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## THE VOICE OF JACOB: ENTEXTUALIZATION, CONTEXTUALIZATION, AND IDENTITY

BY MICHAEL SILVERSTEIN

Among the key discursive interactions in the Old Testament, one of the more vivid, if morally dubious, is the seeming perpetration of a hoax on the failing Isaac by his younger son, Jacob, as orchestrated by Rebecca, Isaac's wife and Jacob's mother. Rebecca disguises Jacob's hand and neck with goat fur so as to impersonate his hirsute older twin brother, Esau (who had already sold him his rights of primogeniture). Then Jacob asks for the dying old man's blessing as "firstborn." But Rebecca could not disguise the voice in which Jacob asks for Isaac's blessing! At Genesis 27:22, we read: "Vayimušehu vayomer" [And he (Isaac) felt him (Jacob) and he said], "hakol kol Ya'akov" [the voice is the voice of Jacob] "v'hayodim y'de 'Eso" [while the hands are the hands of Esau]. Here is the—as it turns out, false—identity of a biographical individual indexed by a cutaneous if characteristic and essential bodily condition—before the invention of the Remington shaver, at least.<sup>1</sup> As a sign of individual identity, it has trumped, in the instance, the indexical value of one's voice. Body over spirit; matter over mind, as it were. Oy! Were those early Hebrews pre-Cartesian or what!

Now this is a particularly clear and simple case of how signs understood to emanate from some individual allow an interlocutory partner to identify him or her. The characteristics of context indexically invoked allow the interlocutor to locate the individual in one or more classificatory frameworks thereby serving to define the context in which the flow of moves shapes the interaction. Here, the classificatory frameworks that come to envelop Isaac and Jacob-as-Esau are two, as shown in Figure 1. First, agnatic filiation of patrilineal kinship as we say in anthropologese, that is, father-to-son relations defining both this interaction and the more encompassing axis of myth-history in the Bible (to extraordinary effect in the New Testament, to be sure, recuperating and completing at the Crucifixion the story of the sacrifice of Isaac by his father, Abraham!). The second framework is male primogeniture, rights of the firstborn as a principle of descent of property and position within a structural generation of a patriline. In the narrated world, a fluently executed *interactional text* materializes, social acts

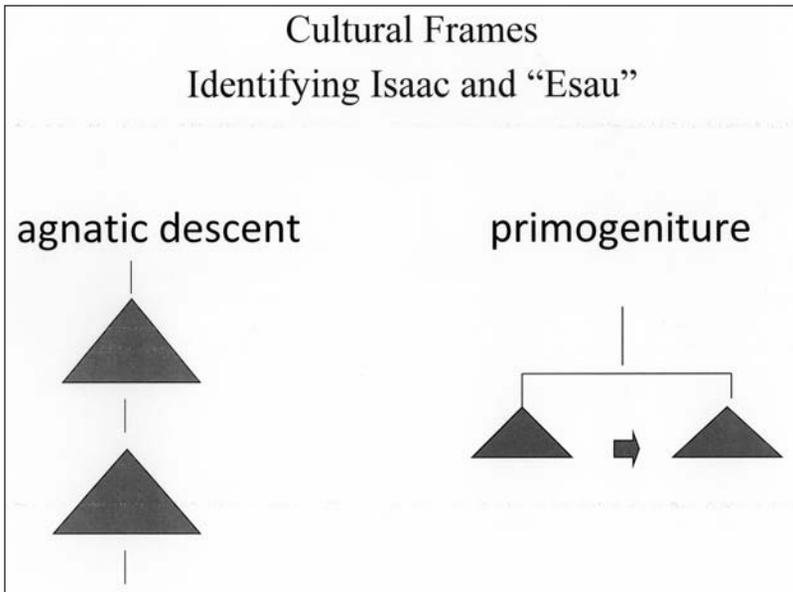


Figure 1. Sociological norms framing *Genesis 27*.

linked as cause-and-effect, as diagrammed in Figure 2: first an act of request by Jacob-as-Esau accompanying a savory meal to please his father, followed by, second, the hoped-for act of blessing by Isaac.<sup>2</sup> The linked acts take place not simply between two otherwise undefined, if named, individuals; they take place between a presumptive firstborn indexed by his characteristic hirsuteness (and by his affirmation that he is his brother) and a dying head-of-the-patriline.

Only within these frameworks are the very indexes of individual biographical identity of Jacob-as-Esau significant, in the wider interactional context of his requesting of his old father Isaac the blessings of agnatic primogeniture. The consequences of Isaac’s mistaken indexical reading render problematic the very “felicity conditions,” as J. L. Austin would say, of the conventional illocutionary sequence of acts of asking for and receiving a father’s blessings of his firstborn son.<sup>3</sup> But if he ain’t the firstborn, are the blessings valid? Well, all we know is that Isaac subsequently gives the real Esau another, lesser blessing, refusing to undo that given Jacob, and that the deity eventually sends angels not to Esau but to reaffirm Jacob’s assumption of the patrilineal succession. So smooth and wily wins the race, and old dull-and-hairy gets a mess of pottage for his face. But my purpose here is not to sermonize,

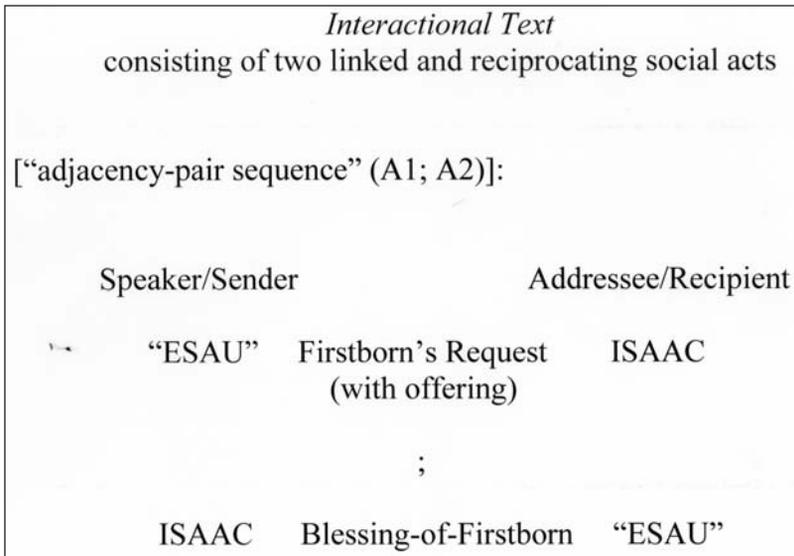


Figure 2. Two social acts in *Genesis 27* serially linked as initiation and consequence.

or even summarize. The point is, mistaken or no, the identity indexically presumed upon for the blessing to be valid (Jacob, in essence, as firstborn) sticks; the fact of Isaac’s blessing has seemed to endow the two brothers with the reversal of status earlier bought-and-sold as its indexical consequence. Identities are, we may note, indexically *presupposed* by social acts like requests and blessings; that is, such identities are presumed to comprise the (felicity-conferring) context for the constituent social acts of a lengthier interactional text. But identities are indexically *created* by such social acts as well; they are in effect entailed as the contextual consequence of such social acts.

So: frameworks of self- and other-definition constitute both an essential contextual input, as it were, to the various social acts of which interactions are built, and they emerge as an important contextual output of such acts. In this respect, we see, the flow of social behaviors like communicating with language and its penumbral sign systems is dynamically *contextualizing*, and what we might term context at any given point in interaction is always indexically balanced between presupposed input and entailed output: for example, as in this episode, a configuration of action-licensing identities and action-dependent ones.

From the perspective of such contextualizing social identities, the sequence of social acts in the narrated world constitutes an interactional

text that is described in terms of named individuals speaking one to another, doing various things both individually and cooperatively, having certain utterance-like thoughts and emotions, and so on. It is indeed a universe of seeming locutionary—illocutionary—perlocutionary events, as Austin pointed out.<sup>4</sup>

Is that all there is to it?

Let's consider this episode in yet another respect. Why did Isaac weigh the probative values of the two indexes—the voice of Jacob, on the one hand, and the hirsute hand of “Esau,” on the other, recall—and choose one over the other as revelatory of with whom he was interacting? If not merely two simultaneously experienced indexical signs—here, voice quality and skin texture—were to emanate from a source, but a whole barrage of them, how might one make sense, might one discern some coherence in what they seemed each to be pointing to? Which context-defining socio-cultural frames would they each seem to suggest when interpreted, implying some aspect of social locatability for the interactants? Would they do so coherently? Wherein lies congruence or mutual reinforcement of particulars in the barrage of such indexicalities? How might we in effect filter out some occurring but countervailing indexicals, making sense of them as interpreters by treating them as supervening on but not contravening more basic or trustworthy ones?

And in contrast to the relative immediacy of the interactional adjacency pair in Genesis 27, request followed by blessing, only interrupted by the metasemiotic comment of the somewhat puzzled Isaac, what about more characteristic interactions? Here we face the problem of discerning over a lengthy interval of experienced interactional space-time a social identity that suddenly makes interpretative sense of a whole configuration of indexicals one might only dimly intuit, as it were, in mid-course of a lengthy interaction. How do we monitor and process—indeed, how do we creatively interpret—any line of coherence across space-time so as to fashion for ourselves as interpreting interlocutors a cumulatively coherent—or at least cumulatively non-incoherent, as I like to say—story about the individual with whom we are dealing, from whom the barrage of potentially significant indexes is emanating, and relative to whom as well we come ourselves to inhabit a relational identity?

That we accomplish these identifications rapidly and for the most part unconsciously as interlocutors on an everyday basis, I am sure is beyond all dispute—however much trouble our rapid-fire presumptuousness in inferencing sometimes yields us. That we attempt to

do so even as offline interpreters, observers in essence of others' interactions, when we hear or read about them, even ones in fictive universes—for example, the Bible—is also clear. Individuals do not present themselves to us as interacting others with descriptive labels attached; they certainly do not constantly announce which aspect of their identity licenses them to say or do a particular social act as a contribution to the ongoing interaction, as Jacob did when lying to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn,” in executing his request for a blessing. As students of interaction and of communication, we are interested in the very *how* of this accomplishment under various socio-cultural conditions, both as here-and-now experienceable on the fly or as we engage in privileged analytic retro-contemplation of interactions of yesteryear (or of a regretted last evening).

And the literary works with which we engage, particularly those in the episteme of polyphonic realism so beloved of Mikhail Bakhtin, themselves reveal the fact that writers understand all these subtleties and complications and make them an essential underpinning of their art.<sup>5</sup> There is no direct and simple way that language directly mediates between states of identity “before” and “after.” To be sure, in the simple legal and juridical ceremonies that animate the Austinian imaginary of “speech acts,” such transformations of identity take place in-and-by the utterance of a formula—for example two individuals' being ‘single’ before the “I pronounce you . . .” and a ‘married couple’ afterward. Life, however—and literature, fortunately!—are much more complicated than that.

I belabor this point, because it is important to see that [1] *contextualization* is the fact that discourse—language in use and all its perivocal signals—relevantly mediates between ‘before’ and ‘after’ states of identity (inhabitable institutionalized statuses, attitudes and orientations, affective conditions, and so on); that [2] thus, ‘context’ grows in complexity and thickens sociologically and attitudinally and transforms as discursive interaction proceeds by potentially incorporating the cumulative effects of prior phases in the here-and-now ‘context’ of any communicative act; that [3] contextualization works indexically, in-and-by precipitating over intervals in real socio-space-time an *interactional text* of social acts, some of which rise to consciousness and labeling in formulae, stimulating (in folk like ordinary language philosophers) an overconfident misrecognition of “what we do with words”; but that [4] the vast majority of identity-work goes on unawares, discontinuously in socio-space-time, and through implicit, non-formulaic, and unlabeled features of discourse.

How systematically to analyze and understand all this implicit, non-formulaic, and unlabeled indexicality, the principal social bearing of language and other semiotic codes in use? That is, of course, the essential task for the student of literature no less than for the socio-cultural anthropologist or sociologist. And to this task we can bring one further essential tool: the understanding of the duplex nature of the process of *entextualization*, the concurrent counterpart to contextualization, deriving from the semiotic understanding of the nature of ritual action.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, we have already introduced the concept of an interactional text, a narratable model of by-degrees contextually appropriate and contextually effective social action: what is “done” with words, like the biblical adjacency pair sequence at Genesis 27:19–29 (A’s request of B; B’s blessing of A). In ritual more generally, such doings are always based on conceptual figurations (technically, diagrammatic icons) of universes of factual belief rendered indexically present and thus effective in the real space-time of the here-and-now (see Figure 3). In the key Eucharistic act, for example, as diagrammed in Figure 4, consume—diagrammatically speaking, incorporate—wafer and wine—figuratively, Christ’s body and blood as earlier ritually transubstantiated in the here-and-now—and one is, reciprocally, oneself mystically incorporated into the fellowship of that body and blood rendered corporate on earth in a diagrammatically chiasmatic—cross-forming—counter-movement, renewing and revitalizing one’s membership in the Christian community as the interactional text. The space-time organization of semiotic material, its *denotational text*, thus *dynamically figurates* how what is presumed upon—the foundational tenets of the Christian universe of belief—are, as it were, made to define and frame the experienceable here-and-now so as to be indexically acted upon to particular effect, here, effecting a worshipper’s reanimated commitment to the community of believers and its corporate form. The denotational text is the space-time structure of tropically activated signs on which the dynamic figuration of ritual operates, as shown in Figure 5. For natural human language, it is the meta-structure that results when the forms-and-meanings determined by grammar and lexicon in the narrow (Saussurean) sense are laminated with the forms-and-meanings determined by deixis, social indexicality, and metricalization.

Ordinary or everyday discursive interaction too is, as Erving Goffman realized, itself a form of “interaction ritual,” and turns out to work in very much the same way.<sup>7</sup> In everyday life, a *denotational text* that comes into being during such interaction ritual is a

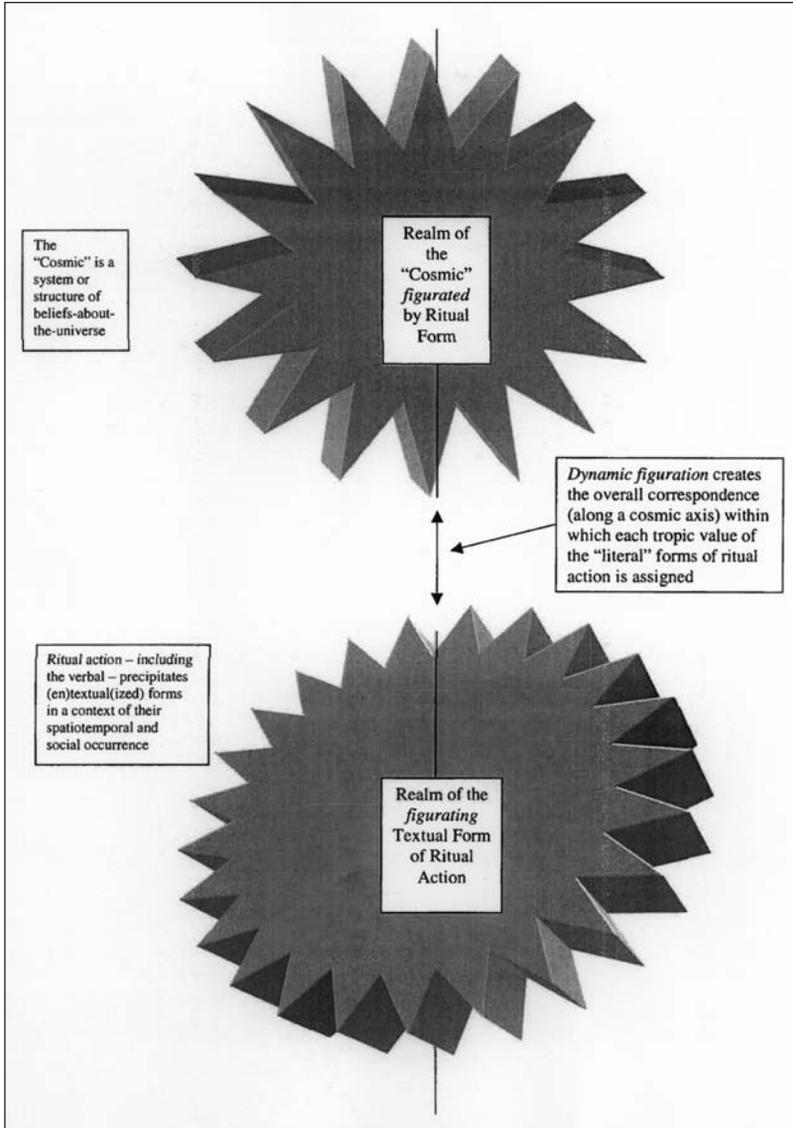


Figure 3. The semiotic schema of performative efficacy in ritual.

0. The story of the Last Supper; figurational deictic transposition:



1. Deictically transposed narrative statement the principles of ritual figuration on which the dynamic figuration depends:

ritual action

cosmic equivalence



=



=



2. Ingestion by phenomenal human

=

Incorporation of Christ



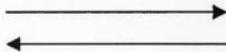
3. Serial participation by phenomenal humans

=

Incorporation by Christ's Body-on earth [=Church]



2+3. Chiastic dynamic figuration



=

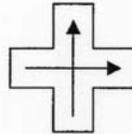


Figure 4. Schematic of Christianity's Eucharistic ritual segment as 'dynamic figuration'.

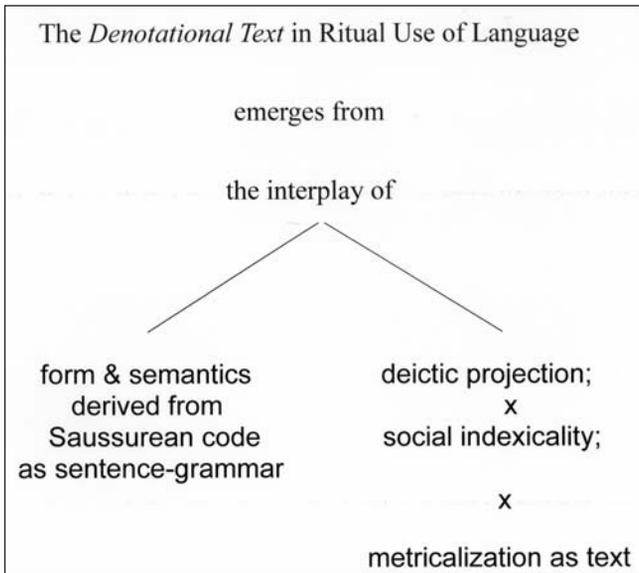


Figure 5. Components contributing to emergence of a ‘denotational text’.

socio-spatio-temporal object that can very roughly be related to what is being communicated or “said” against a backdrop of rules of verbal structuration. The denotational text is not to be confused with a model of so-called “literal meaning” of words and phrases in sentences, nor certainly with any of the other sentence-focused creations of twentieth-century linguistic semanticists and analytic philosophers. We have long known that these concepts are at best unworkable, and at worst incoherent, as useful as they are to certain Enlightenment projects, such as building automata.<sup>8</sup> No: the denotational text is a *co-textual structuring of signs in the interactional here-and-now* that comes into being as the “poetic” or metrical organization of semiotic material involved in referring and predicating, the differential how of what is being communicated that anchors indexes of identity.<sup>9</sup>

Working through a concrete example of entextualization/contextualization is the best way to clarify what is at issue. We will come to understand how, through the machinery of language, two relative strangers come to interact as mutually “visible” and legible identities with outlooks and attitudes created in the course of saying/doing things with words in a process that is as well interpretatively visible to us.

In order to fix our specimens for analysis, we students of the social life of language make recordings of events of language use, and then we transcribe such recordings in fine detail in order to study at analytic speed what was, in the real-time of interaction, flying by in words, facial and other body cues, bodily alignment and orientation shifts, and so on. In addition to fine-grained linguistic analysis, we also generally get native language-users' reactions to and understandings of specific contributions to the interaction that may be salient to them; this sharpens, but does not determine, our analytic account. Through the collecting as well and collating people's reflective sense of the appropriateness and effectiveness of various denotational-textual forms in imaginatively interrogated contexts, we can begin to get a sense of the differential indexical meanings, the pointings-to-context, of contrasting forms that comprise a *pragmatic* (indexically contrastive) *paradigm*. In the case of the interaction we're about to consider, carried on in an academic context by speakers of educated American English, we can serve as our own consultants in this respect, short-circuiting the usually required fieldwork.

So look at the transcript (Appendix) of the verbal channel of a videotaped interaction that was recorded in 1974 by my late Psychology Department colleagues Starkey Duncan and Donald Fiske for a study they were doing on so-called nonverbal communication.<sup>10</sup> The participants were seated and facing each other at approximately 135 degrees in a small, quiet studio room behind the moot court of the University of Chicago law school building. (For technical reasons, we no longer have access to the original video image made with now-defunct Betamax™ technology, but trained transcribers from the Department of Linguistics synchronized their transcript to a millisecond counting track.) My re-transcription, laid out in the Appendix, is an inscription of the denotational language that allows us to visualize each participant's contribution in a distinct column: a certain Mr. A the speaker on the left and a certain Ms. C the one on the right. Overlaps of talk are visually indicated on the same horizontal line, again better to visualize simultaneity of talk. Within each column, the repetitions, the syntactic and semantic parallelisms of form, are pictured in vertical alignment to emphasize the decidedly metrical qualities of how discourse is entextualized through repetition-with-variation. Mr. A, as I call him, was then a student in the Law School, and Ms. C, as I call her, was then a student in the School of Social Service Administration (or, social work). They did not have any prior acquaintance, so far we know, and in fact all they had been told about each other beforehand was that

their interlocutor was a graduate student matriculated in another one of the professional schools of the University of Chicago, just like them.

Now obviously each brings to the interaction a presumption of certain basic demographics of the interacting other that are the specific initial conditions of context. Each interlocutor can presume upon, or rely on this mutual knowledge from the outset. Mr. A is male; Ms. C, female. That both are graduate students presumes a certain academic achievement on the part of each, perhaps even a certain fluency to be expected in standard expository American English. Both have signed up to participate, for pay, in this research that involved their having a chat with several individuals otherwise previously unknown to them; the experience as an engagement of individuals' effort has something of the quality of chatting with a complete, though safe, stranger in a waiting room, on an airplane or train, in a singles bar, or similar milieu. The interactional text emerges principally as a kind of "Getting to Know You" event, and we will see that the transcript of the denotational text centers heavily on the GTKY expectables in this presupposable interactional context and not much more. (Neither participant gives or, upon request, gets a benediction.)

The video camera started, each individual offers the "My name is . . ." formula, male first, female second. Notice that Mr. A alludes to the fact that directions to have a "natural" conversation have been given: "we're s'ppose ta begin →" framed by a mitigating hedge, "I guess," that Ms. C, agreeing, mirrors. If we contrast this to what Mr. A could have but did not say, for example, "So let's start now," with its clear and take-charge directive force—though that seems to be what he is exercising—we can understand the interactional appropriateness of his immediately following excuse for having in fact taken charge: "I hâte forced conversations first of all but"—but, the circumstances of the Duncan and Fiske experiment that have brought him and Ms. C together as research subjects in a "forced conversation" require that they begin. Notwithstanding the circumstances, registered by Mr. A in a vernacular register equivalent, "but anyway," he launches a first question to Ms. C, about her affiliation to a professional school of the University.<sup>11</sup>

Now it is important to see that by this point A and C have already become biographical individuals in relation to each other, not only a male professional-school student and a female one; they have mutually introduced themselves with informal but very American-sounding names, including surnames. Observe, then, that Mr. A immediately picks up on this to use Ms. C's first name in its relatively nickname-like

Contextual Dimensions of Forms of Address	
Languages w/ADDRESSEE DEIXIS	American English w/FORM OF NAME
<u>vous</u> , <u>Usted</u> , <u>Sie</u>	Status Title (+ LN) <i>Max.Status Deference</i> Civilian T + LN
	Full FN
<u>tu</u> , <u>tu</u> , <u>du</u>	NN <i>Max.In-group Intimacy</i>

Figure 6. Distalizing (deference-performing) vs. proximalizing (solidarity-performing) terms of address.

variant in communicating his first question (a parallel would be using “Betty” instead of “Elizabeth,” were Ms. C named “Elizabeth Smith”). As shown in Figure 6, American English lacks the widespread distinction between a deferential and distancing second-person address form—think of French *vous* or Spanish *Usted* or German *Sie* said to a single addressee so as explicitly to do a little verbal bow, an acknowledgment of the addressee’s difference and distinction, used in these languages in contrast to the leveling and intimate second-person address form—French *tu* or Spanish *tu* or German *du*, indicating that we think of the addressee as “in-group” and in this way like the speaker, a familiar.

In American English we use a whole paradigm of different forms of people’s personal names to do the equivalent social interactional work, from deference-indexing Title + Last Name (“Professor Obama”) invoking positional statuses across social divides down through Nickname (“Barry”), the most intimate, egalitarian, “in-group” form of address.<sup>12</sup> The rules of appropriately contextualized use are—save in some folk observations in etiquette books—inexplicit but fairly clear and salient register norms common to communities of users: the kind of name form one uses is congruent with other kinds of occurring signs presuming upon identities in interactional contexts. When people overstep the boundaries of how low in the cline of name-forms we expect them to dip in addressing us, based on the well-established conventions we learn and employ, we feel that a certain jump to unearned familiarity has been attempted in presuming speaker-addressee in-groupness.

Have you ever received a form-letter solicitation for some cause that keeps repeating your first name as a parenthetical address term every couple of sentences? [“So, Michael, hunger in America persists, and therefore, Michael, I’m calling on you to . . .”] Or—perhaps even worse—a telephone solicitor? And sometimes even with our name in its nickname version! [“Is this Mike?” “Michael Silverstein here.” “Mike, this is Joey from the Policeman’s Widows and Orphans Fund. How ya doin’?” (Addressee hangs up.)] The nerve of these folks!

In this form of nickname address, Mr. A is doing at least one of the following: (a) clearly presuming upon the framing presumption of their both being professional school students compelled both to engage in conversation, in other words being very much equals “in the same boat” who have introduced themselves with the informal first name; and/or (b) acting the part of the young man in control of a GTKY interaction, inquiring about a young woman with the possible eventuality of, for example, getting her phone number; or (c)—much more problematic but, as we will see, perhaps consistent with his emerging identity—talking down to a female from a lawyerly (or at least future lawyerly) perch, in a metaphor of speaking in a friendly but professionally condescending manner to a presumptively lower-status client. Note that each interpretation is a door opened to a framework of possible relational identities suddenly rendered “in play” at the moment of utterance; each is a deployment of the verbal sign that better defines the interacting parties.

Now recall, since Mr. A can presume that both individuals know that each is in a professional school at the University, he formulates his question thus: “What school are *yóu* in—are *yóu*—.” As shown in Figure 7, from a whole pragmatic paradigm of differentially stressed forms the heavily stressed form *yóu* is, of course, contrastive, as the focally new information of Mr. A’s inquiry is not the fact that Ms. C is in a professional school—they both already know that they both are—but the identity of *hers* as opposed to his (which he oh so well knows!); that is, I know what professional school *I’m* in, which one, by contrast, are *you* in? Note also here the rather more vernacular “what school” rather than the more academic-expository register, “which school” [of the many of them at U of C]. From Mr. A’s perspective, the two are interacting not only across the gender divide but, as becomes clear at the outset, also across the divide of Mr. A’s Law School identity and Ms. C’s identity as a student in, as it now turns out, the School of Social Service Administration.

Stressed Element Reveals Focal Information Sought	
“ <i>Whát</i> school are you in?”	– confirming possibly misheard earlier information
“ <i>Whàt</i> school are you <i>in</i> ?”	– possible enrollment in one or another
“What <i>schóol</i> are you in?”	– from among a set of possibilities in shared knowledge
“What school are <i>yóu</i> in?”	– by contrast to the one someone else [ <i>here, Speaker</i> ] is in
FORMAL: “Which school ...?”	

Figure 7. Differently stressed constituents of information-seeking WH-questions.

Observe that Ms. C answers Mr. A’s first question, cutting off what looks like the beginning of a continuing second question by overlapping her turn with his contrastively stressed *yóu*; “I’m at SSA →”, she offers. In response Mr. A even professes, a bit condescendingly from the position of the law school student, not to know even what this school in the University of Chicago is all about: “Oh *wéll!*” Mr. A begins—*Oh* responding to Ms. C’s answer plus *well* a contrastive or elaborating interactional paragraph-opener, a marker that a development of information is about to follow—“What do they *dó* over there (I don’t know).”<sup>13</sup> This is a formulation that has three important things for us to notice.

First, the question is formulaic as a communication of the speaker’s utter bafflement. Using ‘do-support’ auxiliiation of the main verb *do-*, which in the declarative indexes assertorial affirmation [“I *díd* do it, officer!” upon being apprehended], in the interrogative order seems to enact the exact inverse, communicating from a stance where one has no idea whatsoever about something unexpected or out of the ordinary. Examining an exotic sex toy in a shop, one asks the salesperson, “What does one *do* with this, can you tell me?” Or, watching someone keep a straight face while everyone laughs, we think, “How does he *do* it?” So in uttering this formula, Mr. A is pointing to—indexing—himself

as an individual now enveloped in baffled ignorance. (For example, why would there even *be* such a professional school?)

A second linguistic feature to note is Mr. A's use of the indefinite human agent subject *they* to refer to Ms. C and her co-members of SSA. This kind of construction, so common in the fantasies of paranoids, whom "they" are always out to get, dissolves Ms. C into an organization the workings of which—notwithstanding it is a degree-granting professional school within the university, just like Mr. A's—are presumably controlled by these imagined others, and of whom perhaps Ms. C is herself an unwitting victim. Perhaps Mr. A has heard strange noises emanating from the elegant Mies van der Rohe building that houses Chicago's School of Social Service Administration!

Third, Mr. A also substitutes "there" to refer to the School of Social Service Administration. This kind of form we term a *locational deictic*, something that describes a place or position in relation to the configuration of Speaker and Addressee in the interlocutory event ongoing at the moment. In default use, as figured in Figure 8, something that is 'here' as opposed to 'there' is within the immediately proximal zone of the Speaker, as opposed to something 'there' that is beyond that topological boundary in some interactionally relevant framework in play (here, the professional schools housed in distinct buildings on campus). Note that even more pointedly, according to the usual deictic differentiation of *here* : *there* as shown in Figure 9, Mr. A uses the distal *directional* phrase to characterize SSA, a formulation that denotes a place at the end of a path from the here-and-now, "over there." It is a place relative to which, of course, he is indexically performing his own distance—the path not taken to social work, as Robert Frost might have had it.

Ms. C seems to respond at first as though Mr. A had indeed been remarking on some strange things he knew to be happening at and leaking out of her school's headquarters: "Well↑," she begins, with the discourse marker beginning a segment of explanatory exposition, "it's a school in turmoil right at the moment I think." She is explaining why what goes on in SSA might seem off kilter to an outsider, perhaps. But Mr. A restates his complete ignorance in a register of yet stronger, affectively laden terms: "Really? I—I have n<sup>o</sup> idea—conception at—at all of *whát* [they do. I've] never [heard of] SSA before." As Mr. A reaches his hyperstressed "whát," Ms. C tries another explanatory paragraph starting with "Well→ you know it's a school . . ."—but as we see in the transcript, Mr. A has not relinquished the speaking turn to her, continuing to remark that he had apparently never even heard of SSA before, or some equivalent further disclaimer of knowledge.

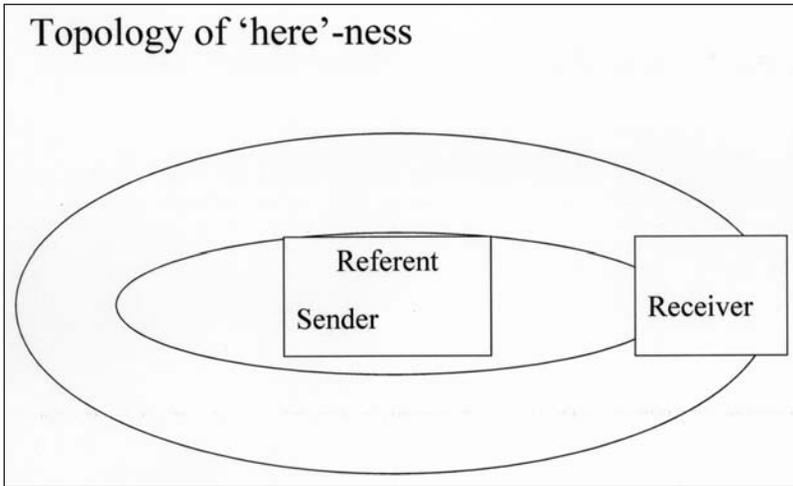


Figure 8. Topology of referent location indexed by the deictic *here*.

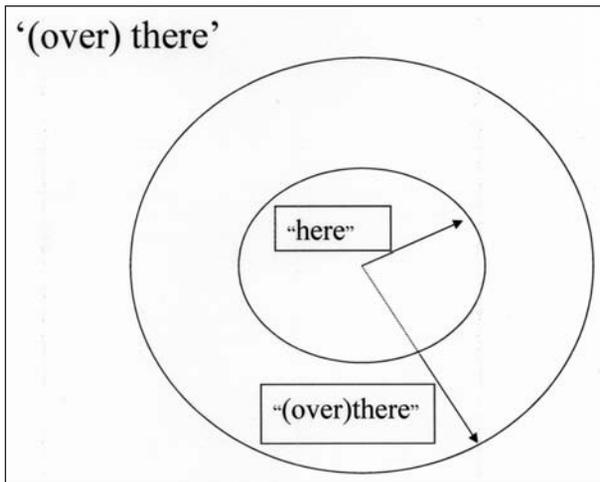


Figure 9. Topology of path's-end referent indexed by the deictic phrase *over there*.

All this is extraordinary self-distancing work on the part of Mr. A, and it is important to see that he is not just professing unfamiliarity with the School of Social Service Administration.<sup>14</sup> So Mr. A is not just communicating a logical proposition about his own state of knowledge, though he is, to be sure, doing that in the referring-and-predicating

mode. But the correctness or incorrectness of his denotational descriptors for people and things are not what are interactionally salient here, nor even the truth or falsity of his claims about them, his statements predicating factual states-of-affairs. In-and-by deictically placing SSA at a dynamic remove from himself in his talk about it, in his therefore justified accompanying and follow-up turns professing personal ignorance about anything going on at the school, he has effectuated a bit of interactional work. He has performed the identity of someone heretofore unfamiliar and unconcerned with Ms. C's professional organization and training, perhaps now ready to entertain some information about it. He has, as we say, *disaligned* himself, taken a stance at an affective as well as cognitive distance with respect to the denotatum in focus at the moment, SSA, which is where Ms. C happens to live as a student, and in so doing he has achieved a certain distance from the identity she has come to inhabit in the interaction. The analytic moral for us here is this: in terms of such pragmatic paradigms, *how* you say what-you-say about whatever or whomever you're communicating about, comes to count interactionally as what-you-do in the way of creating the social organization of an ongoing interaction with a communicating other.

Consider the linguistic tools that Mr. A has chosen in his, as it were, interactional "social work" of the moment, the "how" of his contributions to the flow of talk. Each one of the alternative forms we've been noticing exists in what we term an indexical or *pragmatic paradigm* of contextualizing alternatives that might be, in one way of interpreting language, considered to be semantically or even truth-functionally equivalent. But as an element in a pragmatic paradigm, a linguistic form bears a connotational significance—an indexical loading, as we term it in semiotic discourse analysis—that contributes to building an intersubjective interactional frame that interacting individuals come relationally to inhabit at particular social locations. In the pragmatic paradigm of personal name types, Mr. A uses a nickname to address Ms. C. In the pragmatic paradigm for resumptive anaphoric reference to the School of Social Service Administration, Mr. A uses the distad path deictic *over there*. In the pragmatic paradigm of inquiring about the functioning of some entity, here SSA, Mr. A uses the 'do-supported Wh- interrogative' of bafflement. In the pragmatic paradigm of predicates of knowledge states, Mr. A uses the over-the-top self-descriptor (*to*) *have no idea—conception at—at all of*, thereby indexing high affective involvement through exaggerated absolute gradience.<sup>15</sup> In the denotational textual record, Mr. A and

Ms. C rely on the cumulative, enregistering effect of coherent—or at least non-incoherent—pragmatic paradigmatic material (each bit contributing its indexical appropriateness and, in context, indexical effectiveness) to situate themselves one with respect to the other not merely as abstract talking heads but as socially self- and other-placing individuals with demographic and attitudinal biographies, the central interactional textual work manifest here.

But let us return to our transcript. Ms. C has given a parallelistic false start in trying to explain to Mr. A what SSA is: “it’s a school . . .,” but she breaks off, presumably just coming to process his rather more preposterous claim—as it will turn out—of never having even heard of her school before. Were that indeed literally the case, then her having introduced herself earlier as being affiliated with “SSA” would not have sufficed, and she appears consequently to start on glossing the abbreviation for Mr. A: “whát SSA stands fór” as he twice backchannels “Yeah→Yeah→”

But at this point Ms. C simply begins to teach Mr. A all about the various rubrics of the curriculum, indexing her own schematic conceptual knowledge of taxonomies, meronomies, serial structures, and their relationships, as shown in the diagram of Figure 10 that pictorially renders the propositional content of what she is communicating. Perhaps Mr. A did not expect such a long and complex explanation of precisely what it is that Ms. C and her fellows “dó over there,” but it becomes quite clear later on in the conversation that Mr. A probably had all the while had a very good idea about what goes on in “SSA,” because later on in the conversation, in relation to a sequence of geographical locations with which Mr. A and Ms. C further identify each other, he indicates that he has had some experience with the school: “Í lived with a gúy for part of the—at the end of the summer—from Cornell as a matter [of fact] who was a research assistant at SSÁ↑.” So his professions of ignorance are merely part of a strategy of dismissal, a self-distancing to count as a conversational put-down, that Ms. C simply responds to cheerfully with full informational overload: Mr. A has to hear the full story, as shown in the transcript and Figure 10, whether he wants to or not.

Observe that as Ms. C is coming to the end of her segment outlining the curricular structure, Mr. A attempts to interrupt, actually overlapping her talk with a question about the SSA curriculum, “hów (long) how lóng a—thíng is it →” Here Ms. C has been speaking of course sequences, programs, practicums, casework, fieldwork, and so forth, and all Mr. A comes up with to term the complex SSA curriculum is

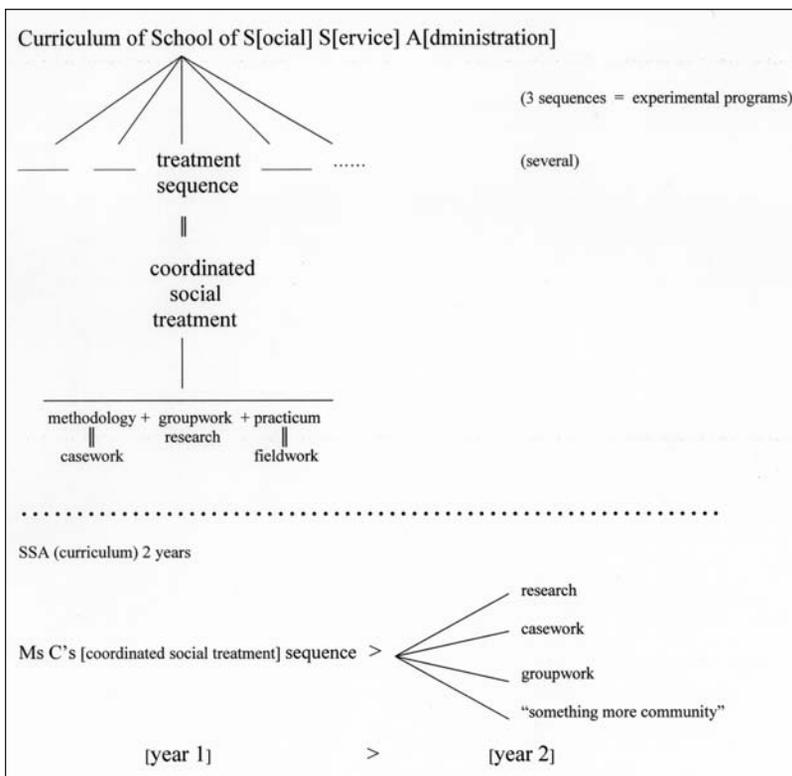


Figure 10. Schematic of Ms C's articulated knowledge of the SSA curriculum.

“thing.” It is “a two year school → — professional — school →” Ms. C notes—she suppresses the “just like yours, buddy!”—while Mr. A backchannels “uh hūh →” and then she goes on to explain that she will face decisions in her next, second year of the curriculum.

What Mr. A, by contrast, wants to do, in fact, is to complain about his lot; this becomes a further strategy of metaphorical self-removal from his circumstances. His comment on her description of her program, which he begins as an overlapped turn as she is coming to the end of her account, is the sarcastic “sounds → about as exciting as law school↓” obliquely revealing with which professional school he is affiliated. Note that Ms. C may well have caught this by the time she has come to the end of explaining her own affiliation and in which year of the two-year curriculum she is matriculated. She does, after all, agree with Mr. A by starting her turn with “yeah.” But note that

as is more or less poetically or metrically scripted for two-party GTKY denotational textuality, Ms. C obliges the compelling metrical quality of the interactional genre with the mirroring counterpart question for Mr. A, “Yeah → — so téll me, - what [school] *yóu’re* in and what year,”—that is, of course, seeking Mr. A’s professional school and year of the curriculum, precisely the information about herself she has just finished giving.

Here is Mr. A’s opening. He has already revealed to Ms. C that he is in law school; now he adds the additional requested information that “Î’m in my second yéar hére →,” and he launches into a long interactional segment in which he confesses his misery as a second year student in the three-year University of Chicago Law School. “it’s uh réal-ly real-ly hórrible → it’s the wórst experience I’ve ever had,” he notes, complaining about workload and pressure. Everything is piling up and getting worse for poor Mr. A—like the snow, perhaps, at that Winter Quarter low-point of the academic year. Ms. C—recall, the future social worker—follows along with some reassuring backchannel affirmations; what else can she do at this point short of stroking his feverish brow? After all, a distressed student is venting right before her.

But matters of identity take a further revelatory turn as Mr. A tries to self-diagnose his misery in terms of where he comes from, “the East,” an American ethno-geographical phrase that always means the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states, the focal urban first-tier center of which is New York City, though the second-tier boundary conurbations are Boston, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C. Observe that Mr. A contrasts “the East” with “the area here,” a.k.a. the Midwest, the focal urban first-tier center of which is Chicago. The deixis implies that “the East” is ‘there’ by contrast to where the interlocutors sit. Mr. A does not like “the area here,” the Midwest, as compared with “the East”; perhaps—as he several times later returns to—this is contributing to his misery at law school. But this additional layer of complaint initiates a long and interesting segment in which the participants choose particular deictic locational phrases and place-names that index highly perspectival ethno-geographical frameworks of knowledge serving further to place them one with respect to the other in a most precise way. Let’s follow along.

Mr. A has wrapped himself in the identity of the displaced Easterner. And true to his displacement, he uses the phrase “out here” for the region around Chicago, in his contrastive query—again note the hyper-stressed *yóu*—for Ms. C: “Are *yóu* from out hére—ór er ↓.” As shown in Figure 11, someone can be “out here” only if what, currently, he or she

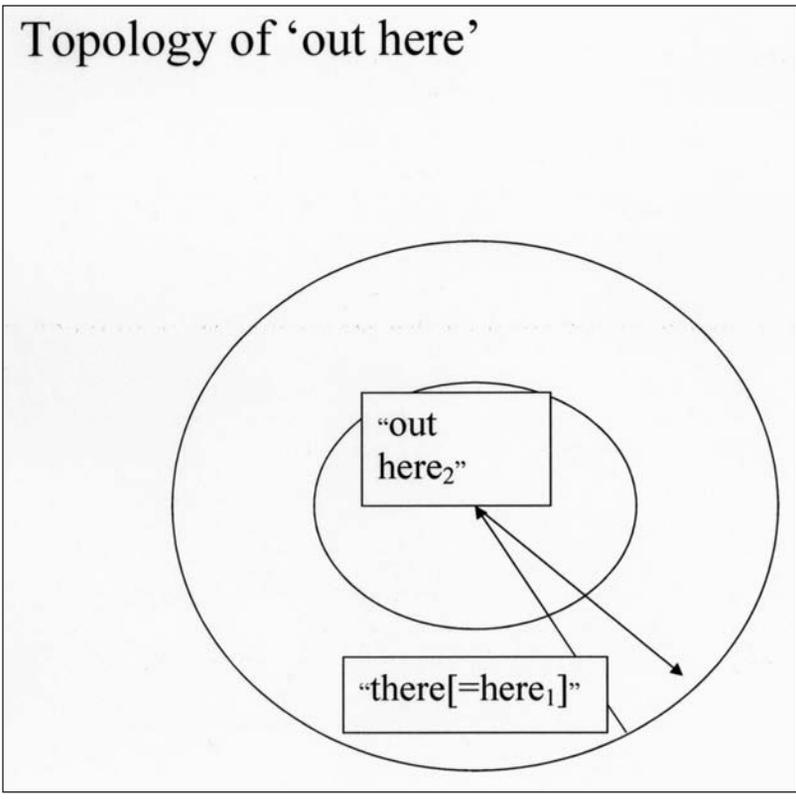


Figure 11. Transposed deixis denoted by the phrase *out here*.

would term “there” is the actual perspectival origin-point—the deictic *origō* is the technical term—from which a conceptually computed path to reach “here” begins. (Contrast the deictic phrases *in here* and *in there* in a pragmatic paradigm of denoting place without such transposition.) In this case, given the two regions Mr. A has compared, the Midwest explicitly termed “here,” it is “the East” in the coastal northeasterly United States, that is, in a sense, Mr. A’s permanent place of reference. The transposed deixis bespeaks—it indexically performs—his suffering transported identity as a kind of expatriate.

Ms. C, bless her social worker’s insight, must pick up on the pointed east coast centrism of his perspective. To be sure, upon Mr. A’s questioning if she might be “from out hère—ór er ↓” she reveals herself to be someone having grown up in (that is, “[coming] originally

[from]”) South Dakota—going east to west, even further “out here” than Chicago, poor thing! But though she is “originally [from] South Dakota” she adds “but I lived in New York last year.” Maybe she has some easterner chops after all! Ms. C assimilates Mr. A’s geographical framework, seeming to align herself, as it were, with it. Note how she goes on in this very turn, another metrical mirror question to the one he has just asked her, to resume his phrase about having come from “the East,” asking “where in the East” to get down to the brass tacks of location.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps as a would-be caseworker Ms. C is trying to understand where Mr. A has come from such that he is so miserable at the University of Chicago.

“I’m –m from a place called New Rochéllé,” says Mr. A. A bit odd? Observe how he formulates this denotation with a metalinguistic phrase, telling us that New Rochelle is a place and that it has that name. Names, recall, are linguistic forms we either learn in a baptismal moment where the referent is clear, or our interlocutor has to tell us that such-and-such lexical form is, in fact, the name of something or someone that can be otherwise described in common nominal phraseology (“No, dear. ‘Moon Unit’ is the child’s given name.”). That’s precisely what Mr. A is doing: telling Ms. C that he comes from a ‘place’ and New Rochelle is the name with which people have, as it were, baptized that place. Mr. A’s presumption, we gather, is that Ms. C, the South Dakotan now in Chicago “out here”—by way of New York during the last year, for goodness sakes, as she has just said!—would not know anything of the geography of New York State, or realize that when she asks a “from where?” question exactly mirroring Mr. A’s own, that his answer will be a place-name (as she had already supplied). It’s not merely presumption at this point in the conversation, then, it’s a demeaning presumptuousness on the part of Mr. A, who seems verbally to be putting on airs.

Now as the map in Figure 12 shows, New Rochelle, as it turns out, is a suburb of New York City, on the eastern side of Westchester County just a few miles north of the northern city limit bounding the Borough of the Bronx. It is socio-economically respectable but, as these things go, hardly a rich one. A guy from the ‘burbs, our Mr. A. So what follows is rather interesting in the way of revealing the cultural knowledge with which our two interlocutors are communicating identities. “New Rochelle↑” Ms. C affirms, obviously recognizing the place-name. Mr. A, now having revealed his suburb of origin, plays upon the nested structure of ethno-geographical knowledge currently in play, to wit “The East” > “New York [State]” > “New Rochelle.” He even doubles

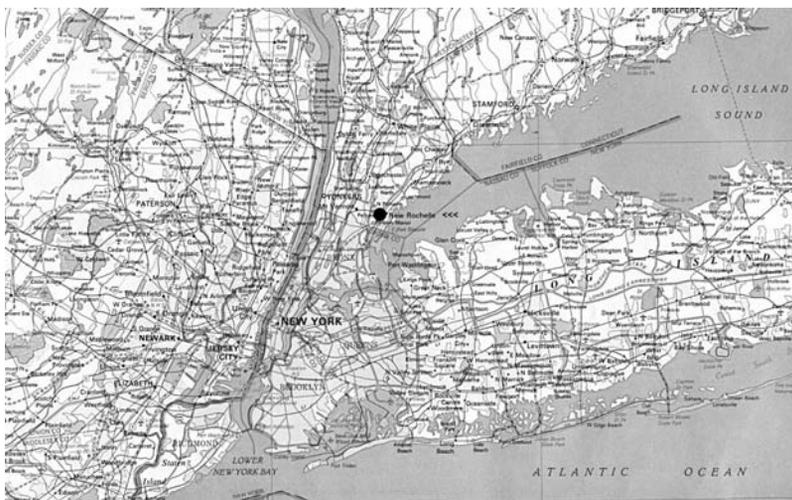


Figure 12. New Rochelle in the New York City conurbation.

his presumptuousness by asking, “Where’d you live, in The City or what?” using the phrase “The City” that is the local population’s way to refer to the borough of Manhattan, both those who are in the four other boroughs within the New York City limits as well as those in the immediately surrounding suburbs.<sup>17</sup> Ms. C, recall, had earlier remarked as though a counterbalance to her South Dakota origin that she had lived the previous year in New York; given the ambiguity of designations of New York State and New York City, we can see here the presumption on the part of Mr. A, the would-be New Yorker, that Ms. C could only have really meant “The City”—else why mention it?

As our chart of geographical affiliation shows in Figure 13, Ms. C seems really to be catching on by this time, and, not to be outdone, while revealing that she lived elsewhere in New York State, “in Ithaca,” in fact, immediately adds, “up státe,” attempting to use the very term that people in the New York City metropolitan area deploy deictically to indicate their city-focused perspective on the ethno-geographical distinction between two regions of the state. “Upstate” as a denotable region for New York City urbanites and wannabes begins north and west of the instate bedroom suburbs of New York City. It was completely denotationally gratuitous of Ms. C to add the regional designator “upstate,” of course; that she did shows her assimilative alignment to the deictic presumptions of Mr. A. And yet, the performance is the

### Geographical Affiliations of Mr A and Ms C

Mr A	Ms C
“The East” vs. “the area here” = “out hère” [= Midwest];  “a place called New Rochelle” vs. “The City”	“South Dakota” vs. “New York [State]”  “Ithaca [N.Y.]” in “Up Státe” [= Upstate]

Figure 13. Geographical identity emblems of Mr A and Ms C.

somewhat flawed one of the outsider, since Ms. C’s token is stressed on the wrong syllable, as though a descriptive phrase—*up#státe*—rather than the desired regional locative noun—*Úpstate*. (Another adaptable future social worker, we might wonder, or someone playfully giving the interlocutor what he needs?)

But let us turn to consider Mr. A’s contributions intercalated with the segments of Ms. C’s reply to his question about where in New York she had lived. Somewhat characteristically, one may say, Mr. A does not catch the subtlety of Ms. C’s move, as he exclaims an “Óh óh óh!” of recognition after she names Ithaca, New York, and proceeds to add a stylized phrase of “old boy” endearment for the noted university there, “Old Córnell,” Ithaca’s most famous feature immortalized as a phrase in the school song I should imagine every male New Yorker of a certain age knew. (My high school’s school song, among many, was even sung to the same melody, almost as widely known—and as parodied—as Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance March” music for graduation ceremonies.) “Old Córnell,” indeed, is a phrase that lives in the same kinds of discourse as the self-descriptive phrase Mr. A will come to use to describe himself in his next “forced conversation” that very day, “an old Jesuit boy.”

To take stock for a moment, note the symmetry of the information about these interlocutors that has been established in a denotational text precisely metricalized by Q-&-A segmentation. The information

thus revealed is fashioned into an intersubjective identity frame: Mr. A's and Ms. C's biographies and orientations revealed not just by explicit self-description, but, implicitly, consequent inferentially upon deictic stance and perspective, as they use particular descriptors in pragmatic paradigms indexically connected with certain kinds of cultural knowledge associable with certain socially locatable categories of people. We can see how, in an orderly and metrically alternating way, first Mr. A and then, reciprocally, Ms. C, inquire of each other about the details of their biographies along similar framing social affiliations and schemata of social differentiation. We can diagram the interaction in its three phases, then, as in Figures 14 through 16.

There is what we term a kind of interactional ballet, a *pas de deux* as it were, that unfolds in the real-time of discourse generating a kind of metrical segmentation, not only the alternating (Question; Answer) dyadic segmentation, but sometimes the ((Question; Answer); Remark) or (Remark; (Question; Answer)) triadic one, that is like a cookie-cutter iteratively applied to give metrical shape to the verbal medium. The interlocutors move through the interactional work of establishing frames, the particular forms they use in constructing their turns-at-talk pointing to—indexing—a kind of social knowledge made relevant at that moment in-and-by the meaningful element chosen from a pragmatic paradigm they deploy. Mr. A and Ms. C first concentrate on establishing their respective professional school affiliations and their respective years matriculated in them. First Ms. C's identity characteristics, responding to Mr. A's question, and then Mr. A's, volunteered just as Ms. C was obliging him with the poetically parallel question. Then they go on to establish where they are “from,” as we say in American English, first broached by Mr. A through his self-description as being “from The East,” and somewhat more specifically indicated by Ms. C in naming her natal state of South Dakota. New York, the state, turns out to be a place in common to the two, and we have Mr. A's New Rochelle affiliation counterbalanced by Ms. C's Ithaca affiliation (if only for a year).

Now Cornell University—you know, “old Córnell”—has been mentioned, opening a new framework of identities by affiliation. At this point, having denotationally incremented Ms. C's mention of Ithaca, New York, with a ceremonious mention of that university, Mr. A contributes a remarkable autobiographical detail: that “Í lived with a gúy for part of the—at the end of the summer—from Cornell as a matter [of fact] who was a research assistant at SSÁ↑” whom he names at Ms. C's request before going on to describe the project on

Macro-Metricalization of Mr A–Ms C “GTKY” Phases - I

Interactional Segment Sequence	Denotational Textual Turn-Structure	Emblems of Identity Established	Biographical Interval Sequence
I.A.	$((A \rightarrow C Q^{C-SCHOOL,};$ $C \rightarrow A A^{C-SCHOOL \& YEAR});$ $A \rightarrow C R^{A-SCHOOL});$	C=SSA, 1 <sup>st</sup> Year; A=Law	$\Delta T_0$
I.B.	$((C \rightarrow A Q^{A-SCHOOL \& YEAR,};$ $A \rightarrow C A^{A-YEAR});$ $A \rightarrow C R^{A-SCHOOL/AFFECT})$	A=Law, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year; A Negative	

Q=Query A=Answer R=Remark

Figure 14. Macro-metricalization of Mr A–Ms C “GTKY,” Phase – I.

Macro-Metricalization of Mr A–Ms C “GTKY” Phases - II

Interactional Segment Sequence	Denotational Textual Turn-Structure	Emblems of Identity Established	Biographical Interval Sequence
II.A.1. II.A. II.A.2. II.B. II.C. II.C.1.	$(A \rightarrow C R^{A-HOME,};$ $(A \rightarrow C Q^{C-HOME,}; C \rightarrow A A^{C-HOME});$ $C \rightarrow A R^{C-LIVED.IN});$ $(C \rightarrow A Q^{A-HOME,}; A \rightarrow C A^{A-HOME});$ $(A \rightarrow C Q^{C-LIVED.IN,}; C \rightarrow A A^{C-LVD.IN});$ $C \rightarrow A R^{C-LVD.IN})$	A < “East” =N Roch, NY; C < SDak & C “<” Ithaca, NY =Upstate	$\Delta T_1 > \Delta T_0$

Q=Query A=Answer R=Remark

Figure 15. Macro-metricalization of Mr A–Ms C “GTKY,” Phase – II.

Macro-Metricalization of Mr A–Ms C “GTKY” Phases - III

Interactional Segment Sequence	Denotational Textual Turn-Structure	Emblems of Identity Established	Biographical Interval Sequence
III.A.	$(_{A \rightarrow C} Q^{C-UGRAD};_{C \rightarrow A} A^{C-UGRAD});$	C=[Valpo Univ]/ Vlpo IN	$\Delta T_2 < \Delta T_1$ > $\Delta T_0$
III.B.	$(_{C \rightarrow A} Q^{A-UGRAD};_{A \rightarrow C} A^{A-UGRAD})$	A=Grgtwn Univ/ Wash, D.C.	

Q=Query A=Answer R=Remark

Figure 16. Macro-metricalization of Mr A–Ms C “GTKY,” Phase – III.

which he worked. Now as students of discursive interaction who have the luxury of fixing transcriptions for systematic analysis, it cannot but strike us that this experience of sharing an apartment the summer before with a Cornell student (or former student) then employed as a research assistant for a project at SSA is not quite consistent with his earlier disclaimers of knowledge. Recall: “What do they dó over there (I don’t know) . . . I—I have nó idea—conception at—at áll of what (they do) [I’ve] never (heard of) SSA before→.”

The extract of transcript in the Appendix now skips an interactional segment about Ithaca, New York, that a more leisurely and complete analysis would treat. Let me just say that there is another lengthy exposition on the part of Ms. C, this one about the attractiveness of life “upstate”—where, by the way, Mr. A confesses to never having traveled (another distancing move?): Ms. C explains of Ithaca that “it’s not just some little town located in rural New York→.” Do we sense an affectively loaded plea for non-urban urbanity creeping into Ms. C’s self-presentation?

At this point Mr. A turns the conversation to previous educational institutions, a likely next step in GTKY for professional school graduate students. Ms. C had earlier said that she came from South Dakota, you will recall, even less “East” than Chicago, so Mr. A. asks, “Did yóu go tó ↑ school in South Dakota or er”—and Ms. C reveals that she went to undergraduate school in Valparaiso, Indiana just outside of Chicago, “here.” She does not name Valparaiso University, note, nor does Mr.

A pursue the matter. To Ms. C's obligingly symmetric query of where *he* contrastively went to undergraduate school, "how about *yóu* → where'd *yóu* go to undergrad →," Mr. A again makes a very elaborate, almost ceremonial show of a response. Is it his presumption that Ms. C might be ignorant of its full countervailing status significance (me Georgetown; you merely Valpo), or as well a ceremonial elaboration, a stretching of the construction to emphasize his "easterness," the very subject matter to which he will immediately return? Whichever, note the careful metalinguistic distinction of how the institution in Washington, DC is named in his reply that he "went to a place in—a—Washington called Georgetown" (compare his earlier, "a place called New Rochelle" with its conspicuous metalinguistic hypertrophy). I very much like Ms. C's response here, a mere "Oh."

Note that Mr. A does, indeed, return to the theme of East and Midwest, as he underlines the significance of his having done his bachelor's degree work in Washington, DC, the southern urban node in the northeast corridor. It is consistent with his essential "easterness," as he notes: "I don't know . . . I'm véry sure I were an Easterner bórned and bred / I gúess —" (As it turns out, in all of Mr. A's conversational data, his ruminative self-analyses are uniformly framed with these metrical markers, *I don't know* and *I guess*. They measure off thoughts in a stance of what is interactionally staged soliloquy, one might say, uttered before an audience as much as to an addressee.) By contrast, "coming óut [out] hére was really—it was really a change." Again note the combination of deictic usage here in this somewhat telescoped or blended construction: the verb *come-* is usually motion from 'there' to 'here', the speaker communicating from 'here' the endpoint; the verb-plus-preposition expression *come- óut*, as from some delimited 'there' location, is semantically congruent, and generally occurs with a specification of wherefrom one is coming out, not whereto—"here"—one has emerged. It looks like Mr. A wanted to say the equivalent of "come óut [(to) out] hére" actually, recapitulating his earlier deictic usage about Chicago and the Midwest as only a second-city "here" at the end of a path.

It turns out that he has followed an older brother to Chicago, who had earlier matriculated as a student in the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, and was not prepared, apparently for the "real . . . change" in his life such a relocation entailed. With barely any prodding on Ms. C's part, as we might expect, he comes elaborately back to his discomfort in Chicago at [the University of] Chicago for a good deal of the rest of the interaction. In the course of the conversation

involving Mr. A's complaint piled on complaint about the Law School, the City of Chicago, the Midwest, all the while reporting that he has little experience of any of it, Ms. C does, however, ultimately tell him in effect that he has not experienced enough of the "out here" to have such opinions. (Just in case you wanted to know the amusing note on which the transcript of this conversation ends.)

So even by this point in the interaction, you can see from the transcript we have glossed that we are not observing two communicating, if asocial cognitions merely mutually informing each other about various personally interesting states of the world. We have two rich and complicated social persons being literally created in-and-by talk who have, in the instance, "gotten to know" one another as such. Figure 17 summarizes the now intersubjective way that Mr. A and Ms. C face each other by the end of the conversation.

My point here, of course, is not to talk about the content of what Mr. A and Ms. C have been discussing—banalities to be sure, as befits GTKY as a genre—but to use this sample of their conversation to illustrate the entextualization/contextualization dialectic in relation to its interactional textual outcome: mutual self/other positioning in culturally comprehensible social and attitudinal dimensions, whatever other social acts they may be engaged in, if any. Three points should be emphasized here: one, about the mechanisms of entextualization/contextualization; a second, reminding us that interaction ritual is, a fortiori, ritual; and finally, what this reveals about the socio-cultural order.

Observe, the aspects of what Mr. A and Ms. C say that seem to be key in entextualizing/contextualizing a denotational text-in-context. Note all kinds of explicit metricalizations captured in the transcript, from the alternating-turn metrical structure of dyadic interaction to the resumptive parallelism of recurrent words and phrases, both within a speaker's turns-at-talk and across turn dyads. Such devices of textual cohesion in essence suggest bounded chunks of interactional coherence, much as syllable or stress measures—and in some systems rhyme—bound off the significant segments of poetry within which special tropic coherence obtains. Note as well what is, in essence, a kind of *virtual metricalization* suggested by the way particular denotata are projected through accompanying deictics (indexically-based denotational operators like *now*, *here*, *this*, or *I*), thus conceptually "placing" what is being talked about, whether an entity or an event/state-of-affairs, in essential relation to the developing orderliness of intersubjective facts about the ongoing interaction. Every bit of denotational content communicated

<i>Mr A and Ms C: Emergent Identities/Outlooks Compared</i>	
Mr A	Ms C
Law School student	Student at the School of Social Service Administration
“Unknowledgeable” about SSA	Knowledgeable in detail about SSA
[turns out in fact to know about SSA]	
Suffering graduate student	Seemingly tolerant and sympathetic
“Easterner born and bred” – “New Yorker”	South Dakotan who has spent time in Ithaca, New York
[Mr A turns out to be from New Rochelle, a suburb of NYC]	
Georgetown U undergraduate	Valparaiso U undergraduate
Younger brother	
Dislikes City of Chicago	Appreciates Chicago
[A turns out not to have experienced much of the city]	[C has]

Figure 17. Comparison of Mr A's and Ms C's emergent identities and attitudes.

in language is dependent on one or more of such systems of deixis, such that when we speak of something as being ‘there’, it entails the differential placement of something else as ‘here’, even if only implicit in the relevant metricalization segment of the denotational text. Note in the transcript that for Mr. A and Ms. C, they place various entities respectively as ‘here’ and ‘there’ whether involving professional school, place of origin, or undergraduate institution, creating a virtual metrical array (in ‘time’ as well as ‘space’ by the use of tense forms) as a function of the paradigms of deixis.

I have as well pointed out further indexical or pragmatic paradigms that structure identity effects in this interaction, though this fact is not visible in our standard orthographies for transcription. This is the phenomenon of *register* noted above, the fact that for speakers of any language, there seem to be alternative ways of saying what counts for them as more-or-less the same thing—communicating denotational content in-and-by using one from among a set of forms such that one’s identity is revealed as a user of the form, or such that the social characteristics of one’s interlocutor are indexed in-and-by its use, or such that something else about the context is rendered interactionally salient. The vast amount of such *sociolinguistic variability*, as it is termed, though systematic, goes by unawares—until we think about why we put some message in precisely those phraseologies, those words, those morphological forms, even those phonological shapes of the words (for the last, think of the social indexicality of saying [aydiyáləjij]

vs. [ɪdiyələʒi], [əyræ'k] vs. [ɪrək]). But the particular shibboleths of register are as well metricalizing highlights of the baseline setting of whole segments of denotational text set off one from another.

All these signaling phenomena—explicit metricalization, implicit or deictically bound metricalization, the metricalization or chunking around the landmark shibboleths of register, and other, concurrent indexical variation—give shape to a denotational text, cross-cutting, though intersecting, with what we think of as the forms of language such as are, for example, included in the small subset enshrined in our system of inscriptional orthography.

But to what end, all these signaling phenomena? Here, I want once more to suggest the comparison of what Mr. A and Ms. C are doing to what we do in ritual—to suggest, in other words, that the creation and maintenance and transformation of identities is *interaction ritual*, to resume Goffman's term. Observe once more that in full-blown public ritual a presumed-upon cosmic order—a realm of intersubjective belief—is instantiated in the here-and-now of constructed ritual context so that the spatio-temporal ordering of ritual signs dynamically figurates the interactional textual end or purpose potentially fulfilled in the ritual event. So also here, each of the entextualizing aspects of the denotational text seems to play a role—sometimes direct, sometimes only indirectly contributory—in relationally defining our participants. When Mr. A refers to the School of Social Service Administration as “over there,” he is, from the denotational-textual perspective placing it in a conceptually distal point—the endpoint of a path of indefinite length, in fact—from where he conceptually presumes himself to be located. From the point of view of dynamic figuration, he is, reciprocally, performatively placing himself at a conversational place-of-remove from Ms. C's organizational origin. He is, in this sense, figuratively performing an identity-defining move in *social space*, as he creates the very social-spatial framework in which this can be discerned. Similarly, his use of “out here” for Chicago and environs; ‘out here’ is a secondary deictic point for someone whose primary *origō* is elsewhere, removed from ‘here’ and in fact identified in this interaction with “the East.”

Similarly, when, hearing from Ms. C that she had lived in “New York” the previous academic year, Mr. A's immediate segue to inquiring if it was in “The City,” plus Ms. C's subsequent use of “Upstate” to describe Ithaca, New York, smoothly coordinate to anchor both of their performed or relevantly enacted identities—*voicings*, Bakhtin termed them—precisely as Manhattanites associated with the landmark in the nested geography of “the East” > New York State > New York City >

[Borough of] Manhattan (= New York County). Place-name choice—knowing what level in the natives’ meronymy (part-whole structure) to name—is a highly enregistered shibboleth of identity-relevance, much like organizational acronyms and abbreviations (at Harvard the undergraduates enroll in “[sák] Sci” courses; at Chicago in “[sowš] Sci” ones).<sup>18</sup> In-and-by communicating the information in this form, one performs an interactionally effective tropic self-placement (sometimes a placement of the interlocutor as well) in the “interaction order.”<sup>19</sup>

Finally, it must be noted, linguistic forms in denotational text are like the body movements of the pantomime, creating—as we say—a projected cultural framework in the interactional here-and-now, a framework of systematic knowledge of the universe obtainable only by participating in such interactions, whether such interactions are decidedly social by intent or purportedly purely expository, like scientific communication. (Note how Ms. C breaks into expository communication to teach Mr. A more than he wanted to know—or let on that he knew—about SSA.) The point is that culture cannot be seen, heard, or sensed directly; we cannot study culture except by studying its effects on things like discursive interaction (or interaction more generally with other “cultural semiotics”). Mr. A and Ms. C come to define each other cumulatively through the indexical power of deployment of this or that little contributory piece of verbal signage, gradually yielding a fairly coherent picture of who—that is, sociologically, what—they are in relation to cultural norms and thus to each other. There is no announcement of identities-in-culture; no one proclaims himself, for example, “I am an intolerant and arrogant pretend New York City twit who, coasting through Georgetown as an undergraduate, has the gall to complain about the work involved in getting a law degree from the University of Chicago Law School.” Such an identity is the endpoint of lots of linguistically mediated social work that builds cumulatively in this context through multiple, culture-invoking little verbal partials, metrically organized entextualizing machinery that, invoking such cultural knowledge as gives meaning to the signs, dynamically figurates the social identities resulting as the characters of an ultimately narratable interactional text contextualized in-and-by interaction. Interaction ritual after all!

*The University of Chicago*

APPENDIX

<p>My name is [Mr. A]</p> <p>I guess we're s'ppose ta begin → (an' like) first of all but any way</p> <p>What school are you in are [NN] you</p> <p>Oh well! What do they do over there (I don't know)</p> <p>Really? I - I have no idea - conception at - at all of what ( ) never ( )</p> <p>SSA before →</p> <p>Yeah → Yeah →</p>	<p>My name is [Ms C]</p> <p>I guess → me</p> <p>I'm at SSA' →</p> <p>Well ↑ ... it's a school in turmoil right at the moment I think</p> <p>Well → you know it's a school</p> <p>what S SA stands for</p> <p>Okay an' I'm in the uh - of the school ↓ - [There're the three actually several experimental programs one of I'm in is - coördinated social treatment - which - is coördinated - from the sense of combining your - uhm - methodology which is case work - and groupwork research -</p>
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<p>         úmm, -          how          (long) →          how lóng          a - thing is it →          uh huh →          [ ] sounds →          about          as ex          citing as <u>law school</u> ↓          it's →          I'm in my second year here →          and          it's uh réal-ly réal-ly hórrible →          it's the worst experience I've ever had → (oh yéah) -          oh I just in - i - i -          It's it's just an awful lot of work → -          and they keep pushing and pushing          and I - really - gets →          really          sick of it after a while →          I don't know       </p>	<p>         ánd um your -          all          in          to          one          course →          Thé →          whole school ↓          úmm is a two year school → -          professional - school → -          then - I'll have to - decide whether I' go into - úh          but my' sequence goes for the year → -          résearch -          or go and dó          casework          or groupwork          or cr -          you know -          some          thing          more com          mun          ity          Yéah → - so téll me - what [ ] you re in and what year - I'm →          I'm →          mm-          h'm       </p>	<p>         practicum →          which is like fieldwork →       </p>
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cause - everything's piling up and →	and getting worse and worse 'nd →	Y- é:ah ↑
tú ah -	I don't know	yéah →
I'm from	I guess a lot → the E'ast → - also - which -	
if I don't - like the area either	I don't know	
Are you from	here →	'm mmm
ah yéah →	out hére - ór er ↓	Nó - originally but I lived in New York last year →
I'm -m	from a place called New Rochelle	where's ↑ where - in the East → New Rochelle ↑
Oh oh oh	where are y- where 'd you live → in [The City] or what →	Nó I lived in Ithaca → up state
oh yeah (are there zik) →	old Cór nell	yéah right
I lived with a guy	for part of the - at the end of the summer -	

<p>Oh → gée ...</p> <p>Did you → go to ↑ – school in South Dakota? or er</p> <p>Oh</p> <p>Oh-h</p> <p>I went to a place in a Washington called Georgetown →</p> <p>it was like-</p> <p>I'm very sure I were an Eastern bóm and bréd and coming out [out] here was really – was really a change</p> <p>I don't know →</p> <p>I guess →</p>	<p>Oh → What's</p> <p>Nó →</p> <p>I went [to school] outside of Chicago; here – in Valparaiso Indiana</p> <p>How about you → Where'd you go to under grád →</p> <p>Oh</p> <p>M- mm</p> <p>yeah ↓</p> <p>How'd</p>
<p>from Cornell as a máttér who was a résearch assistant at SSÁ ↑</p>	

## NOTES

This lecture was originally presented for The English Institute, held at Harvard University, 8 September 2012. I am grateful to Jerome Christensen and the organizing committee for the invitation to speak, and to the attentive audience for comments and questions demanding the clarification attempted here. I sincerely thank Bart Longacre and Nicholas Harkness for rescuing my visual material after a computer disaster and getting it to me in time for my presentation. The lecture was reprised on 5 April 2013 for the Department of Media, Culture, & Communication of New York University's Steinhardt School, for the arrangements for which I am greatly in the debt of Lily H. Chumley, and for vigorous discussion once more to the attendees.

<sup>1</sup>I presume upon a Peircean semiotics, in which are to be distinguished sign functions of likeness to a stood-for object (iconicity), causal or other co-presence with it (indexicality), and convention-based categorization of it (symbolic character). Phenomenal signals frequently manifest more than one kind of semiotic function simultaneously, as a large sidewalk object in the form of an ice-cream cone standing before an ice-cream merchant's store functions as an indexical icon of the commercial establishment inside.

<sup>2</sup>We should note the food-mediated parallelism in the two sequential incidents of Maussian exchange: Jacob offers a mess of pottage to Esau in exchange for the birthright of primogeniture, followed by his offer of a savory meal to Isaac in exchange for receipt of the patriarchal blessing of primogeniture. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

<sup>3</sup>On felicity conditions for the performative efficacy of verbal and equivalent acts, see [John] L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962; rev. ed. 1975), esp. 13–46.

<sup>4</sup>A now classic introductory but critical exposition of so-called Speech Act Theory can be found in Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 226–83. See also Michael Silverstein, “The Three Faces of ‘Function’: Preliminaries to a Psychology of Language,” in *Social and Functional Approaches to Language and Thought*, ed. Maya Hickmann (Orlando: Academic Press, 1987), 17–38, esp. 27–34; and “‘Direct’ and ‘Indirect’ Communicative Acts in Semiotic Perspective,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (2010): 337–53, esp. 342–44.

<sup>5</sup>See Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), 259–422.

<sup>6</sup>The term *entextualization* emphasizes the coming-into-being of a structure we can term a *text*, as developed in the various contributions to Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, ed., *Natural Histories of Discourse* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996). For the way ritual action in particular is a prototype of the semiotic processes of entextualization, see Michael Silverstein, “‘Cultural’ Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus,” *Current Anthropology* 45 (2004): 621–52, esp. 626–27.

<sup>7</sup>In Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967), the emphasis is on just the kind of voicings of identity and status relationality with which we deal in this paper.

<sup>8</sup>See Hilary Putnam's discussions of the insufficiency of these views in “The Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2, *Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), 215–71; and in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> One must understand and elaborate considerably upon Roman Jakobson's idea of "poetic function" with modern tools for the analysis of discourse. See Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), 350–77, esp. 356–58.

<sup>10</sup> The details are laid out in Starkey Duncan, Jr. and Donald W. Fiske, *Face-to-Face Interaction: Research, Methods, and Theory* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> On the modern concept of *register*, within any language a generally implicit schema of textual consistency of choices within various pragmatic paradigms, see Asif Agha, "Registers of Language," in *The Blackwell Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 23–45; and Agha, *Language and Social Relations* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007). The coming-into-being of a register such as *standard register* in languages such as English is a result of rather explicit and institutionalized forces of enregisterment, ideologically driven projects not unrelated to forces of group formation and social stratification.

<sup>12</sup> On the contextual distribution of various versions of one's name, see the now classic paper by Roger Brown and Marguerite Ford, "Address in American English," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 62 (1961): 375–85. An elaboration including the determining role of the audience or overhearer is found in Gregory L. Murphy, "Personal Reference in English," *Language in Society* 17 (1988): 317–49.

<sup>13</sup> On the conversational distribution and interactional function of the interjection *well*, see the example-rich discussion in Deborah Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 102–27.

<sup>14</sup> I should point out an irony in all this, by the way: that the two professional schools' buildings are right near each other along East 60th Street, just south of the Midway Plaisance that runs east-west through the University of Chicago campus. They are separated by one intervening building, the front elevation of an undergraduate dormitory.

<sup>15</sup> On the indexical use of such apparent denotational gradience for affective display, see William Labov, "Intensity," in *Georgetown University Round Table 1984; Meaning, Form, and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications*, ed. Deborah Schiffrin (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1985), 43–70.

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to observe that while there is a good deal of further conversation pinpointing towns and cities in "the East," Ms. C's "South Dakota" is of no further interest to Mr. A's questioning. See the *New Yorker* magazine map of the world according to Saul Steinberg for a graphic illustration of this, geographical landmarks getting sparser and sparser as one first approaches the Hudson River and—gasp—goes west of it.

<sup>17</sup> Compare here a Londoner's use of *The City* to refer to the 1.12 mi<sup>2</sup> that comprise that city's financial district in its historic center. When I was growing up in Brooklyn, we similarly traveled "into The City," to Manhattan and by contrast, went "downtown" or "to downtown Brooklyn" to its administrative center and district of department stores.

<sup>18</sup> On the several interactionally relevant indexical dimensions of place-name choice, see Emanuel A. Schegloff, "Notes on Conversational Practice: Formulating Place," in *Studies in Social Interaction*, ed. David Sudnow (New York: Free Press, 1972), 75–119.

<sup>19</sup> See Goffman, "The Interaction Order," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 1–17.