

Audience diversity, participation and interpretation*

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Abstract

This paper investigates how an audience and the interpretive work in which it is engaged are constituted through a dynamic process of ongoing interaction. Analysis focuses first on how the topic of the talk in progress can both provide an arena for displaying competence and expertise, and differentiate members of an audience from each other in terms of their access to that domain of discourse. Second, through its interpretive work and participation displays an audience can shape what is to be made of the talk they are hearing. Typically speakers provide their recipients with an initial characterization of a story they are about to tell which acts as a guide for their understanding of those events. In addition, throughout the telling, the speaker, through his/her gestures, intonation, word selection and arrangement of events, proposes a certain alignment to the story being told. However, recipients through their interaction with each other can offer competing frameworks for both interpretation and alignment which undercut those of the speaker. The meaning that the story will be found to have thus emerges not from the actions of the speaker alone, but rather as the product of a collaborative process of interaction in which the audience plays a very active role.

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1. Introduction

This paper will investigate how an audience listening to a story within conversation is organized interactively. The main phenomena to be examined are how the structure of the talk in progress can shape its audience and, reciprocally, how the audience, through its interpretive work and use of the available participation structures, shapes what is to be made of the talk. The first part of the paper will focus on how members of an audience can be differentiated from each other by the topic of the talk in progress. It will be found that talk about a particular subject can partition its audience into relevant subsets, some of whom have more access to the domain of discourse constituted by the talk than others. Moreover, access to this domain of discourse can provide a testing ground through which participants can negotiate their expertise and competence vis-à-vis one another. The effect of all this is that, rather than being a single homogeneous entity, an audience can be internally diversified in ways that are relevant to the detailed organization of the talk in progress. Analysis will then turn to investigation of how such an audience can shape the way in which the speaker's talk is to be interpreted. Through the use of available participation frameworks members of an audience can communicate to each other an alignment to the events that the speaker is describing, and a way of understanding their import, that the speaker himself actively opposes. Such phenomena provide some demonstration of how the sense and relevance of talk, rather than emerging from the speaker's actions alone, are constituted within a collaborative process of interaction that includes the audience as a very active co-participant.

2. Differentiation within the audience

The use of a single term, such as 'audience', to refer to all those who are witnessing a performance has the power to suggest that an audience is in some sense a single, homogeneous entity. However, playwrights have long recognized that members of an audience might significantly differ from each other in ways relevant to the performance they are witnessing. Indeed, on occasion, they have considered the heterogeneity of the audience as a dramatic topic in its own right. For example, different members of the audience to the play within the play in *Hamlet* interpret it in very different ways. On the one hand, there are parties such as Polonius and the Queen who treat the play as

a fictive entertainment. The King, however, by bringing to bear knowledge of events in his own guilty past, sees the play as an accusation and storms away from it. The players' audience also includes someone who is already informed about the events being staged, Hamlet himself. During the performance, he behaves quite differently from other members of the audience, for example explicating and commenting on the scenes being witnessed. Indeed, after he identifies a character who has just appeared on the stage, Ophelia says 'You are good as a chorus, my lord'. Moreover, as the author of some of the material being performed, Hamlet is as interested in the reactions of others in the audience to the performance as in the performance itself.

Such phenomena point to the importance of the *attention structure* that an audience brings to a performance, an issue that is dealt with in the play scene in *Hamlet* in other ways as well. As noted earlier, at the end of the play within the play, the King, seeing the accusation that Hamlet has made against him within it, storms out of the scene. However, the same accusation is also contained in the dumb show which precedes the play, and there the King displays no reaction whatsoever. John Dover Wilson (1960: 5) asked 'How comes it . . . that Claudius, who brings the Gonzago play to a sudden end "upon talk of the poisoning", sits totally unmoved through the same scene enacted in dumb-show a few minutes earlier?' As a solution to this puzzle, he argues that the play scene has to be staged so that during the dumb show, the King is seen to be paying attention to a conversation he is having with Gertrude and Polonius, and not to what is occurring on the stage:

Thus they are not watching the inner-stage at all; the play is nothing to them; their whole attention is concentrated upon the problem of Hamlet's madness. The dumb-show enters, performs its brief pantomime – a matter of a few moments only – and passes out entirely unnoticed by the disputants; and when the audience turn again to see how this silent representation of his crime has affected the King, they find him still closely engaged with Gertrude and Polonius. (Wilson, 1960: 184)

The dumb show thus fails because its principal addressees do not act as audience to it. In order to constitute an audience, it is not enough for appropriate recipients to be physically present at the place where a performance occurs. Rather potential witnesses to the performance must actively align themselves to what is happening as an audience. Moreover, given the continual possibilities for disattention that are available (any movie theater pro-

vides ample evidence of the ease with which one can shift attention from the screen to one's companion) such alignment is an ongoing process.

2.1. *Audience differentiation within conversation*

Research into the organization of conversation has revealed that audience structures of similar complexity are found there as well. For example, just as the audience to the Gonzago play contained both parties who had not yet seen it and someone already well acquainted with it, so many stories in conversation are told in the simultaneous presence of both new recipients and listeners who are rehearsing the story. Indeed, this poses systematic interactive problems for parties such as couples who share much of their experience in common. While they attend together many of the social events where stories are told, they have already heard (or lived through) each other's stories. The partner of the teller is thus put in the position of being audience to a performance of which they are only too well acquainted. This can lead to a range of behavior on the part of both listener and teller, including talk from the partner not selected as teller that is much like the chorus complained about by Ophelia.¹ Unlike the usual situation in the theater, parties who are principal characters in the events being narrated in conversation are frequently present at the telling. On the one hand, this can lead to attempts to defend themselves from the portrayal being offered by the speaker, and indeed to dispute this with both speaker and the rest of the audience (M. H. Goodwin, 1982b), and on the other hand such recipients may face the task of organizing their reactions to the telling in terms of the story-relevant scrutiny they will receive from others in the audience (C. Goodwin, 1984).

As is suggested by the way in which the local focus of attention might shift from teller to principal character, attention structure is as central to the organization of a performance in conversation as it is in the theater. Indeed Goffman (1972: 64) notes that one of the key attributes of encounters, in general, is the way in which 'two or more persons in a social situation . . . jointly ratify one another as authorized co-sustainers of a single, albeit moving, focus of visual and cognitive attention'. The dynamic properties of this focus of attention create a range of possibilities for structuring interaction between performer and audience. First it appears that this process is capable of partitioning the audience into distinct zones in terms of the mutual access they have to the speaker. Thus, on many occasions, one

member of the audience will act as principal recipient, and the speaker will preferentially direct the focus of his/her gaze and attention to this party. Parties not included within this special axis of heightened engagement can attend to tasks unrelated to the talk during preliminary segments of the telling, while returning their attention to the speaker at focal segments such as the climax (C. Goodwin, 1984). Second, the story-relevant orientation provided by principal recipient, and the way in which her actions provide a locus for the speaker's explicit attention, can free others in the audience to deal with the speaker's talk in quite different ways. For example, they might use it as a point of departure for playful, fanciful comments, that, though tied to the speaker's talk, do not deal with it in the way that the speaker proposes it should be dealt with (M. H. Goodwin, 1985). Such byplay creates an audience structure of considerable complexity with teller and one subset of the audience dealing with the talk in one way, while a second subset of the audience attends to what is being said but uses it as a point of departure for its own fanciful constructions.

2.2. *Data*

For clarity, the analysis in the present paper will focus on a single story which was videotaped at a midwestern backyard picnic. Three couples, Pam and Curt (the host and hostess), Gary and Carney, and Mike and Phyllis have gathered around a picnic table where they have been talking and drinking beer. In the sequence to be examined, Mike tells the others about a fight he had witnessed the previous evening at a local car race. Since the hostess, Pam, has withdrawn from the group to attend to something in the house, the audience to the story consists of

- Curt (the host)
- Gary and Carney
- Phyllis (Mike's wife).

A transcript of the entire telling can be found in the Appendix.²

2.3. *Audience differentiation and topic*

The present paper will expand previous analysis of differentiation within an audience by investigating some of the ways in which the topic of the talk of the moment can partition its audience.

2.3.1. *Differential competence in a domain of discourse*

In listening to a story, recipients bring to bear on it their own knowledge of the kinds of events it is describing and the scenes within which such events are embedded.³ One simple, but clear, example of how participants make use of prior knowledge of the scene encompassing the fight Mike describes to analyze and interpret its import, occurs near the end of the telling. Mike draws on his knowledge of the characters who regularly attend the races to observe that the party who initiated the fight made a big mistake by attacking the person he did because his victim (Keegan) had kinship ties to many others who were habitually found in the pits:

(1) G.84:2:15

- 98 Mike: But *yihknow* eh- uh-he *made iz*
 99 *first mistake number one* by *messin* with
 100 *Keegan* because a *'pits'r fulla Keegans*
 101 *en* when there *is* _o *nt't a Keegan there=*
 102 Curt: *Mmhm,*
 103 Mike: *=ere's a 'Fra :nks,*
 104 Curt: *There's a 'Fra :nks,*
 105 Mike: *{ ()*
 106 Curt: *{ I kno w.*
 107 Mike: *Because they're relatedjih*
 108 *kno:w?*

Note how Curt in line 104 makes a special effort to claim that he has independent access to the ties between the Keegans and the Franks by overlapping his production of the Franks' name with Mike's statement of it. Such behavior suggests that demonstrating detailed independent knowledge of the scene Mike is describing may be an event of some consequence, and indeed elsewhere within the telling, Curt is quick to claim that he is acquainted with a character that Mike suggests he might not recognize. Near the beginning of his story, Mike provides his audience with the name of one of the protagonists in the fight, Paul DeWald, and then begins to further identify the character by stating where he is from. Providing the audience with such information can be taken as a proposal that the speaker does not expect his audience to be able to recognize that character on their own (i.e. if recognition could be made by the recipient the further identification being provided would not be necessary).⁴ Before Mike has the opportunity to finish this identification, Curt interrupts with the statement that he already knows DeWald:

(2) G.84:2:15

- 7 Mike: Paul de Wa:ld. Guy out of,=
 8 Curt: --> =De Wa:ld yeah I [^o(know)]'m.)
 9 Mike: Tiffen.
 10 Mike: =D'you know him?,
 11 Curt: °Uh huh=
 12 Curt: =I know who 'e i:s,

Note also how, in line 12, Curt is careful to specify the exact parameters of his knowledge about DeWald (he states that he knows who he is, but not that he actually knows him).

All of these phenomena together provide some demonstration of how displaying precise independent knowledge of the scene in which Mike's story is embedded is not only being utilized to analyze and understand the talk being produced, but is an issue of some consequence for at least some of those present. In essence, it would appear that the world of automobiles within which Mike's story is set is a domain of expertise and knowledge, indeed a small culture in its own right, that has considerable importance to some of those involved in the telling.

Gary's actions shed further light on this process. Though he tries to talk into this topic his contributions are not ratified by the others present. For example, shortly before the story being examined emerges, Curt proposes that Al, the winner of the feature, is the 'only good regular out there' (lines 1-3 below). This is disputed nonvocally with a head shake by Mike (line 4), and Curt modifies his position by asking about someone else, Keegan, who might constitute a 'good regular' (line 5).⁵ Curt's statement is also challenged by Gary who says 'What do you mean. My brother-in-law's out there' (lines 14-15). However, unlike Mike's far less salient action, what Gary says is ignored by the others who overlap his talk with continuing talk of their own. The following is the sequence within which this occurs:

(3) G.84:2:10

- 1 Curt: He- he's about the only regular
 2 he's about the only go//od
 3 regular [_i out there's,
 4 Mike: ((Head Shake))
 5 Curt: Keegan still go out?
 6 Carney: °(Help me up.)

- 7 Mike: Keegan's,
 8 Carney: [[(gently,)
 9 Mike: out there he's,
 10 Carney: [[*Oghh!*
 11 Mike: [[He run,
 12 (0.5)
 13 Mike: E: [r he's uh: :
 --> 14 Gary: [Wuhyih *mean* my: ,
 --> 15 Gary: My [*brother-in-law's* out there,
 16 Mike: doin real good this year'n
 17 M'Gilton's doin real good
 18 thi_s year,
 19 Curt: M'Gilton's still there?=
 20 Gary: =hhHawki [ns,
 21 Curt: [Oxfrey runnin-I heard
 22 Oxfrey gotta new ca:r.
 23 Gary: Hawkins is ru [nin,
 24 Mike: [Oxfrey's runnin the
 25 same car 'e run last year,=
 26 Phyl: Mike siz there wz a big fight down

The way in which Gary organizes his talk in this sequence may be relevant to the treatment he receives from Mike and Curt. Two phenomena will be noted: first the timing of Gary's talk, and second how he identifies the party about which he is talking. With respect to the issue of timing, it can be noted that Gary does not challenge Curt immediately after he speaks (line 3), but waits approximately four and half seconds before beginning his counter in line 14. Though this delay might seem short in clock time, during it the sequence between Curt and Mike moves forward to new material, a discussion of Keegan. Gary thus lets the sequential position where his action would be appropriate pass, and tries to insert it in the midst of talk that has now moved on to another subject. Such action is part of a larger pattern of disattention that Gary has displayed to the emerging sequence between Curt and Mike since its inception. Thus, when they begin their discussion about cars, Gary turns away from them to talk to a dog under the table, and in the interval between Curt's statement and his counter he is drinking beer and helping his wife stand up behind him. The way in which Gary is ignored by Mike and Curt thus mirrors the treatment he has given them.

2.3.2. *Assessing competence in the details of talk*

In his counter, Gary identifies the driver he is talking about as 'my brother-in-

law'. Examination of the larger automobile discussion, within which the sequences being examined here occur, reveals that competence in this domain of discourse entails not just knowledge about the subject being discussed, for example the ability to recognize the racers who frequent the track, but also specific practices for making expertise in this subject matter visible in the details of the talk one produces. Thus throughout the discussion, the racers talked about by Mike and Curt are identified in a particular way: by specifying the racer's last name,⁶ and if further identification is required, by adding the place he is from to the name. The place reference is appended through use of a distinctive format, tying the place to the name with the words 'out of'. Note, for example, Mike's 'Paul DeWald. Guy of Tiffen' in example 2 on p. 289. Gary's identification of the racer he is talking about in his counter to Curt does not follow this format. The identification format chosen by Gary, 'my brother-in-law', could be heard as claiming a special status for the speaker by displaying his kinship ties to the racer. In brief, it appears that through the way in which he formats his talk, Gary displays lack of competence in the current domain of discourse. Support for this possibility is provided by Gary's subsequent actions. The next time he talks about this racer (line 20 in example 3) he identifies him through use of his last name, and thus adapts his talk to the identification format being used by others, and indeed by Curt in the talk (lines 17 and 19) that immediately precedes Gary's. Gary seems to be trying to adapt his talk to theirs in other ways as well. Thus in line 23, he picks up another term for describing the activities of a driver that has just been used by Curt (line 21) when he says '*Hawkins is runnin*'.

Indeed throughout the auto discussion one can see Gary trying to learn how to talk appropriately in this domain of discourse,⁷ though he never completely succeeds. For example several minutes later he adds a place identification to the name 'Hawkins'. However, he uses the word 'from' instead of the expression 'out of' to do this (line 1 below) and moreover, shortly after this, again introduces his kinship ties to Hawkins (lines 6-7):

(4) G.84:6:15

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | Gary: | <i>No:w Rich Hawkins from</i> |
| 2 | | <i>Bellview drives one, fer some guys</i> |
| 3 | | <i>frm up't Bellview.</i> |
| 4 | | (0.4) |
| 5 | Mike: | <i>Yah.</i> |
| 6 | Gary: | <i>He's my:: liddle sister's</i> |

- 7 brother'n law.
 8 (0.5)
 9 Gary: He's a policem'n in Bellview b't
 10 he- (0.4) I guess he's, not
 11 afraid t'drive a ca:r,
 12 (1.0)
 13 Gary: I d'kno what they have tuh dri:ve I
 14 haven'even been over there tuh see (im
 15 [lately)
 16 Mike: [[It's a pretty good ca:r.

When one examines the vocal and nonvocal behavior of Mike during this sequence, additional support is found for the possibility that Gary's audience might be actively attending to the appropriateness of alternative identification formats he uses. Mike responds to certain identification formats used by Gary but actively disattends others. Thus Gary's Name + Place identification in lines 1-3 receives a 'Yah' from Mike in line 5. However, when Gary identifies Hawkins as his little sister's brother-in-law in lines 6-7, Mike, who has been looking down, withdraws his gaze even farther from Gary. When Gary changes this identification to 'a policeman in Bellview' in line 9, Mike again responds to him with a nod. When Gary then produces the implicit brag about Hawkins in lines 10-11 ('I guess he's not afraid to drive a car') Mike again withdraws from him. At this point Gary (lines 13-15) makes a statement which reveals how little he actually knows about Hawkins as a racer (he doesn't even know what kind of car he has) and Mike uses this as an opportunity to demonstrate his familiarity with the track and his competence as an expert to assess the car. In brief, Mike withdraws from Gary when he talks about Hawkins in ways that either display Hawkins' ties to Gary or make claims about Hawkins' status, but ratifies identification formats based on place or occupation. In addition, Mike makes use of opportunities to establish his status as an expert and Gary's as one who is not. Such phenomena have a clear relevance to the process of being socialized into competence in a domain of expertise. The status of some particular person as an expert is made visible within the activity itself, and actions of a neophyte are responded to by the expert who acts as audience to his behavior in a differential fashion, with some being treated as appropriate while others that could be responded to are ignored. Such a process of 'selective reinforcement' is central to many learning programs. From a slightly different perspective, such phenomena shed light on how a domain of expertise might be interactively constituted. For example, the very large set of possible ways of identifying something

or doing something is through a process of interaction shaped into a subset of choices that other practitioners of this knowledge treat as appropriate. Moreover, in so far as such choices are consequential, the competence of the party making them can be assessed, supported and sanctioned within the midst of moment-to-moment interaction.

Such phenomena provide some demonstration of how automobile racing (and related events such as restoring old cars) constitute for these participants not just any topic in talk, but a domain of special relevance for establishing the competence, expertise, and standing, vis-à-vis one another, of the men conversing about these subjects. Mike's story emerges from this domain of action and two of his recipients, Curt and Gary, differ significantly from each other in the competence they are able to display within it. While Curt can demonstrate independent access to much of the background information that Mike uses to set the scene for the story and analyze its import (pps. 288–289), Gary is shown to have far less access to both that scene and the procedures used to talk about it, and his actions are frequently not ratified by either Mike or Curt.

2.3.3. *Non-engrossed recipients*

In addition to Curt and Gary, Mike's audience also includes two women, Phyllis and Carney. However, the talk about cars does not seem to be relevant to them in the way that it is for the men present, and indeed, at the end of Mike's story, Carney withdraws from the conversational cluster and Phyllis follows shortly afterwards, with the effect that the rest of the automobile discussion is an entirely male activity. A number of issues seem to be implicated in the women's lack of involvement in this particular domain of discourse. Investigating these issues requires that we look more closely at the actual talk Mike produces. The following is a transcript of the body of Mike's story. Line numbers are keyed to the complete version of the story in the appendix. For a reader unfamiliar with these materials, the transcript might initially appear difficult to follow. To make this material more accessible, here is a brief synopsis of the events that Mike describes:

In the midst of a race a driver named DeWald tried several times to put another driver named Keegan into the wall. DeWald was unsuccessful and finally Keegan 'rapped him a good one in the ass'. However the incident cost Keegan three spots in the feature. After the race an enraged Keegan tore off his helmet and went after DeWald with an iron bar, but was convinced to drop it by the crowd that had formed around him.

Here is a transcript of what Mike actually said:

(5) G.84:2:15

- 41 Mike: De *Wa*:ld spun ou:t. 'n he
 42 waited.
 43 (0.5)
 44 Mike: Al come around'n passed im Al wz
 45 leading the feature
 46 (0.5)
 47 Mike: en then the *sekint*- place guy,
 48 (0.8)
 49 Mike: en nen *Keegan*. En boy when *Keeg'n* come
 50 around he come right up into im tried
 51 tuh put im intuh th'*wa*:ll.
 52 Curt: Yeh?,
 53 Mike: 'n 'e tried it about four diffren times
 54 finally *Keegan* rapped im a good one in
 55 the *a:ss'n* then th-b- *DeWald* wen *o:ff*.
 56 (0.5)
 57 Curt: Mm
 58 Mike: [| But in ne *meantime* it'd cost *Keegan*
 59 three spo:ts'nnuh *feature*.
 60 Curt: Yeah?,
 61 Mike: So, *boy* when *Keeg'n* come in he- yihknow
 62 how *he's* gotta temper anyway, he js::
 63 °*wa*::::h sc₁reamed iz damn=
 64 Curt: Mm
 65 Mike: =e:ngine yihknow,
 66 (0.5)
 67 Mike: settin there en 'e takes iz helmet
 68 off'n *clunk* it goes on top a the *car* he
 69 gets *out'n* goes up t'the *trailer* 'n
 70 gets that °god damn iron *ba:r?*, 'hhh
 71 *rraps* that trailer en *away* he starts
 72 t'go en evrybuddy seh *hey* you don't
 73 need *dat* y'know, seh ye:h yer right'n
 74 'e throws | that son'vabitch down- =
 75 Curt: | °Mm hm hm
 76 Mike: ='hhhhh So they all go down

When the story is examined in detail, it can be seen that in a number of different ways his talk seems to be designed more for the men present than for the women. First, not only are the characters in the story all male, but

they are doing things (for example racing cars and threatening each other with tire irons) that only males typically engage in, in the participants' culture. Second, the themes that motivate the story and give it its drama – establishing who is better than whom in both sport and action and settling such differences through violent confrontation – also display a perspective that is more characteristic of males than females in this culture. Third, the sense of events occurring within a male domain of action is heightened through the language used to construct the description. Perhaps the most glaring example of this is the profanity used (though other types of word selection, such as terms imparting a sense of violent conflict, are also relevant as well). Fourth, in addition to word selection from domains such as profanity, the speaker also organizes larger descriptive units in ways that establish a recognizably male perspective on the events being recounted. For example, not just the word 'a:ss' but all of 'Keegan rapped im a good one in the a:ss' (lines 54–55) makes visible to recipients conflict that is distinctively male (note also that speaker has made a special effort to infuse his talk with this perspective – for example the thing that got 'rapped' was not in fact a particular part of DeWald's body, but his car). Thus, though half of the people listening to Mike's story are female, the story makes visible to its recipients a distinctively male alignment to the events it is recounting. It would thus appear that like the issues of access to this domain of discourse noted above, features such as these also divide present recipients into distinctive subsets. Though the story could be understood by any of those listening to Mike, properties of it – such as the characters in it, the activities in which they are engaged, the themes that motivate its drama, and the words selected to tell it – show that some of those present (specifically the men) are a more appropriate audience of what it has to offer than others.⁸

From a slightly different perspective, such phenomena can be approached in terms of the engrossment that the events in the story offer the audience. Consider for example lines 58–59 in which Mike describes what DeWald's action cost Keegan: 'But in the *meantime* it'd cost Keegan three spo:ts in the *feature*'. A true *aficionado* of the sport might well be quite attuned to the injustice of such an event and be able easily to become engrossed in the drama it provides, and immediately see the power of this situation to motivate particular kinds of subsequent action, such as confronting the perpetrator of the offense. However, as the existence of many 'football widows' demonstrates, others might be able to understand the events being described without in any way becoming engrossed in them, and indeed treat the events that

their spouses see as high drama as, in fact, quite uninteresting. Subsequent events in the telling reveal that while Phyllis understands Mike's story quite well, she does not find the drama in it that Mike does. Such a capacity for differential involvement is not of course restricted to the domains of discourse involving sports, but is common in many types of talk.

Indeed audience engrossment and participation status can interact with each other in interesting ways. After the automobile discussion Mike, Curt and Gary start telling dirty jokes. The obscenity of the jokes (as well as more specific themes in them such as male competition) again locate the domain of discourse as one whose prototypical participants are male. Nonetheless one of the women, Carney, becomes engrossed in the jokes and wants to listen to them. However, when she joins the men, she seats herself at the picnic table with her *back* to the rest of the group. Thus, while she is physically present and able to act as a recipient to the jokes, she vividly marks that her participation status in the telling is quite different from that of the men seated with her.

Finally, recipients are differentiated from each other in another way as well. Though the events being described are news to Curt, Gary and Carney, one member of his audience, Phyllis, the teller's wife, has already heard the story.

2.4. *Heterogeneity of the audience*

The audience to Mike's story contains a collection of recipients with very different types of access to the domain of discourse within which the story is embedded. Its principal recipient, Curt, is able to competently display relevant knowledge about the larger scene that brackets the story, and indeed the story emerges from a sequence in which Curt is checking his knowledge of regulars at the track against Mike's. Gary, by way of contrast, though an appropriate recipient of the story, is shown to be not only less familiar with the world of the track, but also to lack the ability the appropriately constitute this world within the details of his talk; in fact, some of the actions he makes are explicitly ignored by Mike and Curt. Gary thus has a more peripheral standing as audience to Mike's talk than does Curt. Indeed, though all of Mike's listeners are included within the scope of his audience (i.e. those sitting around the table are recipients of the story, not parties who happen to overhear it), in a number of ways, Mike's talk seems designed more for

Curt as its focal recipient than for any of the others present. For example, in lines 61–62 Mike says with reference to Keegan ‘You know how *he’s* got a temper anyway’ and thus proposes that the recipient to his story is already quite familiar with Keegan, and indeed at this point Mike moves his gaze specifically to Curt. By including within the story material that acknowledges Curt’s special access to the world of the track, while making the story as a whole available to all present, Mike may be attending to, and attempting to take into account the heterogeneity of his audience. The women present create further complexities with respect to audience structure. On the one hand, the talk does not seem to encompass them in the way that it does the men present. None the less, Phyllis has not only already heard the story but seems as familiar with the track and its characters as anyone else present, but Mike. However (as will be seen in more detail below) she does not seem to find in it the seriousness and drama that Mike and Curt do. In brief, Mike’s audience is not homogeneous, but rather contains recipients who are differentiated from each other in a variety of ways that are relevant to the story that he is telling.

3. Audience interpretation of the story

The diversity of Mike’s audience is, in fact, quite consequential for his telling. Within a telling, members of an audience have resources available to them for

1. Analyzing the talk that is being heard,
2. Aligning themselves to it in a particular way,
3. Participating in the field of action it creates.

By making use of these resources, one of the non-engrossed recipients is able to offer a way of understanding the events that Mike is describing that undercuts the seriousness and drama he attributes to them. The participation frame-works that she uses enables her to recruit others, including those whose competence in this domain of discourse has been challenged by Mike, to her position. The effect of this is that Mike faces serious problems when he attempts to produce the climax of his story, as many of his recipients treat it in a way that he finds quite inappropriate.

3.1. *Alternative prefaces*

Many stories in conversation (including the one to be examined here) are preceded by a brief preface which offers an initial characterization of what the story will be about. The characterization in the preface provides recipients with key resources that they use to analyze the story as it is being told (Sacks, 1974). For example, if the preface states that the story will be about something 'terrible', recipients can look for such an event to help them find the climax of the story, a place where particular types of responses from them become relevant. In addition, the characterization in the preface provides them with information about the type of alignment and response that is appropriate to the story. Thus, if the speaker glosses what will be told as 'something terrible', recipients are informed that laughter constitutes an inappropriate response. Recipients do not of course have to go along with the speaker's proposal about how the talk about to be produced should be treated, and indeed in the data to be examined here, two competing proposals are offered, and most of Mike's recipients choose to treat his talk in ways that he considers quite inappropriate.

The actual preface to Mike's story (lines 1-2 below) is provided not by him but rather by the one party present who has already heard it, his wife Phyllis. After another recipient, Curt, displays interest in hearing it (line 3) she turns the floor over to Mike for the actual telling (lines 5-7).⁹ In line 14, after the sequence with Curt about recognition of DeWald noted above (p. 289, example 2) he starts the story:

(6) G.84:2:15

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | Phyl: | <i>Mike siz there wz a big fight down</i> |
| 2 | | <i>there las'night,</i> |
| 3 | Curt: | <i>Oh rilly?</i> |
| 4 | | <i>(0.5)</i> |
| 5 | Phyl: | <i>Wih Keegan en, what.</i> |
| 6 | | <i>Paul [de Wa:ld?]</i> |
| 7 | Mike: | <i>[Paul de Wa:l] d. Guy out of,=</i> |
| 8 | Curt: | <i>=De Wa:ld yeah I [°(know)'m.]</i> |
| 9 | Mike: | <i>[Tiffen.]</i> |
| 10 | Mike: | <i>=D'you know him?,</i> |
| 11 | Curt: | <i>°Uh/huh=</i> |
| 12 | Curt: | <i>=I know who 'e i:s,</i> |
| 13 | | <i>(1.8)</i> |
| 14 | Mike: | <i>Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in</i> |

The preface provided by Phyllis describes the events in the story in a particular way, specifically as being about a ‘big fight’ (line 1). Note that, by reporting the talk of another, Phyllis does not herself say that there was a ‘big fight’, but rather that *Mike* says there was. Her own interpretation of the event is left unspecified. Before Mike has a chance to actually tell the story Phyllis, in interaction with other members of the audience, offers a second, quite different characterization of the events they are about to hear, one that belittles their drama, power and even seriousness. Phyllis thus launches Mike into a particular type of telling and then, after he is embarked on it, calls into question the seriousness and drama of the events he is about to describe.

The talk that Phyllis uses to do this builds on issues initially raised by Gary. Just as Mike begins his story, Gary (lines 17–18) asks whether a similar incident had occurred the week before. Initially Mike says that this did not happen (line 19). However, Gary persists in lines 20, 21 and 23,¹⁰ and in lines 24–25, Mike recalls such an incident but challenges the details of Gary’s version of it (and thus continues to display his own expertise even while acknowledging the essential correctness of Gary’s claim):

(7) G.84:2:20

- 14 Mike: *Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in*
 15 *the,*
 16 (0.6)
 17 Gary: *W’wz it la:st week sumpn like th’t*
 18 *ha pp’n too?*
 19 Mike: *Ohno:, th is:*
 20 Gary: *Somebody bumped somebody*
 21 *else’n they- spun aroun=*
 22 Mike: *I don’t kno:w.*
 23 Gary: *=th’tra: ck*
 24 Mike: *Oh that wz::uh a’week*
 25 *be fore last in the late models*
 26 Phyl: *(Yeh they’d be doin’it) en den ney go*
 27 *down’n ney throw their helmets off’n*
 28 *nen n(h)ey [j’s l:lo] ok=*
 29 Mike: *But,*
 30 Phyl: *et each other.*

One thing that Gary’s talk might be heard as doing is challenging whether Mike’s story is indeed about a newsworthy event, and thus worth telling; i.e. instead of being dramatic and unusual the kind of events that Mike is talking

about happen all the time. In lines 26–30 Phyllis picks up on these possibilities in Gary's talk by portraying such violent confrontations as not newsworthy and dramatic, but rather empty show: e.g., despite the violent bravado of the protagonists (for example throwing their helmets off) they end up 'just looking at each other'. Phyllis explicitly ties what she says to what Gary has just said (in addition to the 'Yeah' that begins her talk in line 26 the videotape reveals that she nods toward Gary just before she starts to talk). By doing so, she is able to cast her description of how the prospective fighters just bluster at each other as representative of a series of repetitive events (note her use of present tense) and thus to formulate this as typical of the way in which the fights that Mike finds so dramatic in fact, come off, i.e. they regularly end up as just empty bravado. Phyllis thus undercuts the telling that Mike is about to produce by proposing an alternative framework for interpreting the events he will describe.

When Phyllis speaks, she does more than simply propose a competing cognitive framework for analyzing the talk in progress. In addition, she invokes a set of participation structures available to recipients of a telling that permit them to actively display both their alignment to, and their understanding of the talk in progress. For example, by embedding laughter in her talk (The '(h)' in line 28 marks a laugh token) Phyllis visibly treats events such as these as laughables. This effect is heightened by the way in which she dramatizes the events he is talking about. On the videotape, one can see her enacting throwing the helmet off. The character of this enactment is also conveyed by the patterning of emphasis in her talk (for example the stress on '*throw*' and '*hhelmets*'). In much the way that someone quoting another's speech simultaneously comments on the talk being quoted (Volosinov, 1973), Phyllis's enactment displays an alignment toward the events being mimicked that is congruent with her vocal treatment of them as laughables. Such actions not only enable her to participate in the telling in a particular way but also invite others to join her in this. Thus laugh tokens can constitute invitations to laugh (Jefferson, 1979) and enactments frequently act as solicits for heightened recipient response (M. H. Goodwin, 1980).

What Phyllis does is, in fact, responded to. Through both talk and outright laughter, all the other recipients to Mike's story do affiliate themselves to Phyllis's position.¹¹ Indeed Curt, Mike's principal recipient, in line 37 calls such protagonists 'little high school kids'. The only one present who does not join in this participation framework is Mike himself, who tries to proceed with his telling and eventually succeeds (line 41). The following is a complete

transcript of the section of the telling that contains the second characterization of the story and the response to it by other recipients:

(8) G.84:2:15

- 26 Phyl: (Yeh they doin'tit) en den ney go
 27 down'n ney *throw* their *hhelmets* off'n
 28 nen n(h)ey {j's l:lo }ok=
 29 Mike: But,
 30 Phyl: et each {othe {r.
 31 Mike: this {
 32 Curt: Ye: :h hh { *heh heh*
 33 Phyl: { ehhehhhh
 34 Mike: This: : uh:::
 35 Gary: (They know they gon//na get {hurt/heard }),
 36 Phyl: ehheh!
 37 Curt: [[Liddle *high school* ki {ds,=
 38 Gary: (No {matter=
 39 Mike: This,
 40 Gary: =what {ju:re)
 41 Mike: De *Wa: :ld* spun ou:t. 'n he
 42 waited.

In brief, Phyllis is able to not only propose a competing cognitive framework for interpreting the events that Mike is about to describe, but also to recruit others to such a perspective by invoking a distinctive alignment framework that they also participate in.

Crucial to these operations is their placement. They occur *after* the preface sequence, but *before* the projected story is actually told. Thus, as Mike's story emerges, two competing interpretations of the events he is describing are on the floor and publicly available to his recipients: on the one hand the characterization of these events as a 'big fight' provided by the preface, and on the other the subsequent portrayal of them as empty bravado.

3.2. *Building a story in the presence of competing interpretive frameworks*

When Mike tells the story (example 5 on p. 294) he organizes his description of the events he had witnessed in a way that is quite consistent with Phyllis's initial characterization of them as a violent confrontation. First, the telling has a recognizable thematic and dramatic development. The ordering of

incidents that Mike recounts can be heard as moving toward the 'big fight' announced at the beginning of the telling. Second, events leading up to the projected fight are colored by an aura of violent conflict through the way in which Mike constructs his description of them. Incidents in which actual physical contact occurs, even between inanimate objects, are described with heightened vividness: for example, the iron bar that 'rapps' the trailer in line 71, the helmet that hits the top of the car with a loud 'clunk' in line 68, and the way in which Keegan 'rapped im a good one in the a:ss' in lines 54–55. Characters are described in terms of attributes such as having a 'temper' (line 62) and things that they do, such as racing an engine, are not only described in a way that depicts the event as loud, violent and angry (for example 'screamed' in line 63) but actually enacted for recipients. The sense of an impending, violent confrontation between angry males is heightened by the speaker's use of profanity. Moreover it can be noted that speaker engages in somewhat special work to include the profanity. Placing 'god damn' before 'iron bar' in line 70 adds nothing to the description of the bar itself. Indeed, despite its syntactic position within a specific noun phrase 'god damn' seems less to modify the particular words that follow than to infuse the larger pattern of emerging action with a sense of power and drama, and to make visible a distinctive perspective toward those events. Similarly, by using 'son'vabitch' in line 74 the speaker is doing quite a bit more than simply referencing the bar noted earlier. The profanity in this story is thus not essential to the 'factual' description of the events being recounted, but rather establishes a particular alignment to those events. In brief, Mike's description is carefully constructed to demonstrate dramatic movement toward an impending, almost epic, battle. In this, it is entirely consistent with Phyllis' description of it as being about a 'big fight'.

3.3. *Recipient interpretation of the story*

As Mike produces the body of his story (i.e. the sequence presented on p. 294 as example 5) the interaction of the participants is organized in a distinctive way: Mike is the only participant producing extended talk, and vocal comments by recipients are restricted to continuers such as 'uh huh'. By organizing their behavior in this way, recipients demonstrate their understanding that an extended telling is in progress, and their co-participation in the telling.

The first recipient talk that analyzes Mike's talk in a specific way rather than simply acknowledging receipt of it is Gary's 'All show' in line 77:

(9) G.84:2:15

- 67 Mike: settin there en 'e takes iz helmet
 68 off'n *clunk* it goes on top a the car he
 69 gets *out'n* goes up t'the trailer 'n
 70 gets that °god damn iron *ba:r?*, 'hhh
 71 *rraps* that trailer en *away* he starts
 72 t'go en evrybuddy seh *hey* you don't
 73 need *dat* Y'know, seh *ye:h* yer right'n
 74 'e throws [that son'vabitch down=
 75 Curt: [°Mm *hm hm*
 76 Mike: =·hhhhh So they all [go dow [n
 --> 77 Gary: A:ll All show.
 78 (0.2)

Despite the way in which Mike has carefully organized his story to display movement toward a violent confrontation, there are, in fact, some features of it that could lead someone to propose that the confrontation is only show. Labov (1985), in his analysis of why it is frequently not necessary for speakers to actually lie, notes how language provides a range of expressions that can be used to suggest the occurrence of a state of affairs that did not literally happen. It is quite possible that expressions of this type are being used by Mike to build his story. Thus Sacks (1971) has observed that phrases such as 'at first I thought' inform the recipient that the perception about to be reported was inaccurate. In the present data, it would appear that by using the verb 'start' in the phrase 'and away he starts to go' (lines 71-72) to describe Keegan's actions, Mike alerts his recipients to the fact that these actions were not in fact consummated (i.e. if the action had been brought to completion, the protagonist would probably have been described as having performed it, not as having *started* to do it). Moreover, analyzing the events in Mike's story as 'All show' is quite consistent with Phyllis's characterization of the protagonists as men who produce elaborate aggressive displays but end up 'just looking at each other' (example 7, p. 299). Indeed, when what Mike says just before Gary's comment is examined, we find that it matches almost precisely the situation described by Phyllis. Thus in Phyllis's description, the protagonists violently throw down their helmets but avoid actual physical violence; Mike's talk describes an impending confrontation, complete with

one party throwing off his helmet with a loud '*clunk*', that is withdrawn from before actual violence occurs. It thus appears that Gary has found something in the talk that matches a preview provided earlier of what that talk might contain, and that he now operates on that talk in the way that the preview proposed it should be dealt with. In essence, the preview has provided him with a template that he can apply to the emerging talk and use to understand it when a match is found.

When the videotape is examined, further evidence that Gary might be using Phyllis's actions as a guide for his own is found. Thus Phyllis moves her gaze to Mike just after his enactment of the screaming engine in line 63. She continues to gaze toward Mike until right after he describes the iron bar being thrown down in line 74. At this point, she not only withdraws her gaze from Mike, but as she does so, performs a lateral head shake with shoulder shrug that appears to comment in a pejorative '*Wouldn't-you-know-it*' way on what she has just heard. It is just after this happens that Gary says '*All show*'. In so far as Phyllis is not only the party who first proposed that such confrontations do not in fact lead to real fights, but also the only listener who has already heard Mike's story, it is possible that others might use what she does as a guide to their own understanding of the story – for example, use the fact that she withdraws from the teller and visibly comments on what she has just heard, as suggesting that the climax of the story has, in fact, been reached. It must, however, be emphasized that these possibilities cannot be definitely established in the data that are available to us. Indeed, while it is likely that Gary (who is gazing toward Mike) could perceive actions made by Phyllis (who is seated next to Mike) this is not certain.

Phyllis's earlier talk did more than simply outline upcoming events. It also provided a distinctive alignment to those events and a way of understanding their import. Thus, when Phyllis first provided her analysis, others visibly joined with her in laughing about such incidents. This raises the possibility that by re-invoking the configuration of analysis and participation used by Phyllis, Gary might be able to recruit others to also deal with the talk they have just heard in the way they dealt with Phyllis's talk, and indeed, what Gary says here has a marked effect on the organization of the participants' interaction. Most of the others present affiliate themselves, either vocally or visually to the interpretation that Gary has offered, and begin to comment on the talk they have heard. For example, Phyllis turns and nods in agreement with Gary (visible on the videotape, but not in the transcript) and

Carney says with laughter 'It reminds me of those wrestlers on television' (lines 86–89):

(10) G.84:2:15

- 74 Mike: n 'e throws_o that son'vabitch down=
 75 Curt: Mm hm hm
 76 Mike: ='hhhhh So they all_o go dow_n
 77 Gary: A:ll All show.
 78 (0.2)
 79 Carney: Yeah, th_o ey all,=
 80 Mike: They all-
 81 Gary: =hn- hn!
 82 Mike: They all go down th_{ere},=
 83 Gary: Gimme
 84 a beer Curt,
 85 Mike: =N_o some- somebuddy so:mebuddy,
 86 Carney: It reminds me of those
 87 wrestl(h)ers. 'hhh
 88 Mike: So:me body ra:pped=
 89 Carney: hhh(h)on t(h)elevi_{sion}. °()
 90 Gary: =Bartender how
 91 about a beer. While yer
 92 settin there.

Gary's actions have strong sequential implications for not only the talk that has so far been heard, but also for the possible future development of Mike's telling. One of the ways in which a characterization of a story is used by recipients is as a resource for finding when the climax of a story has arrived. If, in fact, all that Mike's protagonists do is 'look at each other' then his story might be heard as having reached its climax. In a variety of different ways Gary treats Mike's story as complete. Thus his 'All Show' is a summary assessment, an object that Jefferson (1978: 244) notes constitutes a 'prototypical telling-ending device'. In addition, right after saying this, Gary visibly withdraws from the telling by turning away from Mike and asking Curt for a beer (lines 90–92). By producing summary talk and no longer acting as audience, Gary treats the telling as something that has run its course and from which one can now be withdrawn.

In essence, after Gary's comments, there is a structural change in the organization of the participants' interaction and the way in which they are dealing with the story. Gary and some of the other recipients stop operating

on the talk in progress in a way that is appropriate to an unfinished *telling sequence* and move to a *response sequence* in which they comment on the talk and start to disengage from it.

These data provide some demonstration that an audience is not simply a collection of passive listeners, but rather a dynamic entity that can actively influence the interpretation that will be given a speaker's talk. Phyllis is able to propose two very different interpretive frameworks for understanding the talk that her husband is about to produce. Through the participation possibilities provided by these templates she is also able to get others to visibly affiliate themselves to one of the positions she is offering. Gary is then able to choose to hear the talk in a way that is consistent with one of these frameworks but not the other. Moreover, by reactivating the participation structures provided by Phyllis' second template he is able to lead others to not only a type of analysis, but also a type of interaction, that is consistent with that particular view of the talk, i.e. aligning themselves to the events in the story as phenomena to be laughed at. This has consequences for the organization of the telling as a whole as some of its audience start to withdraw from it. In essence, when Mike gets to a point in his story that could be heard as consistent with the 'laughable' characterization (though this point might, in fact, be merely the prelude to a more elaborate fight) some of his recipients treat this as the climax of his story and both ridicule his protagonists and withdraw from the telling. Such phenomena provide further insight into how recipients utilize an initial characterization of an upcoming story to analyze its emerging structure in ways that are relevant to their own actions. Indeed, with her second characterization, Phyllis might be able to guide other recipients to find the climax/conclusion of Mike's story at a place where Mike himself is ready to continue with it.

3.4. *Reconstituting the audience*

While Gary can propose to treat the incidents being described as 'All show', and the telling as something that has now reached its projected climax and can be withdrawn from, others are free to either align themselves with him or counter his proposals. In the present data, both options are actualized by different participants. As was noted in the last section (pps. 304–305) both Carney and Phyllis affiliate themselves with Gary's analysis of the events they have just heard. However, Mike explicitly counters Gary by saying 'No.

Somebody rapped Dewald in the mouth' and tries to move the telling forward to further events that are consistent with the 'fight' version. Because of the way in which Gary's talk has transformed the structure of the current interaction so that others are now overlapping Mike's talk, it takes him several attempts to produce this statement in the clear. First, he tries to continue with his story (lines 80-82). However after Gary asks for a beer (lines 83-84), Mike in line 85 uses the word 'No' to explicitly disagree with the 'all show' proposal and starts to say that somebody did in fact hit DeWald. He is unable to finish this statement until lines 94-96 because of the talk that others are producing at this point:

(11) G.84:2:15

- 76 Mike: =h h h h h So they all ₁ go dow ₁ n
 77 Gary: _{A:ll} ₁ All show.
 78 (0.2)
 79 Carney: Yeah, *th* ₁ ey all,=
 80 Mike: They *all*-
 81 Gary: =hn- ₁ hn!
 82 Mike: They *all* go down *th* ₁ ere,=
 83 Gary: ₁ Gimme
 84 a ₁ beer Curt,
 --> 85 Mike: _{=N} ₁ o some- *sombuddy* so: me buddy,
 86 Carney: ₁ It reminds me of those
 87 *wrestl(h)ers*. 'hhh
 --> 88 Mike: So: me ₁ body ra: pped=
 89 Carney: ₁ hhh(h) on t(h) elevi ₁ sion. °()
 90 Gary: ₌ Bartender how
 91 about a beer. While yer
 92 settin' ₁ there.
 93 Carney: ₁ °().
 --> 94 Mike: So: me buddy rapped uh:.
 95 Curt: °((clears throat))
 --> 96 Mike: DeWald'nna *mouth*.
 97 Curt: Well, h ₁ e deserved it.
 98 Mike: ₁ But *yih* know eh- uh- he made iz
 99 first mistake number *one* by *messin* with
 100 *Keegan* because a *pits'r* fulla *Keegans*
 101 en when there *is* ₁ nt't a *Keegan* there=
 102 Curt: ₁ ° Mhm,
 103 Mike: =ere's a *Fra* ₁ :nks,
 104 Curt: ₁ There's a *Fra*:nks,

- 105 Mike: [[()
 106 Curt: I kno |w.
 107 Mike: Because they're relatedjih
 108 kno:w?

These data thus provide an example of an audience displaying through its behavior an interpretation of the speaker's talk that the speaker himself actively opposes.

The fact that Mike does actively oppose the actions being performed on his talk by his recipients is noteworthy in its own right. Other analysis has revealed that speakers can be quite adept at modifying the structure of their talk even as it is emerging to take into account actions being performed by their recipients (C. Goodwin, 1981; M. H. Goodwin, 1980). One effect of this is that incongruence between talk and recipientship to that talk can frequently be averted before it becomes a visible, noticeable event. On some occasions, speakers go along with recipient laughter and heckling, and then return to their talk when it has run its course (M. H. Goodwin, 1985). In the present data, Mike refuses to adapt his actions to the actions of his recipients. Such a stance is consistent with the importance and seriousness that Mike elsewhere invests in the automobile world about which he is talking. For Mike, events such as these are not laughing matters. Thus, while not adapting to what his recipients are doing might cause problems in the telling of this story, by taking the position he does, Mike maintains his integrity with respect to a particular domain of discourse that is quite crucial in constituting who he is.

Gary's proposals were not restricted to how the incidents described by Mike should be analyzed, but also dealt with the orientation that the audience was now to give the teller. Though Mike is able to counter what Gary said, he does this within a pattern of interaction that has been heavily shaped by Gary's action. Instead of talking to others who are visibly acting as recipients to his story (i.e. the situation during the telling of the body of the story, example 5 on p. 294) Mike must now fight to be heard in the midst of other talk that is either belittling the characters in his story, or dealing with activities entirely unrelated to it. Thus Mike faces the task of not only countering what Gary has said (and getting others to listen to and possibly accept that counter) but also of finding recipients who will continue to act as an audience to his talk.

At least one party does not align himself with Gary's withdrawal. Curt continues to act as audience to Mike's talk, and, moreover, to do this even

though he is called upon to engage in other activities as well. After saying 'All show' Gary not only turns away, but also asks Curt to get him a beer (lines 83–84, 90–92). Curt does then get the beer. However, Curt manages to do this in such a way that he returns his orientation to Mike, even while in the midst of extracting a can from a six pack, by bending the upper part of his body back toward Mike.¹² Thus, though he is simultaneously engaged in another activity, Curt, unlike Gary, manages to remain a participant in the telling until Mike does in fact describe actual physical violence. Curt then produces subsequent talk to this new talk (line 97).

However, though Mike still has an audience, it is a different, more limited audience than the one that listened to the opening of his story and this does indeed seem to have consequences for the further course of the telling. First, though subsequent talk reveals that there is in fact quite a bit more that could be said about the confrontation (Mike later notes that the episode ended with DeWald on the back of his pickup truck with a jack 'trying to keep himself from getting his ass beat') Mike moves away from further development of the story itself and into commentary about it, analyzing why it was a mistake for DeWald to pick on Keegan (lines 98–104). He thus does not return to the type of story-telling that he was performing before Gary's talk, but instead moves to a type of talk that is frequently used to start disengagement from a story. Second, the analysis he now offers seems designed for Curt's listening more than for any of the others present. Thus, through use of phenomena such as reference to the 'Franks' family without prior identification of them, the talk proposes that an appropriate recipient to it is familiar enough with the racetrack and its regular characters to recognize them on his own, i.e. that the recipient of the current talk is a well-versed fan of the races. Prior talk (as well as Curt's own retrieval of the name 'Franks' in line 104) strongly indicates that the one present who can most meet these criteria is Curt. It thus appears that as some of Mike's audience withdraws from him he re-organizes his talk so that it can be seen as most appropriate to the recipient who remains.¹³ In essence, the audience is reconstituted into a subset of its original members not only through the actions of those who withdraw from it, but also by congruent changes in the organization of speaker's talk.

4. The audience in more elaborate performances

The data just examined were drawn from spontaneous conversation. Within conversation participants are able to not only comment on what they have

heard in a variety of ways, but rapidly become speakers themselves so that the party they were audience to now becomes audience to them. Such possibilities are frequently not available at more formal performances, such as a play, at which members of the audience do not have the option of becoming performers in their own right. In view of this, it might be argued that the active role played by the audience in the preceding example is a by-product of its conversational location rather than an intrinsic characteristic of audience itself.

Though diminished opportunities for visible response make it more difficult to study the dynamic articulation of audience with performance in more stylized settings, there is nonetheless some evidence that, at such events, the audience plays a very active role in constituting what is to be made of the performance they are witnessing. For example, the theater director Jan Kott (1984: 1-5) describes a Polish production of *Hamlet* shortly after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia:

When the line 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' was uttered on-stage, a murmur rippled through the audience from the gallery right under the ceiling to the first row in the orchestra. When, later, the line 'Denmark's a prison' was repeated three times, I felt the house go silent, like the sudden lull before a storm. Then applause broke somewhere in the center of the auditorium, and then somewhere in the gallery: individual, quiet applause that seemed frightened at its own audacity. In another moment, the entire auditorium had broken into a fierce applause that lasted until hands went numb.

By applying information of their own to the text being heard the audience to this performance was able to interpret it in ways that were clearly unforeseen by Shakespeare at the time he wrote the words being responded to. The meaning that the text was found to have arose not just from the work of the playwright but rather as the emergent product of an active collaboration between author and audience. This occurred in a far more formal setting than spontaneous conversation, one in which the audience did not have the opportunity (at least within the framework of the performance itself) to produce novel talk that was responsive to the scenes they were witnessing. Nonetheless, through the precise placement of the response moves (such as applause) that were available to them, this audience were able to display an interpretation of the events being witnessed that had a specific relevance to their own situation.

Moreover, as indicated by Kott's description of how the applause slowly built up, this was achieved through an active process of interaction.¹⁴

The phenomena which have been examined in this paper provide some demonstration of how an audience is both shaped by the talk it is attending and helps shape what will be made of that talk. On the one hand, the details of the talk of the moment are able to differentiate those within the audience from each other in ways that are relevant to the tasks they face as audience. Indeed differential access to specific domains of discourse not only places a speaker in the position of addressing a heterogeneous audience, but also provides an arena within which participants can test, negotiate and establish their competence and standing vis-à-vis each other. On the other hand, through use of participation resources available to them, members of the audience are able to not only interact with each other, but actively influence the interpretation that will be made of the performance being witnessed.

Appendix

Complete auto race story

(12) G.84:2:15

((Participants have been talking about Mike's visit to a dirt track auto race.))

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | Phyl: | <i>Mike siz there wz a big fight down</i> |
| 2 | | <i>there las'night,</i> |
| 3 | Curt: | <i>Oh rilly?</i> |
| 4 | | <i>(0.5)</i> |
| 5 | Phyl: | <i>Wih Keegan en, what.</i> |
| 6 | | <i>Paul [de Wa::ld?]</i> |
| 7 | Mike: | <i>[Paul de Wa:l] d. Guy out of,=</i> |
| 8 | Curt: | <i>=De Wa:ld yeah I [°(know) 'm.)</i> |
| 9 | Mike: | <i>[Tiffen.</i> |
| 10 | Mike: | <i>=D'you know him?,</i> |
| 11 | Curt: | <i>°Uhuh=</i> |
| 12 | Curt: | <i>=I know who 'e i:s,</i> |
| 13 | | <i>(1.8)</i> |
| 14 | Mike: | <i>Evidently Keegan musta bumped im in</i> |
| 15 | | <i>the,</i> |
| 16 | | <i>(0.6)</i> |

- 17 Gary: W'wz it la:st week sumpn like th't
 18 ha pp'n too?
 19 Mike: Ohno:, th'is:
 20 Gary: Somebody bumped somebody
 21 else'n they- spun aroun=
 22 Mike: I don't kno:w.
 23 Gary: =th'tra: ck
 24 Mike: Oh that wz: :uh a'week
 25 be fore last in the late models
 26 Phyl: (Yeh they'd be doin'it) en den ney go
 27 down'n ney throw their helmets off'n
 28 nen n(h)ey j's l:lo ,ok=
 29 Mike: But,
 30 Phyl: et each othe r.
 31 Mike: this
 32 Curt: Ye::h hh, heh heh
 33 Phyl: ehhehhhh
 34 Mike: This:: uh:::
 35 Gary: (They kno:w they gon//na get {hurt/heard}),
 36 Phyl: eh eh!
 37 Curt: Liddle high school ki ds,=
 38 Gary: (No matter=
 39 Mike: This,
 40 Gary: =what ju:re)
 41 Mike: De Wa:ld spun ou:t. 'n he
 42 waited.
 43 (0.5)
 44 Mike: Al come around'n passed im Al wz
 45 leading the feature
 46 (0.5)
 47 Mike: en then the sekint- place guy,
 48 (0.8)
 49 Mike: en nen Keegan. En boy when Keeg'n come
 50 around he come right up into im
 51 tuh put im intuh th'wa:ll.
 52 Curt: Yeh?,
 53 Mike: 'n 'e tried it about four diffren times
 54 finally Keegan rapped im a good one in
 55 the a:ss'n then th-b- DeWald wen o:ff.
 56 (0.5)
 57 Curt: Mm
 58 Mike: But in ne meantime it'd cost Keegan
 59 three spo:ts'nnuh feature.
 60 Curt: Yeah?
 61 Mike: So, boy when Keeg'n come in he- yihknow

- 62 how *he's* gotta temper anyway, he js::
 63 °wa:::h sc₁reamed iz damn=
 64 Curt: mm
 65 Mike: =e:ngine yihknow,
 66 (0.5)
 67 Mike: settin there en 'e takes iz helmet
 68 off'n *clunk* it goes on top a the car he
 69 gets *out'n* goes up t'the trailer 'n
 70 gets that °god damn iron ba:r?, 'hhh
 71 *rraps* that railer en away he starts
 72 t'go en evrybuddy seh *hey* you don't
 73 need *dat* y'know, seh ye:h yer right'n
 74 'e throws₁ that son'vabitch down=
 75 Curt: °Mm hm hm
 76 Mike: =-hhhhh So they all₁ go dow₁n
 77 Gary: A:ll All show.
 78 (0.2)
 79 Carney: Yeah, th₁ ey all,=
 80 Mike: They *all*-
 81 Gary: =hn-₁hn!
 82 Mike: They *all* go down th₁ere,=
 83 Gary: °Gimme
 84 a₁ beer Curt,
 85 Mike: °N₁o some- *somebuddy* so:mebuddy,
 86 Carney: It reminds me of those
 87 *wrestl(h)ers*. 'hhh
 88 Mike: So:me₁ body ra:pped=
 89 Carney: °hhh(h)on t(h)elevi₁sion. °()
 90 Gary: °=Bartender how
 91 about a beer. While yer
 92 settin₁ there.
 93 Carney: °().
 94 Mike: So:mebuddy rapped uh:
 95 Curt: °((clears throat))
 96 Mike: DeWald'nna *mouth*.
 97 Curt: Well, h₁e deserved it.
 98 Mike: °But *yihknow* eh-₁uh-he *made* iz
 99 *first* mistake number *one* by *messin* with
 100 *Keegan* because a'*pits'r* fulla *Keegans*
 101 en when there *is*₁ nt't a *Keegan* there=
 102 Curt: °Mmhm,
 103 Mike: =ere's a'*Fra*₁:nks,
 104 Curt: There's a'*Fra*:nks,

105 Mike: [[()
 106 Curt: [[I kno₁w.
 107 Mike: Because they're relatedjih
 108 kno:w?

Notes

- For more detailed analysis of such phenomena see Sacks (1971) and C. Goodwin (1981, Chapter 5).
- Talk is transcribed using the Jefferson transcription system (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 731–733). For purposes of the analysis to be developed in this paper the following transcription conventions are the most relevant:
 - Punctuation symbols are used to mark intonation changes rather than as grammatical symbols.
 - * A period indicates a falling contour.
 - * A question mark indicates a raising contour.
 - * A comma indicates a falling-raising contour.
 - Italics indicates some form of emphasis, which may be signaled by changes in pitch and/or amplitude.
 - A bracket joining the talk of separate speakers marks the point at which overlapping talk begins.
 - Colons indicate that the sound just before the colon has been noticeably lengthened.
 - Numbers within parentheses (e.g. '(0.5)'), mark silences in seconds and tenths of seconds.
 - The letter 'h' within parentheses (e.g. 'wrestl(h)ers') marks a laugh token.
- A particularly vivid example of the importance of the audience applying appropriate knowledge to what they are hearing is provided by Bohannan's (1986) description of what happened when she told the story of *Hamlet* to members of an African society in which it was expected that a dead man's brother would marry his wife and take over his kingship, ghosts were not reincarnations of the dead but omens sent by witches, symptoms of madness were thought to be caused by bewitchment from relatives in the male line, etc. By using such background knowledge to interpret what they were listening to, the African audience found a very different story in *Hamlet* than would a western audience.
- For more detailed analysis of this interactive organization of such recognition formats see Sacks and Schegloff (1979).
- See Schegloff (1985) for more detailed analysis of this sequence.
- A racer's first name may be given the first time he is introduced into the talk (for example Paul DeWald in example 2 on p. 289) but subsequent reference to him will use only the last name. There is one exception to this. The best racer, Al, is consistently identified through use of only his first name. Indeed, the way in which procedures for identifying him differ from those used to identify all others in the scene is one of the ways in which his special status is made visible within the details of the participants' talk about him.
- I am indebted to Gail Jefferson for bringing this phenomenon to my attention.

8. See Sacks (1978: 262–269) for very interesting and relevant analysis of how the interests and social organization of a group of girls can enable them to find information and motive power in a story to which boys are oblivious.
9. By displaying uncertainty about DeWald's name, Phyllis is able to successively address two recipients who differ from each significantly in ways relevant to the organization of her talk. Thus Curt is proposed to be uninformed about the name of the character she is talking about, while Mike is proposed to be the authority on who that character is. For more detailed analysis of the interactive organization of utterances such as this, and how they might deal with problems that parties such as spouses who share much of their experience in common systematically encounter see C. Goodwin (1981: Chapter 5).
10. Note how Gary escalates his initial claim for an equivalent event by using the 'same term Mike used in line 14, 'bumped' to now describe the incident he heard about, i.e. 'somebody bumped somebody else'.
11. See M. H. Goodwin (1982b: 89) for analysis of how invitations to laugh can be used to affiliate members of an audience to a speaker's position in a dispute. For more general treatment of the process of alignment to positions within disputes see Maynard (forthcoming).
12. Curt returns his gaze to Mike just at the point where Mike hesitates in his talk in line 95. For more detailed analysis of how such perturbations in the stream of speech can act as requests for the gaze of recipients see C. Goodwin 1981, Chapter 2.
13. More extensive analysis of how a teller reorganizes the structure of a story as the constitution of its audience changes can be found in M. H. Goodwin (1982a).
14. For clarity, our discussion of theatrical performances has been restricted to a single clear example. However, as work in reader response criticism demonstrates (see, for example, Tompkins, 1980), the issue of how the audience helps constitute a literary or dramatic work is far richer than the limited phenomena we have been briefly able to look at here. Spontaneous conversation and western theater are clearly but two points in a continuum that contains multiple possibilities for different types of audience participation. For a very interesting analysis of a situation that falls between the participation frameworks which have been examined here, a ritualized performance in Kaluli society in which the audience actively helps construct the story being performed, see E. Schieffelin (1984).

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