having taken any interest in the "eyeglasses" conversation, and consequently no evidence of a turn in that conversation being unavailable to him if it had been of any value to him.

(6) The fact that this segment begins with an utterance in which Ethel accepts an offer of a drink from Lori suggests that she can expect to interact with Lori (albeit largely nonverbally) at least until the drink is delivered. This suggests that Lori is not excluding Ethel from <u>interaction</u>, so that a shift by Ethel from one conversational

grouping to another need not involve interactional segregation of the parties to the particular conversations. (Lori is likely to be involved in preparing drinks for the others as well.) More generally, the exchange of speech which characterizes each conversation is only one of a variety of locally available bases for ongoing interaction, so that the opportunity to exchange speech with Lori on the topic of Ben's eyeglasses may be of lower priority to some parties than the preparation of drinks, which conversational activity may actually delay.

While a shift of an individual from one conversational grouping to another need not result in any interactional segregation, it may also happen that the separation which follows such a shift will evolve into a persistent segregation of organization. For example, Max and Bill might begin by discussing the salami and later go off together to see about its preparation. Conversationalists therefore have a stake in monitoring all such shifts for their organizational implications, particularly with regard to the current membership of particular groupings. However, the distribution of turns is only one manner in which a realignment of groupings may occur. Specifically, one party may propose an <u>activity</u> which will result in some segregation of parties (for example, "Go play in the back yard"), a <u>topic</u> (for example, "shop talk") about which some of those present may find it difficult to make a contribution, or may speak in a different <u>language</u> <u>or</u> <u>dialect</u> which only a subgroup will comprehend (for example, we have observed bilingual parents switching from one language to another when they wish to withold information from their unilingual children).

In summary, then, we find that the exclusion of parties from conversational groupings may result in bifurcation, but that turn-monopolization is only one of a variety of ways in which exclusion may be accomplished. Moreover, persons who do not value a turn at talk in a particular conversation at any given time may attempt to exclude themselves from that grouping. Finally, the movement of an individual from participation in one conversation to participation in another is as likely to result from a process in which that person includes himself (see Ethel and Max's actions in Segment 14), or are included by others into the other conversation (see Bill's involvement in Segment 14), as from a process in which that person excludes himself (see person D's "We can talk a little shop too!" in Segment 13) or is excluded by others (see the treatment of Tom in Segment 9) from the original conversation.

Conversational Groupings and Social Relationships

In the remainder of this chapter we will be concerned with features of interactional inclusion and exclusion which influence the organization of conversational groupings. We use the term "grouping" to emphasize the ephemeral nature of these interactional alignments as compared with "social groups" which can be observed to endure beyond any current interaction. Likewise, we do not wish to confuse a current interaction between persons with a "social relationship" by which they may be organized over time. "Exclusion" of a person from a current grouping, therefore, is not taken to constitute his exclusion from ongoing group relationships in which he is involved.

On the other hand, any current exchange or grouping may be reflective of, and consequential for, the condition of ongoing social relationships and groups. In general, inclusionary actions may be seen to promote relationships and group cohesion, while exclusionary actions may be seen to threaten the integrity of both. The brief consideration of these basic concepts which follows is intended to clarify some of our assumptions about them and to provide some warrant for paying serious attention to processes of inclusion and exclusion, even in ephemeral groupings.

The study of social groups is a major concern in the social sciences. The definition of what constitutes a group, however, may vary considerably. Often the concept of group is either assumed to be familiar to an audience (i.e.,not defined at all), or defined in terms of other concepts, such as reciprocal social relationships, which themselves go undefined. The reality of social groups and social relationships is part of the "world-taken-for-granted"(Schutz, 1954) by laymen and professionals alike, and the faith in (as opposed to a need to define and account for) these assumed realities is directly related to the sense of their obvious importance. That is, social realities thought to be closest to, and most consequential for, the everyday experience of persons in this culture are, ironically, the least well-defined.

One danger of a disattention to definition of essential concepts is that some of their essential features may be overlooked. In the case of social groups and relationships, we observe a tendency to a static conception of these realities, that is, to a reification of groups and relationships as stable objects which simply "exist" at

any point in time. While few observers fail to note that groups and relationships "change over time," explicit attention to temporal changes is infrequent.

Lay and professional attention to stability in groups and relationships can be understood in terms of the psychic security such stability offers in contrast to the general flux of human existence. However, wherever interpersonal relationships are empirically studied, the picture which emerges is one of continual change. We therefore propose a conception of a social relationship not as a state in which a number of persons find themselves, but rather as a reciprocal interpersonal process to which persons are oriented. In this regard, any current characterization of the nature of a particular relationship is inherently subject to modification from one moment to the next. Every relationship can be seen to have an historical development in which it begins, undergoes qualitative changes of various kinds, and ultimately ends.

Much of the lay and professional attention to change in social relationships is focused on crises, in which a dramatic change becomes imminent. This, we would argue, potentially obscures the underlying processes of which any current crisis is a consequence. That is, while crises are episodic, relational change is likely to be continuous.

If we understand a social group not as an assemblage of persons but as an organization of relationships, we find that the nature of a group is a function of the dynamics of its constituent relationships. A group will also undergo an historical process of development in which persons may identify the establishment of relationships which constitutes its beginning, changes in those relationships, engagement or disengagement of persons from group-relevant relationships, and termination of the group via termination of its relationships.

Persons may often recall the beginning of their membership in a group by reference to the origins of particular social relationships. These, in turn, are identified in terms of particular interactional contacts, often involving an initial conversation between previously unacquainted persons. As a relationship develops, its expression is typically found in recurrent conversational interaction. The termination of a relationship is also traceable to particular interactional events (such as a farewell or argument) or to interactional discontinuity (as in: "What ever happened to so-and-so?"), either of which can be taken as evidence of disengagement. The significance of interactional engagement and disengagement can also be seen in instances of the frustration of attempts to establish relationships (as with the person at a particular gathering to whom we never found an opportunity to speak) or terminate relationships (as with the person who continues to call after we perceive the relationship to have ended).

The significance of particular conversational encounters is often recognized after the fact, that is, by reference to a relationship perceived to have been established, transformed, or terminated. The potential for establishment, transformation or termination of relatioships, however, can be seen to reside (in principle) in every utterance within every conversation. The particular turn at talk is therefore a major vehicle for relational development, although this will not be a matter of conscious awareness in most cases.

Our concern with conversational inclusion and exclusion is based in part on their formal significance in the development of ephemeral conversational groupings, but also on a conviction (which we are not yet in a position to elaborate) that these processes serve as essential

vehicles for relational change. In obvious cases, the inclusion of a stranger into a conversational grouping is understood to make possible the establishment of one or more relationships, and the snubbing of an acquaintance by participants in a grouping may be consciously recognized as a device for the termination of one or more relationships. More generally, however, the moment-by-moment course of inclusionary and exclusionary actions among participants in an ongoing relationship is likely to exhibit highly significant patterns which may be of use to professionals or to persons whose interaction is subjected to careful scrutiny in this regard (see Chapter VI).

To the extent that persons will monitor their interaction for evidence of significant changes in relationships, it would appear to follow that speakers will be under some obligation to display in their utterances that they prefer to include someone with whom they have an ongoing relationship and prefer to exclude someone with whom they do not. This general rule might be suspended in cases where a person with whom the speaker has a relationship has specifically requested exclusion for good cause, or when making or breaking relationships is specifically appropriate. Yet exclusion, even of close relatives and intimates, is a recurrent feature of our data. We would infer, then, that exclusion of self or others from particular conversational groupings is socially acceptable in many sociable gatherings, so long as the exclusion is accomplished in such a manner that it may be perceived as transitory and as posing no threat to ongoing relationships. Moreover, certain forms of exclusion, such

as overt refusals to allow participation, are extremely rare, except in the case of the exclusion of small children from adult groupings. Inclusion and exclusion would therefore appear to be organized in very complex patterns such that instances in which they are intended to reflect communication of the current state of a relationship may be differentiated from instances in which they are interactional happenstance.

Conversational Inclusion and Exclusion

In the few studies in which conversational fragmentation is recognized, an occasional reference will be made to the processes of inclusion and exclusion which constitute the dynamics of the organization of groupings. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), as we have shown, suggest that the monopolization or spreading-around of turns are devices which may influence participation. An example of exclusionary action is also offered by Goffman:

> "...an addressed recipient can turn from the addressor to initiate what he hopes will be a separate state of talk with another party, minimizing any tendency to reply in order to invoke the boundary required by the conversation he himself is fostering"(1976:294).

It should be observed that the process of turn-distribution may result in exclusion without any attribution of its being intended, and even without awareness that it is occurring. In the kind of interaction suggested by Goffman, however, the combination of non-response to a prior speaker with apparent hearing of the prior utterance, physical movement of the hearer, and initiation of a new

and restrictive exchange, it would be difficult for the initial speaker to perceive the addressed party's actions as anything but blatant rudeness. While such actions do occur in conversation, the vast majority of exclusionary actions we have observed occur by virtue of sanctionable courses of interaction and without any attribution of rudeness. What appears to be required prior to evaluation of specific cases of inclusion or exclusion is a general conception of the operation of these processes, and the remainder of this chapter will be addressed to the development of such a conception.

We will initially propose that every utterance in conversation contains inclusionary/exclusionary relevance, in that it potentially conveys to hearers that they will be either included in or excluded from a conversational grouping. We may identify particular utterances as attempts at self-inclusion, in which a speaker attempts to become or continue as a participant in a conversational grouping; other-inclusion, in which a speaker invites of acknowledges participation by one or more others; self-exclusion, in which a speaker indicates that he is not a candidate for, or will no longer be available for, participation; and other-exclusion, in which a speaker disattends or rejects the candidacy of a would-be participant.

Inclusionary/exclusionary relevance may be conveyed in the substance of an utterance (e.g. "We can talk a little shop too!") or in its formal features (e.g. when an utterance is neither attentive nor responsive to a prior utterance). Moreover, the absence of an appropriate or expected remark will often have relevance in this regard (see Turner, 1970; see also the discussion of "relevant absences" in Sacks, unpublished

lectures). Although the function of absent utterances will perhaps most commonly be to convey exclusion, we find an instance in Segment 13 in which the absence of an immediate response to "Oh Morgan, where did you get that eye" conveys attention to, and potential inclusion of person D as a participant in an ongoing conversation.

Attempts at self- or other-inclusion may be produced in explicit form, as in requests for,or offers of, participation, or may be implicit in the taking or response to a turn at talk. Attempts at self- or other exclusion may also be either explicit (e.g. "Go play in the back yard") or may occur as the failure to take or recognize a turn at talk.

It may happen that a particular utterance will have both inclusionary and exclusionary relevance simultaneously. For example:

Child	Mom, may I speak with you?
→Mother	Not now dear, I'm speaking with your father.

In this case, the mother's utterance indicates that the child will be excluded from subsequent talk but, from another perspective, constitutes the consummation of an interactional sequence between child and mother. We might characterize this exchange as a minimal conversation which serves to prevent an extended conversation. In this regard, we find that the most effective exclusionary action will often not be an overt refusal of participation (which could be challenged, appealed, etc., the result often being an extended conversation), but rather disattention of the attempt, in which case no interactional sequence of even a minimal form is consummated.

Although many utterances will have obvious inclusionary/exclusionary relevance, many others will be ambiguous in this regard. Ambiguity may be an essential feature of social interaction, such that any utterance will be subject to a variety of possible interpretations. On the other hand, we find that conversationalists may have reason to design their utterances to be ambiguous under certain circumstances.

Members of this culture display a striking ambivalence regarding inclusion and exclusion. This ambivalence may be observed at an institutional level, so that persons will subscribe to values of egalitarian relations while simultaneously cultivating social, physical and psychological barriers between themselves. In conversation, persons may believe that inclusion is a pro-social and therefore commendable category of action while exclusion is anti-social and deplorable. At the same time, they will be aware of having more or less interest in speaking with particular others. Consequently, person A may have more interest in speaking to person B than to person C, but may be obliged to avoid an action which obviously excludes C in order to conceal this fact. This will be particularly important in a situation in which person C is a relative or intimate, since the exclusion may be taken as reflecting negatively on the A-C relationship. Persons subscribe to a belief that exclusion from groupings "just happens" in most cases, rather than attending to and holding one another responsible for the particular actions which actually cause it. (This belief appears to hold in the culture generally, so that political and economic differentiation are often understood either in terms of happenstance or of abstract forces rather than in terms of the actions of particular persons or groups.)

Where particular utterances are heard to have recognizable inclusionary/exclusionary relevance, that feature need not be heard as having been deliberately designed with inclusion or exclusion as their objective. Rather, the hearer will simply anticipate that one of these will be a likely outcome of a particular pattern of turn-distribution which has developed. For example, when person A addresses a question to person B, person C may recognize that he is technically excluded from the question-answer sequence in progress and possibly (because of such tendencies as chaining and last-as-next) from some later interaction as well. More generally, one's exclusion may be interpreted as an unintended byproduct of the current inclusion of another. A's question is designed for the inclusion of B, which results in an exclusion of C relative to B's inclusion. Among relatives and intimates, then, each person will be advised to construct utterances which convey not exclusion of the person with whom they have a relationship, but rather inclusion of some other person to whom they have some interest in speaking, although this action may have the same effect as exclusion of the person with whom they have the relationship.

Ambiguity may be a deliberate feature of the construction of an utterance, either to preclude a negative interpretation of the motives of someone who means no harm to a relationship or to "cover" for exclusionary actions which constitute a person's disengagement from a relationship. Ambiguity is likely to be dispreferred by the hearer as compared with overtly inclusionary actions. Unfortunately, conversationalists rarely attempt to challenge a possibly exclusionary or ambiguous action immediately, so that the relevance of many utterances will remain ambiguous for the analyst.

Inclusion/Exclusion Sequences

Inclusion and exclusion are the result of interactional processes in which the occurrence of either depends upon the inclusionary/exclusionary relevance of a series of utterances. For example, self-inclusionary actions followed by other-exclusionary actions often result in a frustration of the initial attempt. We will therefore attempt to understand inclusion and exclusion as interactional accomplishments over the course of inclusion/exclusion sequences. Each such sequence consists, minimally, of (1) an initial relevancy-establishing utterance, which can be interpreted to project the subsequent inclusion or exclusion of the speaker or another person from a conversational grouping; and (2) a response (including the absence of a response when that is appropriate), in which a hearer of the initial utterance either consummates or challenges the candidate relevancy as a current (if only momentary) condition of interaction.

The discussion to follow will consider the variety of utterance-types which are available to conversationalists for the accomplishment of inclusion/exclusion sequences of a minimal (that is, two utterance) form. Like other interactional sequences, however, these are inherently subject to expansion (see Jefferson and Schenkein, 1977) beyond their minimal form, as in the following hypothetical example:

A: Hey C, come over here and join us.
B: Yeah C, come on.
C: Not now, I'm busy.
D: He has some work to finish.

In this case person A invites person C to participate, person B reaffirms the invitation, person C rejects the invitation and person D reaffirms the rejection. The first two utterances establish the relevancy of C's inclusion, the last two respond with self- and then other-exclusionary actions.

We might characterize our hypothetical expanded sequence in the following manner:

A:	explicit other-inclusionary action	relevancy-establishing utterances
B:	explicit other-inclusionary action	
C:	explicit self-exclusionary action	responses
D:	explicit other-exclusionary action	

Inclusion or exclusion as conditions of the organization of a gathering may only be accomplished after extended attempts at self- or other-inclusion or exclusion, together with disagreements, challenges, individual or teamed (as in the example above) negotiations, etc. The essential units of such interaction, however, will be utterances with inclusionary/exclusionary relevance, used either as relevancy-establishing utterances or as responses to a proposed relevancy.

Inclusionary/exclusionary sequences appear to occur in the following forms:

INCLUSION/EXCLUSION SEQUENCES

A. Sequences Based on Inclusionary Actions

relevancy-establishing utterance	response
(1) Explicit self-inclusion, e.g: request for permission to participate	(a) explicit other-inclusion, e.g: granting of request
	(b) implicit other-inclusion, e.g: responsive utterance
	(c) explicit other-exclusion, e.g: denial of request
	(d) implicit other-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive utterance
	(e) deferral of response, e.g: non-verbal recognition suggesting subsequent verbal response
	(f) ambiguous action
(2) Implicit self-inclusion, e.g: simply taking a turn at talk	(a) explicit other-inclusion
	(b) implicit other-inclusion
	(c) explicit other-exclusion
	(d) implicit other-exclusion
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous action

relevancy-establishing utterance	response
(3) Explicit other-inclusion, e.g: inviting participation by another	(a) explicit self-inclusion, e.g: acceptance of invitation
	(b) implicit self-inclusion, e.g: taking a turn
	(c) explicit self-exclusion, e.g: refusal of invitation
	(d) implicit self-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action or absence of response
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous action
(4) Implicit other-inclusion, e.g: treatment of another's utterance as a turn in one's conversation	(a) explicit self-inclusion, e.g: recognition of implication
	(b) implicit self-inclusion, e.g: taking a next turn
	(c) explicit self-exclusion, e.g: denial that prior utterance was part of another's conversation ("I wasn't speaking to you.")
	(d) implicit self-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action or absence of response
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous action

B. Sequences Based on Exclusionary Actions

relevancy-establishing utterance	response
(5) explicit self-exclusion, e.g: request to be excused from participation	(a) explicit other-exclusion, e.g: granting of request
	(b) implicit other-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive utterance or absence of response
	(c) explicit other-inclusion, e.g: denial of request
	(d) implicit other-inclusion, e.g: responsive utterance which projects continued participation by other
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous action
(6) implicit self-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action or absence of appropriate response	(a) explicit other-exclusion, e.g: recognition of other's self-exclusionary action
	(b) implicit other-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action
	(c) explicit other-inclusion, e.g: inviting participation
	(d) implicit other-inclusion, e.g: taking a turn which projects other's participation
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous action

relevancy-establishing utterance	response
(7) explicit other-exclusion, e.g: dismissal from participation	(a) explicit self-exclusion, e.g: acceptance of dismissal
	(b) implicit self-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action
	(c) explicit self-inclusion, e.g: challenge of dismissal
	(d) implicit self-inclusion, e.g: taking another turn
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous action
(8) implicit other-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action	(a) explicit self-exclusion, e.g: request to be excused from participation
	(b) implicit self-exclusion, e.g: non-responsive action
	(c) explicit self-inclusion, e.g: request for permission to participate
	(d) implicit self-inclusion, e.g: taking another turn
	(e) deferral of response
	(f) ambiguous response

While the set of sequence-types proposed on the preceding pages is in one sense a theoretical construction, it was generated initially in particular characterizations which we attributed to naturally-occurring utterances. Further research is required to validate it as an accurate set of the options to which conversationalists are oriented.

There will certainly occur utterances which will be ambiguous with regard to their relevancy or otherwise difficult to characterize in the terms we have proposed. However, on the occasion of any utterance, persons will examine the utterance for any relevancy which it may establish, and may select from the available responses in order to either sanction or challenge the proposal. If the utterance is ambiguous, hearers have the option of requesting some clarification or of simply responding to it as if it were one of the types possible, awaiting later validation.

Inclusion/exclusion sequences operate <u>recursively</u> in that, while any utterance beyond the first in a conversation can be understood as a response to an established relevancy, the same utterance can itself be understood to establish a relevancy to which subsequent utterances will be responsive. That is, the hearer of any utterance may orient to its features as <u>both</u> a response to, and an establishment of, inclusionary/exclusionary relevance. The entire organiztion of inclusion/exclusion sequences is thus a resource which conversationalists may bring to bear on any and every utterance, as part of their constant monitoring of the group ecology of a gathering. Its operation is rarely consciously attended, however, because of the degree to which relevancies are anticipated, established implicitly, and accepted.

It is certainly possible for an utterance to have more than one inclusionary/exclusionary relevancy simultaneously. It is also possible that,in focusing on the responsive nature of an utterance which follows any established relevancy, we have omitted certain logical combinations, such as the occurrence of an other-exclusionary action in response to an other-exclusionary action. We can examine both of these issues by considering the following hypothetical exchange:

A: Go away.

B: Why don't you go away.

This instance exhibits two explicit other-exclusionary utterances. On the other hand, the second utterance may also be seen as being implicitly self-inclusionary in its role as a response to the first. The relationship between the first and second utterances may be described as an elliptical coupling, which Merritt (1976) describes as a situation in which the response to the first item "can be absent without being officially absent"(p. 342). Merritt encounters a parallel situation in her analysis of the apparent occurrence of questions-following-questions, as in the following:

Customer: Do you have coffee to go?

Server: Cream and sugar?

A "full form" of this interaction might be:

Customer: Do you have coffee to go?

Server: ((Yes we do. Would you like)) cream and sugar?

With regard to the hypothetical case of other-exclusionary-action-following-other-exclusionary-action which we proposed above, the "full form" might be:

A: Go away.

B: ((I'm staying.))
Why don't you go away.

We propose that the status of the second utterance as a response is a function of this kind of ellision. In other words, conversationalists will recognize not only the explicit relevancy displayed but also the implicit relevancy carried in the function of the response as one of the response-types culturally available.

Participation Maxims

We proposed earlier (see Chapter II) that conversationalists orient to general norms we call interpretation maxims in making talk comprehensible. One feature of conversational organization which is made available for analysis through an orientation to these norms is the allocation of attention, which is facilitated by another level of norms we call attention maxims (see Chapter III).

We now propose that the inclusion and exclusion of persons with respect to conversational subgroups may be understood as organized by yet another level of norms which we call participation maxims. The operation of these norms presupposes recognition of the intelligibility of talk and the allocation of attention as organized by the maxims described earlier. Participation maxims provide for the recognition

of the inclusionary/exclusionary relevance of prior utterances whose other formal features and intended audience are known, and for the construction of appropriate responses in line with the speaker's and hearer's intended organization of participants in a given grouping. Actions oriented to these maxims again operate reflexively, in that they are based upon a knowledge of alternative inclusion/exclusion sequences (see preceding section), while by their accomplishment they provide a warrant for perceiving interaction to be governed by known alternatives. We can offer at this time only a sketch of the most general participation maxims, stated in terms of the sequential patterns identified in the preceding section:

(1) If you are interested in participating in a conversational grouping, attend to the inclusionary/exclusionary relevance of prior utterances which would affect your participation.

(2) If you are interested in initiating, terminating, or changing the composition of a conversational grouping, attend to the inclusionary/exclusionary relevance of prior utterances with regard to yourself and others.

(3a) If a prior relevancy has been established with regard to your intended action, offer an utterance which can be heard as responsive.

(3b) If no relevancy has been established, offer an utterance which establishes your intended outcome as a relevancy.

(4) If you want to initiate a conversation, offer an utterance which projects both self-inclusion and other-inclusion. This utterance may involve either (4a) an explicit request for, or announcement of,

the formation of the particular grouping, or (4b) talk which may be heard as the initial turn in a conversation between those implicitly included.

(5) If you want to be included in an ongoing conversational grouping, offer a self-inclusionary utterance. This utterance may involve either (5a) an explicit request for permission to participate or announcement of your participation, or (5b) talk which can be heard as a turn in the ongoing conversation.

(6) If you want to include someone else in an ongoing conversation in which you are a participant, offer an utterance which either (6a) invites the other's participation or announces the other's status as a participant, or (6b) can be heard to implicitly project the other's subsequent participation.

(7) If you want to be excluded from an ongoing conversation, (7a) offer an utterance which requests permission to be excluded (e.g. "May I be excused?") or announces your subsequent exclusion (e.g. "We can talk a little shop too!"), or (7b) do not take a turn at talk, or (7c) produce an utterance which is insensitive and irrelevant to that conversation, and which can be heard as participation in a different conversational grouping.

(8) If you want to exclude someone else from an ongoing conversation in which you are involved, either (8a) offer an utterance which invites the other to leave or announces the other's expulsion, or (8b) do not offer any utterance which could be heard as responsive to the other or as projecting his subsequent involvement.

(9) If you want to terminate a conversation, (9a) offer an utterance which proposes or announces termination, or (9b) take no

further turns at talk, or (9c) offer a self-exclusionary (maxim 7) or other-exclusionary (maxim 8) utterance constructed so that termination becomes an implicit contingency.

We propose that the conduct of conversation involves a recognition of inclusionary/exclusionary relevancies and appropriate construction of one's utterances in order to achieve one's participatory intentions (for self and others) by orientation to the kinds of maxims we have just proposed. Conversationalists' orientations to these matters may be inferred from their utterances for analytic purposes, particularly in the description of conversational groupings.

We have attempted in this chapter to uncover some of the systematic but taken-for-granted features of the organization of conversational participation. The organization of particular groupings is, however, a highly complex process in which constant shifts and realignments may occur. We attempt to account for some of this complexity and to suggest some implications of this complexity for the development of particular groupings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONVERSATIONAL COMPLEXITY: REALIGNMENT, AMBIGUITY AND NEGOTIATION

We often observe conversational bifurcation which results in rather clearcut segregation of participation. In other cases we observe a fluid relationship between groupings in which persons shift from one grouping to another without apparent restriction. Conversationalists share orientations to the closed or open nature of a grouping and recognize inclusionary and exclusionary action in both forms.

We have also observed instances of fragmentation in which ambiguities arise for participants over such matters as the composition of particular groupings, who-is-speaking-to-whom, the nature of an interactional form in progress, and even the number of conversations which are occurring. The analyst cannot rely on conversationalists to clarify ambiguity in most cases because they typically deal with ambiguity by "letting it pass" (Garfinkel, 1967) so that interaction may continue, in the hope that the ambiguity will be resolved later. Conversationalists may occasionally be observed attempting clarification of an ambiguity or actually negotiating the pattern of their interaction. In general, the study of interaction which is problematic for participants offers evidence on everyday reasoning processes which are likely to escape notice in more routine interaction.

Conversational Realignment

In certain gatherings, conversational groupings may develop which retain a particular composition for an extended period of time. For example, guests at a cocktail party may converse in distinct clusters which become physically segregated from one another. In other gatherings, however, there will be no physical segregation between groupings, and persons will have opportunities to participate first in one, then in another conversation. We have seen in prior chapters that, while mechanisms exist for selectivity in the organization of participation, the boundaries between groupings may often be thought of as permeable, such that the composition of each grouping will be at least potentially subject to momentary change depending on the actions of conversationalists.

In Segment 15 (pages 141 and 142) we find five persons conversing at the dinner table. Their interaction may at times be characterized as a single conversation and at other times as two conversations. Two bifurcations occur, largely as a result of implicit shifts of attention rather than explicitly exclusionary actions. At several points we observe individuals contributing utterances alternately to one conversation and then another, so that the composition of each grouping changes from utterance to utterance. The parties to this interaction do not appear to be uncomfortable or in any doubt about the nature of their interaction. Inclusion and exclusion with respect to particular groupings is routinely accomplished without overt requests, complaints or apologies. Exclusionary actions appear to be treated as

Segment 15

(This interaction at a dinner table involves members of a nuclear family and a guest, Josie, who is the fiancée of Jim.)

Mom	How's the new job, Josie?
Josie	It's pretty good. A lot better than all that travellin.
	(1.0)
Josie	I-
Mom	Yeah. Specially with the gas crisis.
→Jim	What a farce that gas stuff is.
Josie	I know. There's no real shortage.
Mom	Yeah, but they're gonna start rationing-
Josie	That's what I heard, we're supposta get thirteen gallons a week each. Isn't that ridiculous?
→ Jim	Yeah. A lot of people won't be able to get to work on that. By that time-
Al	What's that, the gas shortage?
Jim	Yeah.
Al	That won't last long.
Jim	I know.
	(5.0)
Al	Did ya pick up my tires today?
Dad	Didn't have time. I'll get em tomorrow afternoon.
Al	Gotta get em on by the weekend so I can go-
Dad	You'll have em on.
→Jim	I wanna tune up my car over the weekend, too.
Dad	Runnin rough again?
→Jim	Yeah. Same as last time.
Dad	That won't be much problem.

(continued on next page)

(continuation of Segment 15)

Josie How was school today, Jim?

Jim Not bad. Only one class. But I got alot of homework to do. Got three projects.

Josie Well, its the end of the semester. Bet everybody's really-

Jim Yeah, everybody's sick of school.

→Al How's Doctor Bio doin'.

Jim All right. We're doin' the same stuff you did last year.

Al Still makin' ya write up those stupit labs, huh? They were alot of fun (ha ha)

Jim I CAN'T WAIT TIL I GET OUT OF THERE.

Mom Won't you be glad when it's over.

Dad You goin' over Bettylou's tonight?

Mom Yeah. Y'wanna-

→Al DON'T FORGET THAT BOX.

Mom All right.

Dad I'll go with you if we go to Mall Shop after that.

Mom Sure, I got somethin' to get there too.

formal or technical matters to which interactional responses are adapted, rather than as signs of disrespect or relational disengagement. Persons may assume that their exclusion from a particular grouping will not preclude their inclusion in that grouping at any subsequent moment, and the fact that certain persons shift back and forth can be taken as evidence for such an assumption.

We observe that only two persons, Josie and Dad, never overtly participate in the same conversation, and never engage in mutually inclusionary actions, although they do engage in mutually exclusionary actions at times when each produces an utterance either co-occurring with one by the other or insensitive to the conversation in which the other is involved. While no overt offense is taken, and this mutual exclusion can be interpreted as momentary happenstance, it may be heuristically valuable to temporarily distinguish between "Josie's conversations" and "Dad's conversations." On the one hand, the conversations cannot be said to be controlled by the person with whom we have identified them. On the other hand, each of these persons stands in a particular social relationship with respect to the others. Josie is Jim's fiancée, and as such is a "guest" at dinner, while Dad is the "head of the family" to the extent that others look to him for orientation of various kinds. We observe a <u>substantive</u> distinction between the conversations in which each is engaged which has inclusionary/exclusionary relevance. Specifically, the conversations in which Josie is involved are about matters which affect her but are taken to be of interest by others (her "new job," "all that travellin"), about the

current concerns of one of the family members (Jim's schoolwork), and about matters of general current interest ("the gas crisis"), all of which can projectably involve everyone else present. The conversations in which Dad is involved are about aspects of family business (picking up Al's tires, helping with Jim's tuneup, going to Bettylou's and to Mall Shop with Mom) in which he is directly implicated but have potential for excluding others, notably Josie. In this regard, the exclusion of Josie from "family business" is warrantable in a manner in which the exclusion of Dad from the more general conversations is not. To the extent that Dad is self-excluded from general conversation, his actions may be seen as matters of choice, while Josie's topical exclusion may be seen as externally constrained. (That is, Josie can more warrantably take offense with Dad for not speaking in the groupings which include her than he can for her not speaking in groupings discussing family business.)

There appear to be two "channels" of conversation in operation during this segment. In a sense the "family business" channel can be considered subsidiary to the "general" channel in that the former is used for resolution of practical matters, after which most of those who participate re-engage into the ongoing "general" talk. On the other hand, it would be difficult to distinguish "main" from "side" involvements, and none of the exchanges can unequivocally be characterized as "asides"(see Chapter III).

The initial bifurcation in Segment 15 occurs as a function of a turn-taking problem which we have observed to eventuate in conversational fragmentation in many cases. Specifically, an initial exchange (between Mom and Josie) is completed without clearly projecting a next turn, and is followed by a noticeable full-second gap in conversation. The "floor" is open to self-selection and eventually three persons (Josie, Mom and Al) begin speaking simultaneously. Since no right to the current turn has been pre-established, only one of the speakers (Josie, who may be deferring to the reserved right of the previous questioner, namely Mom, to regain the floor; see Chapter IV) aborts the attempt to take a turn, while two of the speakers (Al and Mom) continue their attempts to completion. Regardless of the intended audience for each utterance, we again find two simultaneous sanctionable utterances in competition for the attention of other parties (see Chapter III), such that the absence of a response to one party could convey disrespect while responses to both will result in bifurcation (see especially the section of Chapter III entitled "Bifurcation as Problem-Solving"). In this case, each of the speakers receives a response and two conversations result.

During the initial period of multiple conversation in Segment 15, Jim is able to participate in both conversations without sacrificing his status as a member of either grouping. In each of his utterances he demonstrates attention to the other parties and the topics of talk. Like Sharon in Segment 9 , he is able to speak as a contribution to one conversation and then respond to an utterance in the other conversation which occurred while he was speaking.

Al does not participate in the Mom-Josie-Jim conversation during his interaction with Dad, or during the interaction between Jim and Dad which follows. After the Al-Dad-Jim conversation is terminated, however, Al re-engages in the ongoing conversation with an utterance ("What's that, the gas shortage?") in which he simultaneously affirms that he has "missed" some of the talk and, by advancing a conjecture about their topic for validation, displays his general attention to their talk. Unlike Jim, Al does not take his membership in the ongoing conversational grouping for granted, so that this request for confirmation of the topic may be heard as a repair of his previous exclusion.

The second bifurcation in Segment 15 occurs when utterances by Jim and Dad co-occur. While Dad's remark occurs at a point of possible turn- and sequence-transition, it is not addressed to either Josie or Jim, the current overt composition of the grouping, but rather to Mom, who is not implicated in the Josie-Jim interaction. As with Max's actions in Segment 14 (Chapter IV), attention to Dad in this instance could be organized to grant his talk the status of a turn in ongoing talk, but only in terms of an abandonment of the subject of discussion and a complete change in the personnel projected to participate in the forthcoming sequence. Instead, Jim continues to speak to Josie and two conversations co-occur. In this case both Al and Mom participate in the conversation initiated by Dad, and re-engage in the ongoing talk after the termination of the Dad-Mom-Al conversation by simply taking interactionally sensitive turns and without apologizing for their prior exclusion or giving any indication of having "missed" significant substance from ongoing talk.

The second bifurcation in Segment 15, unlike the first, follows an implicitly other-exclusionary action by Josie and a response to Josie by Jim which includes him in the sequence which her utterance projects. In this sense, where the first bifurcation may be understood as the consequence of a turn-taking problem, the second may be understood as a response to the implicit exclusion of those who participate in the second conversation from ongoing talk. In this case it is not that Dad, Mom or Al have been denied turns in prior talk, but that they are not projectably involved in some forthcoming course of talk, however brief, which provokes the bifurcation. Moreover, their exclusion is actually a byproduct of the inclusionary relevance of talk between Josie and Jim, rather than a message of exclusion per se.

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) suggest that persons interested in preventing bifurcation should "spread turns around" (p. 713). While this is one device which may be employed in order to convey a sense of inclusion to a large number of persons, we may now observe that the same sense can be conveyed without specifically granting turns to those included. The conversationalist motivated to seek the attention of a number of others may use any of a number of devices which give his utterances other-inclusionary relevancy (see Chapter IV). One common device, for example, is the asking of a question such that others besides the questioner will be projected as the audience for the forthcoming answer. Specifically, if Josie had said something like "Tell us about school, Jim," rather than "How was school today, Jim?," she could have elicited the same information while

making it clear that the information could be shared among the larger grouping, that is, among all those who could hear themselves as included in the category "us." This indicates that the maintenance of a central focus of conversational attention in gatherings of four or more persons is likely to be an achievement related to the construction of utterances which are sensitive to inclusionary relevance. Persons who take one another's attention for granted and do not convey inclusion of all present actually invite bifurcation, to the extent that either exclusion or non-inclusion will leave persons free to pursue other involvements.

The Natural History of Multiple Conversation

We may now be in a position to offer a tentative description of the "natural history" of multiple conversation in terms of its origin in an initial bifurcation, its course over potential or actual shifts of personnel and realignment of groupings, its termination in favor of a single conversational focus, and the re-engagement of personnel from the terminated conversation into ongoing talk.

(1) Conversational bifurcations are organized with reference to two utterances, a bifurcation-inducing utterance and a response to it, which consummates the bifurcation. The bifurcation-inducing utterance may be one of a number of utterance-types which characteristically open conversations, such as a summons (see Schegloff, 1968; 1977), or may be almost any other type of utterance which could occur in the course of talk prior to bifurcation. Bifurcation-inducing utterances

may not be designed as such by their speakers, or they may be produced as part of a deliberate attempt to fragment the gathering. One major class of bifurcation-inducing utterances which generally are not produced in order to cause a bifurcation are those which occur in sanctionable competition for a turn at talk within a single conversation. A major class of bifurcation-inducing utterances which do appear to be deliberate attempts to fragment a gathering are those which either convey or respond to an exclusionary relevancy.

The response to a bifurcation-inducing utterance consummates the bifurcation by establishing mutual inclusion of the speakers while other talk continues. If no response occurs the initial candidate bifurcation-inducing utterance becomes interactionally isolated or may be heard as an abortive attempt to take a turn which may be renewed later. It is the response which permits retroactive identification of the prior utterance as inducing the bifurcation, since the prior utterance may not have been intended to fragment the gathering but rather to take a place in ongoing talk.

When a bifurcation occurs in the form of simultaneous attempts to speak within a single conversation, we may identify both of the simultaneous attempts as bifurcation-inducing utterances and both of their responses as consummating the bifurcation.

While bifurcation-inducing utterances may be differentiated in terms of the speakers intent to fragment the gathering or not, bifurcation-consummating responses commonly occur at a point in which the speaker is aware of imminent fragmentation of the gathering. The response cannot be described as unintentionally leading to bifurcation even though the speaker's intention may be to limit the new conversation

to a brief aside (see Segment 8) or to chastise the speaker of the bifurcation-inducing utterance (see Segment 12), because in the absence of the response no bifurcation could occur. In many cases, however, the producer of the response will have disattention of the prior speaker as his only alternative, so that consummating the bifurcation will be preferable to conveying disrespect of the prior speaker or leaving him interactionally isolated.

(2) An initial bifurcation may be followed by the formation of two or more groupings whose composition does not change over their course, in which case there will be no realignment of personnel until one of the conversations is terminated (as in Segments 12 and 13). Alternatively, persons may shift in their participation from one grouping to another, in which case there will be a continuous realignment of persons and re-composition of groupings (see Segment 15). Given sufficient numbers, one of the component conversations may undergo its own bifurcation, such that its component conversations may vary in the same manner in which it varies from other component conversations of the gathering as a whole. (While we do not have sufficient data on gatherings comprised of more than two conversations, our limited observations suggest that these settings vary from two-conversation settings only in that the individual has more interactional options and the termination of one component conversation does not reinstitute a central focus.) The individual utterances which occur in component conversations do not appear to differ from those which occur in single conversations, and the participation of persons is similar except that the interpretation of utterances as integral to one's conversation and

the distinction of these utterances from those which are external and subject to sanctionable disattention becomes a paramount issue.

The component conversations which comprise multiple conversation are minimally one interactional sequence in course, but may continue as long as other talk occurs. Certain exchanges consisting of a single sequence would probably not be considered conversations in their own right but rather as "asides" in relation to an ongoing conversation. Although this distinction may be difficult for both interactants and analyst to make in particular cases, in general persons involved in asides will be observed to construct their utterances in a manner that will convey to those in ongoing talk that their interaction is not intended to exclude them from that ongoing talk, to which they remain attentive. Where persons in even a brief exchange do not defer to, or convey their continued attention to and inclusion in, ongoing talk, we identify their interaction as a separate conversation. That is, we develop analytic characterizations based on the overt actions of conversationalists in this regard as elsewhere.

(3) The termination of a component conversation in cases of co-occurring talk can occur on the completion of any of its interactional sequences. It does not appear to require the kinds of formal closing sequences found to terminate single conversations (see Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) or any other form of ritualized leave-taking (see Adato, 1975). The termination of a component conversation is comparable to the talk which precedes a lull in a single conversation (see the interaction preceding the five second gap in Segment 15) to the degree that the persons remain in one another's presence and do not rule out the possibility of their continued interaction, either in the resumption of the component conversation or in their common re-engagement

in another, ongoing conversation. The nature of termination appears to be the same in cases where the first conversation to terminate is the "original" conversation in progress prior to bifurcation, as it is in cases where the first to terminate is the "new" conversation which originated at the time of bifurcation.

(4) The re-engagement of persons from a terminated conversation into another conversation which continues may occur via either explicit or implicit inclusionary actions by the persons in question, or via other-inclusionary actions directed to them by those who have been participants in the ongoing conversation. The most common form of re-engagement involves the previously excluded person simply taking a turn (implicitly including himself) in the ongoing conversation. This is particularly the case where the participant in the terminated conversation has also been a participant in the ongoing conversation while the terminated conversation was in progress, since such a person is not only likely to be aware of the nature of the ongoing talk but will have demonstrated his attention along its course (see Segment 15). Persons who either wish to display their re-engagement or who have missed significant substance of ongoing talk may use a variety of devices such as apologies for prior exclusion (see Segment 12), admissions of prior exclusion, or requests for missed information (see Segments 15 and 16). While such devices often occur at the discretion of the person re-engaging, in certain cases persons may prefer some such action as a display of deference to their status as accredited participants (see Chapter IV). These devices appear to occur regularly in cases where the re-engaging person's exclusion was of long duration or occurred at a "crucial" point in talk.

Our conception of re-engagement reflects the perspective of the individual engaged in renewed involvement in a grouping. From the perspective of the grouping into which the attempt at re-engagement is directed, however, this action constitutes a re-constitution of its membership, over which process the current participants have some degree of control. Given that they have disattended the candidate for re-engagement on the occasion of one or more of his prior utterances, they may construct their interaction in such a manner that it will continue to exclude him. Awareness of this contingency obliges the candidate to re-engage with an utterance which displays his attention to the matters which currently concern them and to the formal features of their talk. That is, from the perspective of the gathering as a whole, the termination of all but one of the component conversations will result in a re-integration of the gathering only if the personnel from the terminated conversation(s) are able to successfully re-engage.

Discrepant Orientations

To this point we have generally assumed that, although an ambiguous situation (for example, uncertainty over who may properly take a next turn) may give rise to conversational fragmentation, such an ambiguity will be resolved momentarily, often with the occurrence of a response to the ambiguous utterance(s). This is related to an even more pervasive assumption that interaction will not proceed in the absence of shared orientations to formal and substantive features of a gathering's talk. These assumptions are challenged by Segment 16 (pages 154 and 155), in which an initial bifurcation results from discrepant orientations to

Segment 16

(Alice and her son Rob have recently conferred with her attorney about the settlement of her late husband's estate. They are now part of an extended family dinner gathering hosted by Alice's daughter Nancy and Nancy's husband Sam.)

Nancy Did anybody hear from the lawyer?

(1.0)

Sharon ( )

Alice Oh yeah, // we (went)

Rob Yeah, I took her down and we s- filled out some paper(work).

Sam Nothing else, (came)?

Nancy 'N whad they say, anything else?

Rob We have tuh wait cu- // few weeks.

Sam Anything about the tax, uh, from Enterprise?

Rob (N-) I don't think we'll ever hear about // that.

Sam He workin' on that (Rob)?

Rob Nah. He said forget about it.

. . . .

→ Alice You know how sneaky he was, he, uh, he-

Alice See, I says to Robby that I, ehm-

. . .

Nancy Who was sneaky, the lawyer?

(Alice) Yeah.

(continued on next page)

(continuation of Segment 16)

Sam	Yeah, but you know, penalties go on top of penalties, // interest goes on top of interest.		. . . .
Rob	Right.		
Rob	I know. Uh,		
		Alice	-And this is the house they- for thirty two thousand they put the price on <u>that</u>. (0.5) And- // and-
		→Sam	For <u>what</u> house?
		Alice	In the country. (0.5) They valued the house thirty two thousand.
		Sam	Mh hmh. (Okay)
→Nancy	Did you read the papers?	Alice	And- He-
Rob	I looked over them.		He starts-
Nancy	Oh.		He starts reading on the paper, and-
		→Nancy	So you should have said- y'should- put your mind- say, "Wait a minute, I need my glasses."
			(1.0)
		Alice	Later I put my glasses just to sign it.

the model of interaction in which persons are engaged, and a second fragmentation of the gathering occurs which provokes a variety of interactional ambiguities, notably a disagreement over how many conversations are in progress. While each area of ambiguity appears eventually to be resolved, it is the persistence of ambiguity over a series of utterances which is of concern here. Conversationalists' management of ambiguous situations will be illustrated, although the larger issue of the extent to which interaction may proceed in the absence of convergent orientations cannot be addressed in this study.

Segment 16 begins with an other-inclusionary utterance by Nancy: "Did anybody hear from the lawyer?" This does not project as universal participation as the term "anybody" projects in other cases, because the next turn should only be taken by a particular anybody, namely someone who has heard from the lawyer in question. The full second gap which follows suggests some uncertainty among the hearers, and the eventual next speaker, Sharon (whose utterance is, unfortunately, inaudible), has <u>not</u> in fact been in any contact with the lawyer in question. Because Sharon is married to Rob, one of those who has had some contact with the lawyer, she is probably "cueing" one or more of the relevant anybodies that their contacts qualify them as "having heard." The fact that Sharon does not speak again during the segment suggests that she is not directly involved in the "lawyer" matter.

Sharon's apparent cue is picked up by Alice and Rob, who then offer consecutive answers to Nancy's original question ("Oh yeah..." and "Yeah, I took her..."). The consecutive utterances by Alice and

Rob initiate a form of teamwork similar to that described in Segment 11 (Chapter IV). Specifically, Nancy has attempted to elicit some information, and Alice and Rob indicate that they will collaborate in providing the information. When Sam and Nancy follow with consecutive questions, the team alignment suggested is: Sam and Nancy as an "information-eliciting team" (of twelve utterances attributed to them, eight are questions directed to Alice and/or Rob, and the other four are acknowledgements or follow-up of answers received), while Alice and Rob are an "information-providing team" (all of their utterances are answers or characterizations responsive to Sam or Nancy). As we demonstrated earlier (see Chapter IV, section on "Teamwork"), a teamwork definition potentially modifies the pattern of turn-distribution which operates in individualistic interaction, such that members of the same team may speak consecutively in order to share in the team's production of work that would ordinarily be accomplished in a single turn.

The initial bifurcation in Segment 16 reflects a discrepancy in the definition of the current situation between (at least) Sam and Alice. Specifically, when Rob reaches a transition-relevance place in his answer to one or both of the consecutive questions- ("We have tuh wait" can be heard as his response), Sam begins a follow-up question without waiting for Alice to speak, which displays his orientation to an individualistic model of interrogation. Meanwhile, Alice has begun her own response, which displays her continued orientation to the teamwork model, without waiting for Sam (whose utterance is inconsistent with that model) to finish his utterance. Under the circumstances, she may warrantably feel

that she has a right to the current turn.

In selecting an utterance to be identified as a "bifurcation-inducing utterance" here, we find that both Sam's "Anything about the tax, uh, from Enterprise?" and Alice's "You know how sneaky he was, he, uh, he-" are consistent with our generalization insofar as they are in competition for a turn. Sam's is also implicitly exclusionary, in that it disattends the fact of Alice's right to a team turn. Sam may now be oriented to a different form of teamwork, in which one member of the information-eliciting team will interrogate one member of the information-providing team, leaving his teammate to do likewise. Alice, meanwhile, may recognize the exclusionary implication and begin speaking to the remaining member of the information-eliciting team. However, there is apparently some uncertainty among the various parties as to the fact that a bifurcation has occurred. Specifically, Alice begins two stammering utterances, which indicate some question that she is being attended (see Chapter III), before she finally speaks continuously, and she receives no verbal response for some time, until Nancy's "Who was sneaky, the lawyer?" This suggests that Nancy may still be attentive to the Rob-Sam conversation, or that Alice still seeks to include one or both of them in the grouping into which her talk is directed. Although Alice may be "stalling" her utterance in hopes that the Sam-Rob conversation will be a brief aside, the pattern of her speech would indicate that she is particularly oriented to the inclusion of Rob. She suspends her bifurcation-inducing utterance precisely at the point where Rob begins his response to Sam's simultaneous bifurcation-inducing utterance, and begins speaking again precisely at the point

where Rob's utterance ends. Her next utterance also begins to stall when Rob answers Sam's next question, but eventually her sensitivity to Rob's speech ends and she speaks continuously. During this period she demonstrates no sensitivity to co-occurring speech by Sam.

Alice may be said to initiate a separate conversation (with Nancy) inadvertently, in that, while she is aware that another conversation (between Sam and Rob) is developing, she appears to be seeking a wider audience for her remarks which includes Rob, an essential participant in the other conversation. Indeed, although Nancy's subsequent response indicates attention to Alice from the beginning (from the "sneaky" reference), the bifurcation cannot be said to be consummated until her verbal response.

Ambiguity and Negotiation

The action by Alice in Segment 16 creates an analytic uncertainty in that, while her speech from "You know how sneaky..." until Nancy's response may be heard as a continuous turn, her sensitivity to the Sam-Rob conversation is unnecessary in multiple conversation. Alice's waiting and stammering could result in forfeiture of Nancy's attention, although it happens not to. While the anlytic uncertainties are clarified somewhat by Nancy's response, they re-occur shortly after the termination of the Sam-Rob conversation.

The termination of the Sam-Rob conversation is preceded by a shift on Sam's part from his pattern of eliciting information to an assertion which can be heard as critical of Rob's handling of the matter in question ("Yeah, but..."). Rob responds to Sam's assertion

with "Right" at an early transition-relevance place and "I know. Uh," at its conclusion. The assertion-agreement sequence ends the Sam-Rob interaction because Rob is unsure of what else to say ("Uh,") and Sam does not pursue the matter.

Sam's re-engagement into the Alice-Nancy conversation begins to transform the organization of the gathering in a manner which does not become analytically clear and appears to be ambiguous for the participants in a number of ways. The re-engagement itself is accomplished in a manner parallel to Al's re-engagement in Segment 15. Specifically, Sam's utterance ("For what house?") demonstrates both his general attention to the conversation and the fact of his having missed one of its particulars. Sam's utterance also suspends the story Alice is telling as her provision of information about the lawyer-client interaction of concern to Sam and Nancy, and simultaneously calls into question the type of interactional sequence under way. One way in which we can characterize the Alice-Nancy interaction occasioned by Sam's re-engagement is with the following general sequence-type:

(a) A: Procedural Problem Question (see Churchill, 1978)
B: Suggested Resolution of Procedural Problem
A: Acknowledgement of Resolution (optional)

If Sam's acknowledgement ("Mh hmh. Okay") is heard to conclude the sequence, then the floor should be open for self-selection by anyone, and indeed his remark is followed by simultaneous attempts to take the next turn by Alice ("And-") and Nancy ("Did you read the papers"). We propose, however, that Alice is not oriented to the

form of interaction generalized in sequence-type a above. Rather, the fact that she attempts to begin her story again without offering or waiting for a response to Nancy's question ("He- He starts-") suggests that Alice understands the prior exchange as a "side sequence"(Jefferson, 1972) within an ongoing sequential course, as in the following:

(b)
A: Story in Progress
B: Procedural Problem Question
A: Suggested Resolution of Procedural Problem
B: Acknowledgement of Resolution (optional)
A: Resumption of Story

While in pattern a the occurrence of Sam's acknowledgement will terminate the sequence, thereby opening up the floor and sanctioning Nancy's attempt to take a next turn, in pattern b the turn following the acknowledgement belongs to the original story-teller, namely Alice.

Nancy's utterance might also be warranted as occurring in the following type of sequence:

(c)
A: Story in Progress
B: Procedural Problem Question 1
A: Suggested Resolution of Procedural Problem 1
B: Acknowledgment of Resolution
C: Procedural Problem Question 2
A: Suggested Resolution of Procedural Problem 2
C: Acknowledgement of Resolution
A: Resumption of Story

If we substitute actual utterances from Segment 16 for the formal utterance-types in pattern c we have:

Alice ...and-

Sam For what house?

Alice In the country...

Sam Mh hmh...

Nancy Did you read the papers

Rob I looked over them

Nancy Oh

Alice And-
He-
He starts-
He starts reading...

This substitution, however, makes some assumptions which may not be shared by the conversationalists and overlooks some important empirical details. Specifically, it assumes that Rob, because he has been Alice's teammate, can substitute for her in resolving Nancy's problem. While Rob may in fact be making some such assumption, the fact that Alice is attempting to resume her story suggests that she is trying to follow pattern b. The empirical details ignored by the interpretation that this interaction follows pattern c are precisely the overlaps between Alice's attempts to resume her story and the three prior utterances.

It would appear that any analytic effort to develop an objective characterization of some course of interaction will reflect conversationalists' current agreement or disagreement on the course in which they are involved. In order for the analyst to develop a single characterization,

the conversationalists must be in agreement on their mutual course of interaction. Whenever conversationalists disagree on the form of interaction in which they are involved, it may become improper for the analyst to attempt to impose a characterization on the data. In the case at hand, then, we cannot say that the interaction follows a particular pattern, because each conversationalist may have a different conception of the pattern being followed.

Nancy's final utterance ("So you should have said...") indicates that she is not following either pattern b or pattern c, but rather has begun a new sequence, parallel to Sam's final exchange with Rob, which can be characterized as:

(d)
A: Question eliciting information about B's actions ((where B may have acted as an individual or as a member of a team))

B: Provision of information

A: Criticism of B's (or B's team's) actions

Pattern d resembles instances of interactional confrontation described by Bleiberg and Churchill (1975), and the full second gap which precedes Alice's response suggests that she is taken aback by this shift, which involves the abandonment of her story (already interrupted by Nancy) and the construction of an utterance which responds to Nancy's criticism.

There is no agreed-upon "definition of the situation" in this interaction. Each of our hypothesized models of the interaction can be partially validated by overt action, but inconsistencies are also evident. In attempting, often without success, to direct interaction consistent with his or her sense of its proper course, each of the participants exhibits both a desire to exchange collaborative speech

and a desire to engineer agreement on the terms of that collaboration. It is not surprising that the utterance which finally re-focuses the attention of the gathering (Nancy's "So you should have said- y'should-put your mind- say,...") conveys a certain exasperation, directed perhaps not so much at what she perceives to be Alice and Rob's mishandling of the matter in question, as at the discrepancy between Nancy's definition of the current interaction and Alice's. Specifically, Alice appears to be oriented to pattern b by persisting with her story, and to a two-party conversation involving herself and perhaps Sam but excluding Nancy, as evidenced by her disattention of the interaction between Nancy and Rob. Nancy, meanwhile, appears to be oriented to a new sequence-type and to a single conversational focus in which Alice should properly attend to Nancy's participation.

In summary, an assumption that interaction proceeds according to an agreed-upon definition of the situation does not hold up in this instance. Moreover, these data cast doubt on agreement as a guide to interaction. If we reconsider Segment 15 for a moment, we may observe that the conditions of interaction change with each shift of topic or personnel, although the parties appear to exhibit a flexibility in which they take no offense at changes that occur. In Segment 16, the renegotiation of the conditions of interaction does not appear to satisfy the parties to that interaction. Once the course of interaction becomes uncertain, each of the parties acts according to a personal definition of the situation, and speakers no longer get the attention or responses that they expect. Indeed, the projectability of anticipated actions which is made possible by common orientation to interactional sequences is impossible under these circumstances.

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The Terms of Participation

Examination of interactional complexity has occasioned a number of modifications in our conception of conversational fragmentation. One of these is that multiple conversation does not exist as an objective feature of interaction but rather as a conception of interaction to which all, none, or some of the parties to a conversation may be oriented. Where some of the conversationalists are oriented to this conception while others are not (as evidenced by relevant overt actions), it becomes fruitless for the analyst to attempt a definitive characterization.

Another modification is to our conception of conversational participation. Specifically, persons do not simply orient to the inclusion of others. Rather, they orient to the conditions of participation by particular others. If a particular other does not participate on terms which coincide with the definition of the situation to which one is oriented, that other's participation will not be satisfactory from one's perspective. In Segment 16 , persons directed inclusionary actions toward one another and then were often dissatisfied with one another's actual participation.

These general observations may be illustrated if we consider a final piece of data, Segment 17 (pages 166 and 167), in which two, and perhaps three, conversations co-occur. The segment begins with Charles initiating a discussion of a series of murders (by the "Hillside Strangler") in a conversation which at one time or another also includes Sharon, Rob, Tom and possibly Rachel. (We say "possibly" because Rachel's participation is precisely one of the matters about

Segment 17

(While eating a holiday dinner hosted by Charles and Rachel, members of an extended family have been discussing crimes in the news. The guests include Rob and Sharon and their children Tom and Cynthia.)

Charles How bout that guy in California.

Sharon Mmmh.

Charles Eh- 'nay // suspect he's a cop.

Sharon ( )?

Charles He's one of their own.

Sharon Really?

Charles Cuz he knows their tactics.

And that's how they're able- he's able to avoid all (day)-

-the, uh, their procedures.

Rob Mh.

Charles Every time, like clockwork. He knows what he's doin'.

Rachel They just found the, twelfth woman?

Sharon S- half of them were prostitutes.

Cynthia Mom.

Rachel What's the matter sweetheart.

Cynthia Can I go ( )

Sharon Don't- don't go out ('til)

(continued on next page)

(continuation of Segment 17)

Charles (Twelf-) twelve chicks, man.

(1.0)

Strangled, man.

(0.5)

God.

Tom Chickens strangled! I heard of chickens being shot, // (but-)

Rob Who saw this movie on channel five yesterday?

Cynthia (Ah- I want to leave that there.)

Sharon All right, // eat the inside.

Rachel You don't want any more? G'head.

Sharon Eat // the inside.

Rachel Eat-

Rachel Eat the inside, you wanna have your tomato?

which we do not observe overt agreement.) During the conversation initiated by Charles we observe an exchange between Rachel and Sharon, which may or may not be characterized as a second conversation. In the course of the Rachel-Sharon exchange, a summons by Cynthia initiates yet another conversation, which later includes Rachel and Sharon. After Charles' final utterance, Tom (a child) transforms the word "chicks," which Charles had used in referring to the murder victims, into "chickens," as the basis of a joke. Finally Rob changes the subject and attempts to re-focus the gathering around an other-inclusionary invitation to participation in subsequent talk ("Who saw this movie on channel five yesterday?"). While Segment 17 exhibits a complexity which we cannot fully explore here, we will draw attention to a number of features relevant to our current concerns.

An initial issue of interest in Segment 17 is the status of the Rachel-Sharon exchange ("They just found the, twelfth woman?"- "S- half of them were prostitutes.") as a conversation. Here again that Rachel's utterance is placed at a possible transition-relevance-place in the course of Charles' talk, which suggests that her intention may be the taking of a-turn rather than the initiation of a separate conversation (see our discussion of "bifurcation-inducing" utterances). However, Charles unexpectedly continues, and both Charles and Rachel receive bifurcation-consummating responses. Moreover, Charles' continuation is exclusionary in that it is disattentive to the potential contribution by Rachel even though it is well under way.

The fact that both Rachel and Sharon are subsequently drawn into another conversation by Cynthia appears to be a response to their exclusion.

This case differs from other materials we have examined in that the bifurcation-consummating response by Sharon is subject to various interpretations. One interpretation of specific concern here is that Sharon, like Rachel, is not aware of, or motivated to foster, a bifurcation. That is, Rachel has taken a turn which was sensitive to Charles' prior turn, and Sharon is simply proceeding with a turn sensitive to Rachel's.

At the time of Charles and Rachel's initial overlapping utterances, we may consider whether each has a right to take a turn at that point. This determination again rests on a prior determination of the type of sequence in progress, and again there appear to be discrepant orientations to this matter. Specifically, Rachel is oriented to a model of <u>discourse</u>, which projects relatively egalitarian turn-distribution and permits a variety of utterance-types, while Charles is oriented to a model of <u>story-telling</u>, which projects a warrantably asymmetrical pattern of turns in which a "story-teller" may expect more and longer turns than persons in his "audience," who are expected to defer to the story-teller and to limit their participation to brief displays of attention and appreciation. Such utterances as Sharon's "<u>Mmmh</u>" and "Really?" have apparently given Charles the impression that other parties will currently defer to his status as a story-teller. Rachel's initial remark appears to be a substantive contribution, which is appropriate in discourse but perhaps not from

a member of the audience for a story. In this regard, Sharon's response to Rachel indicates that,while she may have acted in a manner consistent with a member of an audience earlier, she is now also oriented to this interaction as discourse, and is making her own substantive contribution. Substantive utterances will be appropriate at the conclusion of a story, so that we may say that while Charles considers his story to be in progress, Rachel and Sharon consider it to be over.

From Charles' perspective, he is likely to welcome participation by others to the extent that such participation conforms to proper actions by members of an audience. Charles can be observed to pause regularly so that hearers may offer a "minimal response" in which they display their attention and appreciation, but only such displays will be treated as proper.

The form of participation which will be preferred by parties to a conversation may be projected if hearers are able to identify both the model of interaction to which a current speaker is oriented (e.g. story vs. discourse) and the inclusionary/exclusionary relevance of the current utterance. In the case at hand, Rachel correctly interprets Charles' pause as offering her an opportunity to speak, but incorrectly (from Charles' perspective) interprets the interactional model to which he is oriented (discourse rather than story) which leads her to produce an improper (from Charles' perspective) utterance. In general, the range of preferred participation from any current speaker's perspective may be illustrated in the following partial list of restricted other-inclusionary actions:

(1) The speaker may prefer others to limit their participation to nonverbal displays of attention. For example, when Nancy, in Segment 6 (Chapter III), says "...and I bought some flowers, right? That took some time," the fact that she does not pause after "right?" projects something like a nod as a proper response.

(2) The speaker may pause only briefly so that others may participate with minimal responses which display their attention and/or appreciation. For example, in Segment 17 we observed "He's one of their own."-"Really?"-"Cuz he knows their tactics."

(3) The speaker may suspend a sequence in order to get some information or verification essential for continuation. For example, in Segment 7 (Chapter III) Patty says "Oh I'd say he's about what five three enna half=Aren'tchu Ronald."

(4) The speaker may tolerate suspension of a sequence in order to permit resolution of a procedural problem which prevents proper interpretation of the interaction. For example, Alice in Segment 16 responds to Sam's "For what house?" before continuing her story.

(5) The speaker may invite participation limited to the pursuit of a particular topic. For example, Rob in Segment 17 asks "Who saw this movie on channel five yesterday?"

(6) The speaker may invite participation by only a particular person. For example, "Sharon?" is addressed by Vera in Segment 3.

The definition of the situation to which any current speaker can be observed to orient, however, need not be accepted as a condition of interaction. Rather, any current situational definition is subject to negotiation by the parties to interaction. We have suggested, for example, that in Segment 17 Charles is oriented to a story-telling definition while Rachel is oriented to a discourse definition. If we examine these persons' interaction, however, we may observe evidence of negotiation regarding these definitions. Specifically, Charles begins to stammer when Rachel's initial remark draws a response from Sharon (compare Rob's actions in Segment 8). Faced with the loss of two potential hearers, Charles' rigid conception of Rachel and Sharon's audience role (as evidenced by his initial disregard of Rachel's contribution) appears to weaken, and he now may be willing to tolerate a brief Rachel-Sharon aside providing they return to audience status. He does, in fact, make use of Rachel's contribution ("twelfth woman") in a later utterance ("Twelf- twelve chicks, man").

Rachel's role in negotiations is evidenced by the transformation of her utterance into a question ("They just found the, twelfth woman?") after its beginning projects an assertion. That is, we do not think it coincidental that the questioning intonation in Rachel's utterance begins precisely in that part of it which coincides with the resumption of Charles' story. Rather, it appears that Rachel is making a momentary adjustment (in mid-utterance) in which she transforms a substantive contribution to the discussion, which is apparently being treated by Charles as improper during his story, into a question, which Charles may be more inclined to respond to if he can hear it as a procedural problem.

Insofar as the test of success for negotiation is the movement of both sides to a compromise agreement under which both can interact, the negotiation in Segment 17 clearly fails. Charles loses two members of his audience in spite of his adjustment, and Rachel gets no response to her utterance in spite of her adjustment. In the absence of a common situational definition between these parties, their interaction breaks down and the gathering becomes fragmented.

While a situational definition, once agreed-upon, will tend to guide interaction, it remains, like the conversational maxims we have described, only a rule-of-thumb (see Chapter II). It does not force itself on interactants, and persons cannot force it on one another without bringing external constraints to bear. A "shared" definition may result when an initially projected definition is accepted without challenge by interactants, or may result only from a process of negotiation between interactants who are initially oriented to discrepant definitions. This suggests that political imagery is by no means inappropriate to conversational interaction, and that the struggle to establish definitions of interactional propriety may be found beneath the surface of even the most apparently trivial of sociable interactions.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Conversational interaction has been the object of attention by researchers in a number of disciplines. Yet, many studies examine relatively orderly settings, leaving interactional complexity open to speculation. Our strategy has been to search for order in complex and fragmented interactional settings. In this exploratory study, we have observed formal features which organize verbal interaction amidst apparent disorder. At the same time, we have illustrated some of the essential flexibility of interaction. We have arrived at a perspective in which the formal features of conversation are seen as products of a process of negotiation regarding the particular patterns to which persons will orient at any given moment. The uncertainty of conversation can be traced to the momentary renegotiability of current social-interactional definitions.

Conversational interaction cannot be understood without reference to features of the gathering in which it occurs. Social gatherings may be differentiated according to the degree of unity of organization which they are expected to exhibit. In certain types of social

gatherings, participation by all present in centrally-focused interaction may be expected. In others, however, persons may sanctionably disperse into particular groupings and engage in separate conversations. The conversational fragmentation of a gathering may be accompanied by physical segregation of the parties, or may occur while the parties remain in one another's presence.

We refer to settings in which co-present persons engage in separate, co-occurring conversations as instances of multiple conversation. These settings create analytic difficulties insofar as talk from a number of conversations will occur simultaneously. Such difficulties potentially exist for conversationalists as well, in that, wherever the composition of particular groupings may vary over time, the conversationalist must be able to discern such matters as who-is-speaking-to-whom at any given moment. This kind of determination is made possible for conversationalists and analysts alike, we propose, by reference to norms of conversation we call interpretation maxims. The term "maxim" is used to convey the conception of these norms not as rigid rules which constrain interaction, but rather as "rules-of-thumb" which permit persons to ascribe coherence to one another's actions and to act accordingly.

Orientation to interpretation maxims permits persons to organize utterances into recognizable structural units we call interactional sequences, so that any particular utterance is understood in relation to other utterances. Noting the current status of an ongoing sequence permits the conversationalist to ascribe meaning, to determine others' expectations with regard to projected participation, and to participate on acceptable terms.

Sequence-recognition permits the analyst to group utterances according to their sequential relationships and thereby infer the composition of particular conversational groupings despite limitations inherent in the study of audiotaped materials (specifically, the inaccessibility of nonverbal evidence of co-participation). We do not propose that conversationalists or analysts do, or ought to, rely on sequence-recognition to the exclusion of other forms of evidence about interaction. Rather, we observe that these features serve as valuable resources in conversational interpretation.

Persons are often subject to conflicting demands on their conversational attention. The social organization of attention becomes a matter of consequence for conversationalists in that orientation to it provides warrantable bases for the attention or disattention of particular persons and utterances. Since attention may be offered and withdrawn over time, persons rely on one another's overt displays of attention.

On occasion, a particular conversation may bifurcate, resulting in a separation of persons into emergent groupings. Under these circumstances, disattention to certain others is sanctionable if they are no longer one's co-participants in a conversational grouping. We find, however, that participants in one conversation may remain attentive (as evidenced by overt actions) to the course of another conversation in which they are not current participants. The distribution of attention and the organization of conversational groupings are therefore related but not necessarily coincident.

Indeed, our conception of attention embraces such potentially disintegrative actions as interruptions.

Multiple conversation involves multiple foci of attention. However, we may identify instances of the dispersion of attention in which no segregation of attention into separate conversations occurs. Under certain conditions, a shift in conversational attention may result in a diversion of the attention of some of those present which does not suspend their attention to an ongoing focus of conversational attention to which all present remain attentive. When persons are drawn into exchanges unrelated to ongoing talk but display their continued attention to that ongoing talk we refer to their interaction as an aside rather than a separate conversation. We identify multiple conversation to occur in cases where no mutual attention across groupings in expected.

The receipt of conversational attention cannot be taken for granted. Persons recognize selectivity in the allocation of attention, and must identify those they should attend and those whom they may disattend. Selections are not made arbitrarily, but rather by orientation to conversational norms we call attention maxims. Such maxims permit persons to recognize attention and sanctionable disattention of themselves, and to organize the allocation of their attention accordingly.

In spite of existing guidelines, persons are occasionally subjected to simultaneous sanctionable claims on their attention, which creates a dilemma in that attention to one person or grouping may result in denigrating disattention to another. Conversational bifurcation may result from different attentive responses by two or more persons.

Participation in conversational groupings is often organized around concerted action by emergent subgroups in a gathering. Using Erving Goffman's concept of teamwork as an heuristic device, we discover that conversational teamwork may result in patterns of turn-distribution, for example, which are different from patterns which have been generalized from more individualistic interactions. The relationship between teamwork and conversational fragmentation is rather complex, since in certain instances teamwork can be integrative of a gathering while in other instances it promotes bifurcation.

Participation in conversational groupings is found to be accomplished by means of reciprocal inclusionary and exclusionary actions. We propose that every utterance may be inspected by conversationalists for its explicit or implicit inclusionary/exclusionary relevance. Determinations of inclusion or exclusion may be inferred from substantive involvement in particular activities or topics of talk, or may simply be a function of formal features of an utterance, such as the fact of its being addressed to a particular person. Movement of persons between conversational groupings is a consequence of particular combinations of utterance-types as inclusion-exclusion sequences, of which we identify several forms. Recognition of such matters as inclusion and exclusion is governed by an orientation to conversational norms we call participation maxims, which are concerned specifically with group composition.

While participation in the kinds of ephemeral groupings illustrated by our materials cannot be presumed to directly reflect the degree or quality of an individual's participation in ongoing

social relationships and social groups, an inspection of such materials may be suggestive of interactional bases of ongoing relationships. The "sense" of inclusion or exclusion that a person may have in a gathering may be identified with particular interactional sequences which can be examined. If a social relationship is conceived as a dynamic process rather than a static entity, even momentary sequences in which persons are engaged can be consequential for, and illustrative of, the current state of their relationship.

While the potential for this kind of analysis may be great, we propose caution in premature generalization from our observations, not only because of the tentative nature of our exploratory research, but also because uncertainty and ambiguity are pervasive features of interaction for conversationalists themselves. While in certain instances a single conversation will bifurcate into groupings with a persistent composition, in other instances persons will shift from one conversation to another with relative ease, and it may be difficult to identify patterns of inclusion or exclusion at any given moment. When we attempt to formulate a "natural history" of the process comprising multiple conversation as an interactional form, we find variation at each stage: in the initial bifurcation-inducing utterances, in the responses which consummate a bifurcation, in the (actual or potential) shift of persons from one conversation to another, in the termination of any of the co-occurring conversations, and in the re-engagement of persons who have been excluded from one conversation while participating in another.

When we attempt to develop a general conception of the processes involved in multiple conversation, we encounter instances which are difficult to characterize. This may be a function of the immaturity of our analysis. We propose, however, that "objective" descriptions of interactional facts depend upon convergent subjective definitions of situations by conversationalists themselves. When analysis becomes uncertain, it often results from ambiguities or disagreements faced by conversationalists. Even such an apparently straightforward matter as the number of conversations in progress at any given time is actually a matter for potential negotiation by the parties to interaction. A situational definition cannot be imposed by persons in the absence of external constraints, and interaction may actually proceed in the presence of devergent definitions, with or without recognition of the divergence.

Conversation displays an essentially political dimension to the degree to which struggles over such matters as situational definition and inclusion/exclusion come to the interactional foreground. Persons negotiate not only the fact of participation in interaction but the terms of participation as well. On the other hand, our study of self-exclusionary actions suggests that the value of a turn at talk cannot be assumed to be constant. Persons may be observed to pass up opportunities to participate and even to forfeit turns to which they are entitled.

Our research appears to have both analytic and practical implications which may be of interest to a variety of social scientists and practitioners. For example, the interactional fragmentation we examine exhibits features not always in harmony with generalizations drawn from centrally-focused gatherings, and our research thereby calls the generality of such findings into question. Rather than seeing the fragmented conversation as a deviant form of interaction, we may begin to examine the accomplishment of centrally-focused talk. That is, the maintenance of a central focus may often be a function of situational constraints. In this connection, the selection of such settings as meetings and group therapy sessions as sources of data about "naturally-occurring" interaction may have misled other researchers as to the typicality of focused interaction.

In a wide variety of gatherings, centrally-focused conversation and fragmented conversation are both sanctioned alternatives, and in some fragmentation is preferred. Interactional analysis may benefit from following leads we have provided and considering fragmentation as a topic of study in its own right rather than dismissing it as a social aberration and an analytic nuisance.

Our research casts some doubt on notions of a universal pattern of "naturally-occurring" conversation. We suspect that the "central focus" constraint is merely one of a variety of norms which govern the organization of talk in particular situations. It may not be possible to move from constraints to "natural" talk. Rather, we may only be able to move from one set of constraints to another. In general,

then, conversational norms may not be reflective of norms set by the culture for "conversation" as an activity, but rather of norms set by the culture for gathering-types and adapted by interactants to suit particular situations. Future research may be enriched by systematic study of interactional processes across settings of various kinds.

The prospects for this approach to contribute to a sociotherapy based on observed behavior rather than inferred psychic processes would appear to be very good. Therapists working with groups may benefit from identifying situational constraints which obscure certain forms of interaction, and in creating therapeutic settings in which such constraints do not operate. This may be useful in permitting the identification of interpersonal problems reflected in patterns of participation. Specifically, patients may learn from observation of verbal negotiations in which they "struggle" with others. Family therapists might observe unexpected empirical patterns in family groups which could be discussed with members of those groups. Where social psychologists often distinguish the functions of interpersonal communication as transmission of information and expression of affect (see for example Nass, 1978), our research points to communication as a vehicle for the development of relationships.

For our purposes, this research has been most valuable in clarifying our conception of social interaction. We have seen that while persons may bring particular situational definitions to their interaction, definitions are likely to be negotiated and renegotiated over the course of talk (see Garfinkel, 1964; McHugh, 1968). Interaction may often be characterized in terms of its formal features

(see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974), but these features are subject to momentary situational modification. The cultural availability of formal patterns, however, provides interactants (and analysts) with resources for interactional interpretation.. Conformity with conventional forms creates a sense of social order which may be perceived as externally constraining but which is actually created in the course of interaction. Social norms, in this conception, can be seen as guides to conduct rather than rigid rules or constraints. Norms reflect orientation to situational definitions and to the terms of proper participation by each party. (This point was discovered in the classic study by Whyte, 1955, who attempted to behave like the "corner boys" he was studying, but found himself being chastised by them for engaging in obscene language that was seen as inappropriate <u>for him</u>.) Social regularities actually exhibit a variety of sanctioned alternative courses of action from which persons may choose in any situation.

The definitional process occurs in all interaction but is rarely a matter of explicit attention by conversationalists. Persons will act in accordance with an emergent definition which is more or less acceptable to them. When disagreement over a definition occurs, persons will often negotiate, either in an overt struggle or as a byproduct of substantive interaction. We suspect that negotiation is everpresent even when it is not in the foreground of interaction. We would therefore reject a model of interaction as requiring shared agreement in favor of a model based on willingness to negotiate. Only when there is some agreement, however, will there be a normative pattern of projectable action available to participants. Lacking

agreement, interaction may break down or may proceed as an explicit or implicit struggle. Deviance from agreed upon definitions, moreover, will be tolerated within a considerable range of variation (see Churchill, 1973), and the propriety of a particular variation will remain locally negotiable.

The social world we have examined reveals the existence of both conventional forms and possibilities for individual interpretation and creativity. While neither freedom nor constraint are conceptual novelties, we suggest that future research would be well-advised to consider the kind of interplay between the two which is made available by the study of conversational fragmentation.

APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPT NOTATION

Conversational data reported in this study were transcribed in general conformity with conventions originally developed by Gail Jefferson and now used, with minor variations, by most researchers in the tradition known as "conversation analysis." Comprehensive inventories of these conventions are available in Schenkein (1978a) and Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). We offer here a brief outline of our system of notation.

In general, utterances are recorded in a modified English spelling in an attempt to reproduce the speech actually heard:

Whadjuhave, turkey?

Single pairs of parentheses indicate either the inability of the transcriber to determine who spoke or what was said (when the parentheses are empty), or doubt as to the speaker or utterance identified:

( )	heh heh
Sharon	( )
(Alice)	Yeah.
Peg	(Sue), my mother said-

Speakers are identified in the left-hand column, utterances to the right.

Simultaneous speech within a single conversation is indicated by a left-hand bracket when utterances <u>begin</u> simultaneously, and by double oblique lines when a second speaker begins before a current speaker has finished:

Rachel	[Okay?
Tom	[( ) myself.
Vera	[Sharon?
•	
Nancy	That took // some-
Sam	Help yourself.

Simultaneous speech within two or more concurrent conversations is indicated by an arrangement in which utterances are distributed among separate vertical columns (see Chapter II). Utterances on the same horizontal plane occurred simultaneously:

Sue B	See its a different idea when he comes over here.	Katie	(How much do you make a year), Sue?

Intervals of silence within or between utterances are indicated by elapsed time in seconds placed within single parentheses:

Alice	In the country. (0.5) They valued the house...
Jim	I know.
	(5.0)
Josie	How was school today, Jim?

Double parentheses enclose a variety of descriptions of the utterances or other actions:

((turns to E))
((softly))
((crying))

Horizontal ellipses indicate that only part of an utterance is reported, and vertical ellipses indicate unreported utterances:

Nancy I mean the house that you said you saw...

⋮

Sam Pass the relish?

Stress is indicated by underscoring:

Is <u>that</u> right?

Loud volume is indicated by upper case letters:

Al DON'T FORGET THAT BOX.

A dash indicates speech that is either halting or abruptly cut off, and a series of dashes in an utterance suggests stammering:

Excepting-

I- I- I asked-

Colons indicate sounds which are extended. The colon follows the extended sound, either at the end or in the course of a word. The more colons, the more the sound is stretched out:

O:h.

O::h.

No:

Arrows to the left of an utterance indicate a phenomenon of current interest:

→Jim Yeah. Same as last time.

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