TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

QUARTERLY

The Delicacy of Preoccupation'

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Examination of the details of social interaction addresses whether and how poetics emerge in everyday talk. In this study, language users' preoccupations are shown to be tailored to the circumstances they are caught up in and thus occupied with. Analysis reveals how a variety of unwitting usages are delicately connected to situated interactional environments. As descriptive resources, preoccupations arise from and are embedded within momentary and contingent types of actions. In everyday conversation preoccupations may be intentionally constructed and/or immediately recognized, while a host of usages remain unwitting and unnoticed. In one such occasion, involving reported troubles with planning a wedding, a speaker's preoccupations are co-implicated within the language employed to describe a related yet different set of troubles. Understanding the practical performance of language preoccupations yields an appreciation for how conversational descriptions are poetically organized.

I'm not yet convinced that we don't have all these delicates going on constantly and continuingly. But we just don't yet know how delicate. And now we're all catching each other do it a lot, because we just skim away the surface a bit.

Jefferson, "Poetics" (32, 44)

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ertain phenomena reveal the "delicacies of preoccupation." How are language users' *preoccupations* implicated within the very circumstances they are attempting to describe? How might such absorption eventuate in tailormade characterizations of a given activity or a series of events? This analysis seeks understanding of the ubiquitous and non-coincidental nature of these
candidate phenomena: those closer to the surface and thus easily identified, and others more likely to go unnoticed until analysis reveals them as delicately tied to the interactional moments in which they arise.
Attention is first drawn to how such language phenomena might be identified, and ways in which preoccupations might be arrayed on a continuum polarized by intentional and unintentional (unwitting) usages. Analysis then shifts to a
consideration of preoccupations within a fragment of ordinary talk, revealing how certain poetic phenomena might be discovered and substantiated in single episodes of conversational involvement.[2] Each preoccupation will be shown to be situated within an environment of potential conflict, where next speaker withholds affiliation and alignment with prior speaker's stated concerns and

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troubles. In the ways everyday conversation is a visible and contingent display of just what participants are orienting-to, the kinds of projects being co-produced reveal what speakers are "caught up in" or "occupied with."

This analysis is a preliminary step toward comprehending the kinds of phenomena Sacks was getting at in noting "we're trying to find out things we don't know about how delicately people use their language. Then, any possible extended delicacy is something to look into" (Sacks, *Lectures, Vol. II, 292).* Situated examination of the details of social interaction is prerequisite to addressing whether and how poetics emerge rapidly, spontaneously, and are

delicately organized as interactional achievements. However messy and disordered naturally occurring conversations might initially appear, there exists considerable evidence supporting a central tenet of social interaction studies: that there is "order at all points," much of which awaits discovery by analysts, but all of which was produced in the first instance as meaningful and thus *in* meaningful ways by and for interactants.[3]

Arguably the most intricate and delicate resources for locating and describing not just preoccupations but more generally the "poetics of everyday talk," Sacks *(Lectures)* and Jefferson ("Poetics") gave early and detailed attention to various arrangements of "sounds, categories, words, utterances, and errors" that are

> not "exceptional" nor "incidental" nor "constantly suppressed" in normal talk. Rather, they are constantly embedded in and masked by a range of syntactic, sequential, interactional structures. (Jefferson, "Poetics" 19)

What follows are attempts to unmask how selected members' preoccupations are jointly and contingently produced. The talk to be examined will be shown to display not only tailored preoccupations with interactional circumstances, but also (in just these ways) offer a means for grounding and illustrating the performed character of normal conversation.

PREOCCUPATIONS

In "favourable circumstances" language has been shown to be recruited and shaped to intentionally achieve what Freud described as "double meaning proper, or play upon words," as with the following seditious witticism:[4]

> (1) One of Napoleon III's first acts when he assumed power was to seize the property of the House of Orleans. This excellent play upon current words was current at the time: `C'est le premier vol de l'aigle.'* ['It
>
> is the eagle's first vol.'] *'Vol'* means `flight' but also `theft'. (37)[5]

Or a speaker may appear preoccupied when assessing surrounding circumstances, a preoccupation that goes unnoticed, but only for a brief moment:

> (2) *San Diego Tribune,* January 27, 1992
> [During one of several interviews with runners, immediately following the US Olympic Women's Marathon Trials in Houston]:
> Francie Larrieu Smith looked at Janis Klecker and said, "For Janis, running a marathon is like *brushing your teeth."*
> Then, realizing that she had unwittingly made a play on words about Klecker's profession, Larrieu Smith said, "Funny I should say that about a
> *dentist."* (emphases added)

But then again, speakers in ordinary talk commonly make available what they are orienting-to *without* realizing how the just produced utterance was or was not tailored to, or triggered by, immediately prior topics or activities. And in next turn, recipients don't seem to make the connection either. A preoccupation is later available for analysts to point out and make something out of, yet in the course of its "real time" production the talk appears taken-for-granted by participants-used and recruited to get specific work done, but apparently unseen/unheard and thus passed-by-in favor of moving onto some next

positioned matter. One such case appears below in (* 1.):[6] (3) [NB:IV:10:36] (from Drew & Holt 401) [arrows added]

```
Emma:      Wel you know we were there in Ju:ne yihknow Bud
             played go:lf inna (.)
        1- when the air c'nditioner went o:: r .hhh En we're
             about (.) th'only ones that ha:d'n air conditioned
             room the rest of m were bro: ken..hhh An'we
        1- ent down to breakfast 'n there was only about two
             people to help for breakfast with all these guys goina
             pla:y golf.
      * 1-> They were a:ll teed off..
```

```
Lottie:      Ye :ah?
                  [
Emma:           Becuz (.) Bud couldn't e:ven eat his
         1- breakfast. He o: rdered he waited forty five minutes'n
            he'a:dtuh be out there
       * 1 - tuh tee off so I gave it to uh: (.) Karen's: liddle
            bo:y.
         2-(0.7)
Emma:        ((swallow)) I mean that's how bad the 3-, service was
            hhh (.) It's gone tuh pot.

Lottie:      u-Oh:::: (.) e- Ye :: a h.
```

Part of Emma's telling about their trip involved multiple complaints (1-) with the hotel's poor facilities and bad service. The sequential environment within which these complaints get constructed, not taken up by Lottie (2-), and further solicited by Emma (3-) are central to the ensuing analysis and addressed below. However, notice first how Emma displays what appears to be her dual preoccupation with the practical consequences of the complained-about matters. Emma reports they were "all teed off" with the unfortunate circumstances they were caught up in because Bud and "these guys" might be late to "tee off" a round of golf: "teed off/tee off"are clearly connected. Now, did "teed off" simply get moved up and/or did "tee off" get triggered by Emma's dual preoccupations? These are useful questions; certainly this dual use can be added to Jefferson's collection of how sounds and noises get "moved up," and how prior words give rise to something produced next as "father to a thought" ("Poetics" 10). Yet there is more to be addressed here in that neither Emma nor Lottie, then and there, attended to "goina pl:y go:lf ᴴ They were a:ll teed o:ff:" as something special, more than a coincidence, a "play on words." They were, in the first instance, occupied with other encompassing matters; they just don't get the poetics of their preoccupations.

As analysts, we can post-hoc skim the surface away a bit and make something of these kinds of delicacies: the intentionally constructed "vol - flight/theft" in (1), the unwittingly produced yet immediately recognized "brushing your teeth/dentist" in (2), the altogether unnoticed "teed off/tee off" in (3). And we ask, isn't it curious how these utterances get occasioned as descriptive resources, revealing just what these participants were and were not treating as significant? This is no doubt fascinating stuff. Clearly, used but unnoticed features of talk can become the grist for analysts' mills, even if the participants being analyzed appear to make nothing of them. And we come to realize that and how ordinary talk is routinely and *unwittingly* produced: without forethought, void of some a priori or externalized "script" designed to configure a performance toward specific effects and desired consequences. Rather, preoccupations arise from and are embedded within momentary and contingent types of *actions,* such as the seditious witticism in (1), the assessment in (2), and the complaint in (3).

DISAFFILIATIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Returning to (3) above, what *were* Emma and Lottie caught up in producing that so captured and drew their attention *away* from what analysts can recognize as delicate and poetic connections? What *are* these other "matters" emerging within the turn-by-turn evolution of these particular interactional circumstances?

A variety of researchers have evidenced how a considerable corpus of conversational materials include moments of potential interpersonal conflict, most notably during ongoing alignment difficulties manifest in such activities as *complaining* and *receipting a complaint* (but also agreeing and disagreeing, anticipating non-sympathetic hearings, inviting and rejecting an invitation, and so on).[7] Relying on the Emma/Lottie interaction in (3) above, and a collection of similar instances, Drew and Holt have shown how idiomatic expressions (e.g., "It's gone tuh pot," "banging your head against a brick wall," "down the tubes," "throw me off the deep

end," and so on) are often employed in sequential environments involving complainable matters. When an individual provides otherwise private troubles and/or anxieties for another's inspection and response (i.e., a "trouble telling" as in 1-*/*1- above), the issue is: in what ways might recipients produce and/or withhold sympathizing and/or affiliating with the complainer? In cases where withholdings occur and where potential resistance to sympathizing with a prior complaint is displayed (as in 2-, above), it is not uncommon for initial complainers to pursue affiliation by use of *idiomatic expressions* (as in 3-* above, "It's gone tuh pot").

To summarize (3, above) then, it can be seen that upon completion of Emma's telling and complaint formulations Lottie fails to provide sympathy or affiliation (2-*). In seeking to legitimize, summarize, and bring her complaints to a close (3--->), Emma's idiomatic "It's gone tuh pot" effectively solicits

what was previously and noticeably absent: Lottie's affiliative "u-Oh::: (.) *e- Ye*a h." While

idioms do vary, they can generally be identified as (a) formulaic constructions, (b) whose meaning is largely figurative, and (c) designed to summarize and/or complain about others' treatment of them (cf. Drew and Holt).

Within "inauspicious" or potentially disafftliative environments as these, it is thus common for actions to be organized in the following canonical manner:

1 -   Complainable Matters
                              1
2-   Withholding(s) of Affiliation/Sympathy
                              1
3-   Idiomatic Expression

As with (3, above) it was shown how Emma unwittingly employed descriptions tailored to such interactional circumstances. The question remains: are such unwitting descriptions evident in similar troublesome environments? If so, what peculiar shapes might they take?

THE DATA: WEDDING TROUBLES AND PREOCCUPATIONS

One set of answers to such questions can be gleaned from consideration of a single interactional segment drawn from a conversation between a grandmother (G) and granddaughter (S). Occurring approximately eleven minutes into a thirteen-minute audiorecording, a brief backdrop of the disaffiliative, even oppositional character of this interaction is offered to set the scene for subsequent analysis.

It is of some consequence that readers understand that a set of conflicting background contingencies does exist throughout this particular conversation. G consistently displays concern and claims knowledge that S, motivated by the need to fit into her *wedding dress* and appear healthy for her upcoming *wedding,* is vomiting her food as a means of losing weight. As both a concerned relative *and* a registered nurse, G challenges S's choice of diet and weight control by repeatedly and even tenaciously alleging that S is "bulimic" (Beach, "Initiating"). On the other hand, S only indirectly admits, and fails to apologize for, allegations directed toward her by G. Instead, S consistently discounts, averts, and even downgrades the seriousness of G's attributions (Beach, "Avoiding"). Consequently, G and S display disjunctive orientations to what *counts* as a problem, not to mention how to negotiate resolutions involving such encompassing issues as health, happiness, and their relevance to *wedding plans.*

For example, segment (4) occurred only moments before (5, below). Here, S makes an explicit attempt to coerce G to "change the subject" (I-), one that G had been pursuing with quite remarkable tenacity:

(4) SDCL:G/S:569-584

G: Now *admit* just a little bit to me

```
            .hhh they'll () you  do  go  in  and - have  you
            noticed  that  your  teeth  ()  I  noticed  your
            toothbrush has
            a lot of T pink like your l(i)ke you're kinda
            bleeding?
                    (2.2)
      G:      Uh: () Do you think that maybe this
                            l                        l
    1-- S:                  Grandma I thought
            you said we were gonna change the subject. (0.6)
```

```
      S:      Oka:y?=
      G:      =Allright well (wh'ya) talk about.
   2-. S:     Well I dunno but I'm not gonna stay up here if you keep talkin about that.
```

At the end of (2-), S's deictic and noticeably unspoken "that" is in reference to what the bulk of the prior conversation had been about: G's concern with S's bulimic actions. In (1-) S invokes a prior and (purportedly) mutual agreement, providing a possible completion and transition to G's response. Yet as apparent in the (0.6), such response is not forthcoming; G passes on the opportunity to speak and, by so doing, withholds affirmation of and thus alignment with S's invocation in (1 -). Upon continuation, S's next "Oka:y?", with upward intonation/contour, is employed here (and typically so) as a device for soliciting and insuring agreement from next speaker. In this case, S is attempting to do "getting off of" talk she treats as troublesome, and to solicit collaboration which G's next *"Allright"* facilitates (at least for the moment); both S and G's actions contribute to "transitioning" to some next matter (cf. Beach, "Okay").

With this brief backdrop in mind, the analysis will proceed by considering whether and how S produces an unwitting and tailored description: 1) as responsive to G having withheld sympathy or affiliation to S's prior reported trouble; 2) as delicately tied to the circumstances S reveals herself to be caught up in, that is, interacting with *G and* the wedding itself.

Segment (5) occurs shortly after what might roughly be characterized as an "agreement" between G and S in (4) above. Here G can be seen as initiating a new though related "wedding topic" by twice querying S about the "bridesmaid's dresses":

```
    (5) SDCL:G/S:608-621
      G:                Well (th-     ) eh h- ha- have you really decided on on the. bridesmaid's s
                dresses    (      )
                           L        1
      S:                   Well (.)   I
                                           l
      G:                             Did you find anything?
    1- S:      I don't know: to tell ya the truth::
               I kinda wanted a black 'n white wedding but everybody
               else has been saying
               (.) hh do: n't have a black 'n white wedding. (.) maybe I'll
               have a fuchsia or real pretty pink:.
    2-.            (1.2)
    2-. G:     °(Uh huh)°
               [[
   *3. S:       God:: it's hard fittin everyone in my wedding?.hh
               Grandma there's so many people different sizes?
```

In (1-) S does not offer an affirmative response. Instead, her "I don't know prefaces an expression of uncertainty and thus some concern or trouble. What is next reported is one version of a "my side telling" (Pomerantz, "My Side"), an

experience involving a potential conflict between her preference for a "black 'n white wedding" and "everybody else" standing in opposition of such a choice. Though S is the bride and could likely thwart wedding plans not to her liking, this reported conflict makes clear that others' opinions are not only taken into serious consideration but also allowed to impact the choices S makes. Yet no choice is immediately forthcoming.

Rather, it is within this environment of having received others' opinions, and attempting to figure out what to do with them, that S next appears to reflect on further alternatives: "maybe I'll have a fuch:sia or real pretty pink." But in so designing her talk, and by refraining from further speaking, S also offers these alternatives up for G's consideration-one "delicately and circuitously handled" "fishing" device (Pomerantz, "My Side" 197) for indirectly *soliciting* rather than directly asking for G's opinion. Indirectly, S provides an opportunity for G to tell what she thinks, from a different point of view, and thus to collaborate in solving what S has put forth as a current "trouble": the "bridesmaid's-dresses" problem raised at the outset and thus occasioned via G's two queries. These queries revealed G as possessing *some,* but not updated, knowledge about wedding plans.

In these ways, S's (1->) should not necessarily be heard as a complaint seeking commiseration by appealing to G for sympathy; instead, (1-) is an attempt to make available to G one of many predicaments S has "presented the evidence for" and is facing in planning the wedding, and to indirectly solicit G's opinion or advice. Or, as Drew and Holt have put it (summarizing Emerson and Messinger's conceptual interests in the "micro-politics of trouble"), actions of this sort can be understood as an "effort to mobilize help in remedying the trouble" (399).

In (2-), however, such affiliation is not forthcoming. First, as the noticeable (1.2) silence indicates, G withholds by passing on the opportunity to collaborate in talking about, perhaps even solving, this particular problem-at-hand. As recipient to S's attempt to elicit information and involvement, G fails to offer some information or opinion of relevance to S's stated problem. Only G's soft-spoken "°(Uh huh)°" follows the lengthy silence, a token which neither directly acknowledges S's solicitation nor reveals movement toward fuller speakership.

We are now in a position to examine how S, in next turn, deals with G's implicit unwillingness to affiliate by not responding substantively to the predicament S's telling had put forth:

What is the nature of the trouble-at-hand at this precise interactional moment, and what is S attending-to? Might "God" have some relationship to other features of this utterance? Moreover, is there a sense in which these reported troubles consist of more than S's concerns with others in her wedding (e.g., "but everybody else has been saying," "fittin everyone in," "so many people")?

First, answers to these questions might begin with considering whether S's *3,

  S: God:: it's hard fittin everyone in my wedding? hh Grandma there's
     so many people and different sizes?

(*3-->), produced simultaneously with G's minimal "°(Uh huh)°" following the (1.2) silence, treats G as having declined S's solicitation with a displayed unwillingness to talk further about "bridesmaid's-dresses." It seems such a case can be made. For example, consider how failed attempts to achieve desired action can prompt further pursuit (cf. Pomerantz, "Pursuing"; Beach, "Initiating"). In response to G's withholding, one taken to be treating S's initial telling and indirect solicitation as ineffectual, S now produces a second and related source of troubles for G's consideration. Essentially, S's second telling can be understood as a "re-do" troubles reporting, once again and indirectly soliciting G to produce a "different output" (cf. Schegloff, "Recycled" 40-41).

Yet the manner in which S constructs (*3-) does more than re-solicit G to affiliate and, at this moment, provide sympathy for S's problems; it also adds further *legitimation* to the worthiness of her tellings in the first instance (cf. Pomerantz, "Extreme" 227-228; Drew and Holt 405-406). Here S's telling rests not with a single or several persons, but progress from "everybody else" in (1--*) to "everyone" and "so many people" in (*3--*). These descriptors increasingly assert S's problematic circumstances as S seeks response from G. But notice that in (l-) and especially (*3-) S reports details representing more or less "literal descriptions" of her circumstances (e.g., "people different sizes"), not figurative or metaphorical versions of the problems-at-hand." Thus while G's (*3---)-) can be understood as an escalated attempt to formulate the extremity of her situation and detail her problematic circumstances, it is not "idiomatic" per se (as with Emma's "It's gone tuh pot" discussed above).

Second, it is obvious at first glance that S prefaces her response with "God." What might be noted about S's usage of the expletive "God" in the environment of reporting troubles about her "wedding"? Is "God" simply another means for drawing G's attention to further wedding problems, yet an additional "solicitation device" employed in the course of re-formulating the difficulties she is caught up within? That's one version. Another possibility is this: "God H wedding" connections are categorically relevant in many, if not most, matrimonial events. Both Sacks *(Lectures,* Winter, 1971, 291-293) and Jefferson ("Poetics," endnote 17) have noted families of relationships (e.g., semantic, sound) between "God" and other words occurring in close proximity to this and other expletives. They consider how a portion of an utterance, "God there wasn't a soul in *we* were the only ones at the *bar …,"* involves "God and soul" close together, with "only ones" roughly synonymous with "sole."

"God ^{H} wedding" may fit within such a collection. But there *might* be more here. Given the disjunctive character of the talk throughout this interactional event and G's withholding above, could it also be that S's "God" expletive is an unwitting call to the "deity"-as an entity beyond and/or greater than one's self, more encompassing than the situation-at-hand-for deliverance, help, and even restitution? Surely this is stretching it; such analytic possibilities display an over-reliance on phenomenological license in discerning S's orientation to these reported troubles regarding the wedding.'

Third, is it coincidental that S's dual-description of the problem [1) "God:: it's hard fittin everyone in my wedding?", and 2) "Grandma there's so many people different sizes?"] are themselves *mirrored images* of S's own predicament, namely:

1) fitting into her *own* wedding dress; and 2) accommodating everyone's concerns and priorities (notably, but not exclusively, G's) into the planning and organization of the wedding? And what of S's lexical choices, "it's [hard] fitting everyone in," following the exact moment it was [hard] getting a response from G?; the address-term [Grandma] prefacing people [different] sizes, following an extended discussion between G and S over their [different] concerns with bulimia? At least these threads appear woven throughout S's utterance: "God - hard -* wedding," "Grandma - people different." Depending upon how far one wants to push these possible relationships, even more threads may be possible.

Perhaps these categorical and descriptive resemblances are a matter of random occurrence and should be analytically treated as such. Conversely, it is perhaps just these delicacies that Sacks ("Unpublished," Winter 1969) calls attention to in evidencing how immediately and spontaneously interactants perform operations on the materials-of-the moment-without forethought, apparently void of intentional projection, and possible *only* in the confines of such rapid construction-yet nevertheless with amazing sensitivity to the troubles and/or topics-at-hand. In this way, S's offering her concerns with fitting everyone *else* in, and with *other* peoples' sizes, displays and performs *her preoccupation* with the more encompassing problem of achieving *her* own desired size and dress-fit for the wedding. And this preoccupation affects the manner in which the problems presented by S are embedded, and thus made available, in the talk.

This is the kind of "parallel" that Sacks *(Lectures,* Winter, 1969; Spring, 1970) found compelling, "at the edge of overt punning," in examining a data segment from a New York

radio call-in show involving a blind caller's complaint about "the lack of courtesy that people pay to blind people" (1). In stating that New Yorkers "get all preoccupied with their own problems," the host of the show produced an explanation fitted to the blind person's circumstances: though you can't see and are complaining about it, realize that others don't notice things due to their own problems, including noticing the blind ("Unpublished," Spring 1970, 265). The issue was, how did the host of the show produce an explanation, "on the spur of the moment," that so delicately paralleled the blind person's problem, that is, that persons have problems preventing them from "seeing"?

> Of interest in that [i.e., moderator's explanation that New Yorkers "get all preoccupied with their own problems"] is this: Roughly, how fine is the relationship between an explanation and the thing it explains? ... Its compellingness turns on its relationship to the presented complaint; in the series of ways in which it fits and
> parallels and turns on her [i.e., the caller's] circumstances. (Winter, 1969, 1-2)

Such appears to also be the case with S in (*3_) above. Her constructions of reported troubles with the wedding can be seen as displaying an altogether delicate connection to the circumstances she is caught up within. S's unwitting utterances turn out to be a direct, even elegant, performance of the wedding problems she is preoccupied with. As interactional resources these problems find their way into, and are captured by, the language poetics used to organize just this occasion.

CONCLUSION

The range and complexity of poetic relationships identified by Sacks *(Lectures)* and Jefferson ("Poetics"), for example, sound rows, sound and category-formed errors and substitutions, contrast and topical puns, and much, much more, literally boggles the imagination. Perhaps that's just the point: intuition and imagination alone cannot conceive of nor account for such delicacies in everyday conversation. And the very producers of such talk often fail to recognize poetic details that analysts, post-hoc, find so interesting and work to substantiate as possible, candidate phenomena.

The present analysis, and in particular how the categorical and descriptive resemblances of S's (*3-*)

> *3- S: God:: it's hard fittin everyone in my wedding? hh Grandma there's so
>   many people different sizes?

might be understood as tailored to, parallel with, and mirror images of S's own predicament, provides the opportunity to raise several issues of relevance to "making the case for" the possible existence of poetic phenomena in everyday conversation. One central issue involves the realization that because poetic relationships exist in myriad forms, language preoccupations can be read in multifarious ways. Attending to how descriptions and characterizations arise from and are embedded within interactional circumstances is but a small slice of conversational poetics, and by no means the easiest to substantiate as a candidate phenomenon.

For example, and by means of constrast, a portion of Jefferson's ("Poetics" analysis hinges on her ability to repeatedly cite straightforward "mechanical" evidence in explaining the poetics of "sound rows" and "errors." The instance below followed a "very rough landing":

(6) [GJ:FN] (Jefferson, "Poetics" 9)
    Stewardess: On behalf of the who[le] [fri]ght[fli]ght c[r]ew I'd like to thank you
        for flying Air California.

Jefferson refrains from treating "fright-flight" as a Freudian slip, one explanation that could emerge from pondering on possible "deep hidden meanings" of such a speech error. The alternative is to consider how "errors" and "sound rows" might be co-implicated:

that [r] from "crew" just found itself through the [1] in "flight" to give "fright." It's complicated and nice: It *ought* to go, consonant-[l], consonant-[r], but there has been an [I] before it, in "who[l]e." It looks like the whole thing has got pushed back one: the [1] has been done, and now the [r] shows up where it ought to go, except it ought to go [I]-[l]-[r]. The series is just collapsed one. (Jefferson, "Poetics" 9)

This is a very elegant description; it also makes good technical sense, the kind of sense that would be entirely overlooked by prematurely dismissing the occurrence as just another Freudian slip revealing subconscious orientations (e.g., fear-fright). Yet it appears that *some* connection with the Stewardess's situa-

309

tional concerns is not out of the question, that her preoccupations should not entirely be overlooked as a viable explanatory device. The question is: just what relationships exist among sound rows, errors, and preoccupations in cases such as this?

While no "speech errors" are apparent in the construction of S's (*3ˉ->), a case might be made for the existence of a "sound row" [d]:

*3. S: Go[d::] it's har[d] fittin everyone in my we[dd]ing?.hh Gran[d]ma there's so
        many people [d]ifferent sizes?

This instance might fit within a larger "sound row" collection; the series of [d] sounds could partially explain S's construction of this utterance. But there is much more here, as has been argued, closely akin to what Sacks *(Lectures)* and Jefferson ("Poetics" 21) refer to as *topical puns,* involving "words selected in talking about something that are especially apt for the thing being talked about." Clearly, the previously offered analysis hinges less on noticeable, mechanical errors and sound rows than on various combinations and categories of words as embodied reflections of surrounding circumstances. The interactional orientations displayed by S, and thus the social actions achieved, are more convincing as "poetic" evidence than the seemingly endless search for "deep hidden meanings."

A related issue of "evidence" involves consideration of how S's (3*_) is itself implicative for G's next response. A careful consideration of G's subsequent turn-at-talk (and beyond), though beyond the scope of this present essay, provides yet further details regarding what G is herself preoccupied with, the serious yet playful nature of her concerns, and what (if any) poetic features emerge within this interactional environment.

It is clear that "poetic relationships" emerge rapidly and spontaneously in everyday conversations, that such poetics might become recognized *as* situated, interactional achievements, and that the kinds of "projects" participants coproduce are, indeed, organized

delicately. But just how ubiquitous *are* members' preoccupations in everyday conversation? The safest response seems to be: it depends almost entirely on how closely one looks at the details of ordinary talk, resources used all along that remain largely unnoticed. The more preoccupied analysts become with these tasks, the more poetic relationships they seem to discover. This is likely not a coincidence either. Language users' descriptions are routinely tailored to circumstances they are caught up in or occupied with.

ENDNOTES

[2]A concern with moment-by-moment contingencies of interaction can be facilitated by relying upon a single extended instance of conversational involvement as one conversation analytic tool for revealing the kinds of practices "brought to bear" by interactants within a limited (but no less "real") set of circumstances (cf. Jefferson,

TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

"Trouble"; C. Goodwin; Mandelbaum; Schegloff, "Single Episodes"; Beach, "Avoiding"; "Initiating"). It cannot be overlooked that circumstances in any given conversation must nevertheless be accounted for on a case-by-case basis. In large part, the analysis is designed to reveal *what* and *how* "poetic" qualities are locally occasioned in a segment of interaction that was initially part of another research project. It only gradually became apparent that the G/S segment herein possessed features relevant to these two criteria: 1) what appeared to be constituent, "poetic" features possessing some resemblance to Sacks's and Jefferson's initial observations (but also see Sherzer); 2) an ability to develop the analysis on the basis of "known" and thereby previously explicated conversation analytic findings.

[5]Goodwin *(He Said She Said 1-17)* traces a neglect of talk-in-interaction through the history of anthropological, sociological, linguistic, and communication research. By ignoring the embedded details of interactional conduct, the diverse range of social actions achieved through talk-in-interaction are systematically excluded. Such a position is, of course, a rejection of Chomsky's *(Syntax* 3-4) well known but misdirected assessment that "talk" or "performance" per se is altogether too messy, flawed, and degenerate for studies of phenomena such as "competence."

[4]Notice that this instance does *not* reflect a typical Freudian slip, i.e., when some utterance is purported to display "deeply hidden meanings" rooted in subconscious (latent, suppressed) thoughts, feelings, motives, needs, and the like.

'Two similar, intentionally-produced instances provided by Freud are as follows:

Louis XV wanted to test the wit of one of his courtiers, of whose talent he had been told. At the first opportunity he commanded the gentleman to make a joke of which he, the king, should be the *`sujet* [subject].' The courtier at once made the clever reply: *`Le roi nest pas sujet.'*['The King is not a subject.']. *(37)*

A doctor, as he came away from a lady's bedside, said to her husband with a shake of his head: `I don't like her looks.' `I've not liked her looks for a long time,' the husband hastened to agree. *(37)*

[6]And there are a wide variety of other instances to consider; once familiarized with the nature of these phenomena, they "pop up" all over the place. What follows are just a few examples from my "fieldnotes" (emphases added):

SDSU Daily Aztec [May 14, 1992]
[From an article with the headline "Area gas prices higher than rest of nation"]
"The price of gasoline at local pumps has risen at a pace significantly higher than the national average in the past few

months, leaving many San Diego area motorists *fuming."*

Fieldnotes [June 6, 1992]

While opening a bottle *of red* wine for my wife prior to dinner, I asked whether she'd prefer a taller (narrow) or shorter (wide) glass. She responded: "I'll take the wider glass so the wine can breathe more *readily."*

Fieldnotes [October, 1990]

During a televised football game at the University of Miami, co-announcers began discussing the problems Miami had been having with their "bad reputation" as a team. One announcer says: *"Miami's Vice is* that they're not very nice." The next announcer agreed, but then moved on without noticing the first announcer's "Miami's Vice" usage.

Fieldnotes [August 4, 1992]

[From a certified arborist (tree specialist), visiting our home to assess the condition of a Monterey Pine]: "It looks like the tree is really *sapped* of its strength, like it's *out on a limb."*

These examples reveal language users' orientations to a list of plausible preoccupations: economics, colors, violence, and occupation-relevant metaphors.

r For example, see Jefferson, "Trouble," "Laughter," "Stepwise"; Drew, "Invitation Sequences"; Pomerantz, "Agreeing," "Extreme"; Davidson; Maynard; Drew and Holt; Goodwin and Goodwin; Schegloff, "Recycled"; Beach, "Avoiding," "Initiating."

'As Drew and Holt observe:

Similar to extreme case formulations, idioms may be designed to strengthen a complainant's case by portraying the egregious character of the complainable circumstances. However, two differences between extreme case formulations and idiomatic complaints arise.... First, each may be used separately in the environments of the distinctive activities ... extreme case formulations may be used in detailing the circumstances of the grievance, while idiomatic expressions work to summarize those detailings.... The second difference arises from the literal-figurative distinction ... extreme case formulations purport to be literal distinctions of concrete facts ... in being recognizably figurative ... idiomatic expressions remove the complaint from its supporting details. This may give such expressions a special robustness: since they are not to be taken literally, they may have a certain resistance to being tested or challenged on the empirical facts of the matter. (405-406)

°But as Sacks *(Lectures,* Well, who knows, instance, or not ei there is anything t

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'But as Sacks *(Lectures,* Winter, 1971) put it:

Well, who knows? Noticing it, you get the possibility of investigating it. Laughing it off in the first instance, or not even allowing yourself to notice it, of course it becomes impossible to find out whether there is anything to it. (292)

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