

3

Notes on the Organization of Engagement

The phenomenon dealt with in the last chapter, a state of mutual gaze within a speaker-hearer relationship, is of course but one of many patterns of orientation that participants might assume toward each other during the course of a conversation. The present chapter will investigate some of the ways in which different structures of orientation are organized, how participants move from one of the alternatives open to them to another, and the consequences that such displays have for the organization of their talk. This analysis thus continues a line of investigation begun in the last chapter, but attempts to place within a broader framework the engagement structure that was studied there.

Engagement Displays

The present analysis will restrict itself entirely to events occurring during the time that a state of copresence that has already been established is being sustained.

Within such limitations, the fact that the participants are physically copresent is a constant. However, the form that their presence to each other takes is not. This can be seen most easily by comparing Figures 3.1 and 3.2, which are tracings from a videotape of a single conversation.

In Figure 3.1, A is noticeably gazing toward B.¹ A thus shows, first, that B is being publicly observed, and, second, that A herself is positioned to take account of what B is doing. In Figure 3.2, however, A is noticeably gazing away from B. B is thus not being publicly scrutinized by A, and A is not observably positioned to perceive all of the actions B might perform and thereby take them into account in the performance of her own actions.² For convenience such displays of orientation or non-orientation by one party toward another may be referred to as engagement displays.

It may be noted that a display of disengagement treats someone who is physically present as in a certain sense not relevantly present, that is, not the subject of observation or a locus for joint, collaborative activity. Displays about engagement thus permit the alternation between presence and nonpresence to be reestablished within a domain bounded by physical copresence and to become a relevant feature of activities occurring there.

One feature of engagement displays is that the display of one individual proposes something about the participation status of the other. For example, by displaying engagement toward another, one treats that other as available for such observation and coparticipation and not as someone then occupied with private activities that are not to be observed. Similarly, by displaying disengagement toward another, one treats that other as not then performing activities requiring the coparticipation of the disengaged party.

The engagement display of one party thus shows an orientation to the displayed engagement of the other. However, that other party is also performing a similar analysis with the effect that his display is simultaneously being organized with reference to the engagement state of the first. Each party's body thus displays an analysis of what the other is doing and by that very display constrains what the other can or should be doing if he is to organize his body in terms of a similar analysis. This raises the issue, to be examined later in this chapter, of how structures with such simultaneous organization can be changed. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the mutual orientation of the participants in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 is consistent with this line of reasoning—that is, their separate displays are compatible with each other.

¹ In this chapter, because references to individual participants are numerous, in order to simplify discussion, participants will be referred to by letters rather than names.

² As subsequent analysis will make more clear, what is at issue here are official displays about what is being perceived and attended to, rather than the actual limits of the participants' ability to monitor each other.

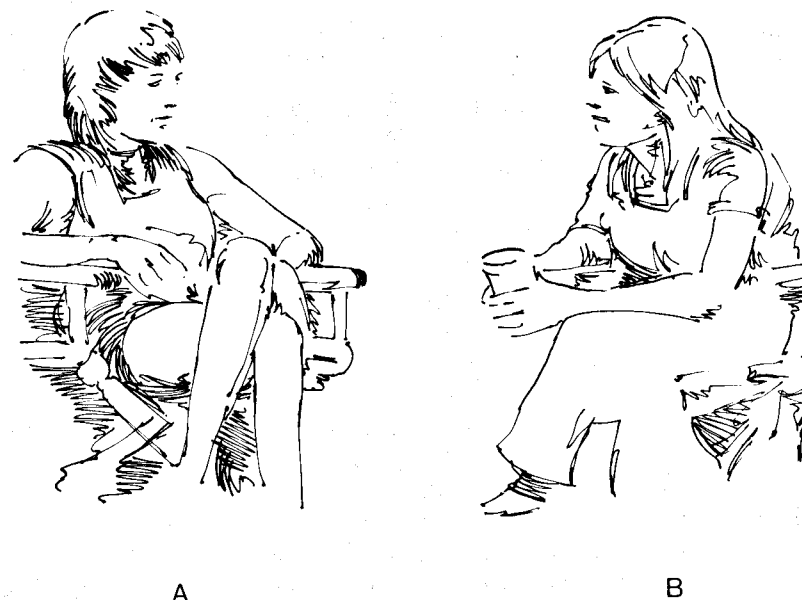


FIGURE 3.1

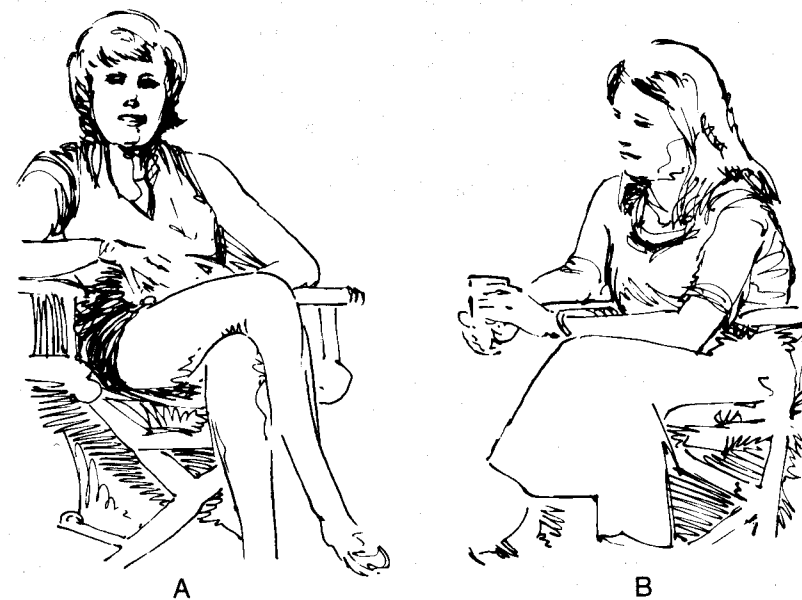


FIGURE 3.2

Disengagement

Displays of mutual disengagement, such as that found in Figure 3.2, characteristically occur during lapses in the conversation. This temporal embeddedness within an ongoing state of multiparty talk is in fact manifested spatially in the way in which the participants organize themselves relative to each other. First, unlike what happens when a state of copresence is broken,³ the participants remain in close physical proximity to each other. Second, though the upper parts of their bodies, and especially their gaze, are directed away from each other, their lower bodies remain oriented toward each other.⁴ When states of disengagement are examined closely, it is found that, despite their displayed lack of orientation toward each other, the participants are in fact monitoring each other's actions quite closely.

Just after the moment stopped in Figure 3.2, A sweeps her head past B (Figure 3.3). She ends the movement by recognizably looking toward something in another direction, at which point B moves her own gaze in the same direction and begins to noticeably search the scene (Figure 3.4). Thus, though B had not been officially gazing toward A, she notices, and reacts to, a movement of A. Moreover, her reaction shows, not simply a recognition that some movement has occurred, but an analysis of the activity being displayed with the movement: That is, rather than turning to the party making the movement, and thereby treating it as a movement to her, B interprets A's gaze as doing a distinct recognizable activity—making a noticing—an activity that B might also engage in by moving her own gaze in the same direction. Thus participants are not only monitoring each other's actions, but engaging in ongoing analysis of those actions, even as they carefully display lack of orientation toward each other.

When A's gaze sweep is examined in more detail, it is found to occur in two distinct stages. At the end of the first movement (Figure 3.5), A does not yet display involvement in an activity such as a noticing, but instead looks off into space with a middle-distance look. B does not respond to this movement but instead continues to display disengagement from A's activities.

³ For detailed treatment of such phenomena, see Goffman (1963), Heath (1979a, 1979b), and Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

⁴ The participants thus continue to collaboratively sustain what Kendon (1977:Chapter 5) has called an F-formation. In his analysis of the F-formation, Kendon demonstrates that the mutual orientation being displayed by the participants' lower bodies is actively and collaboratively sustained. From one perspective, the present analysis is an attempt to delineate some of the alternatives for copresence available within that framework and the ways in which these alternatives are organized and made relevant by the actions of the participants.

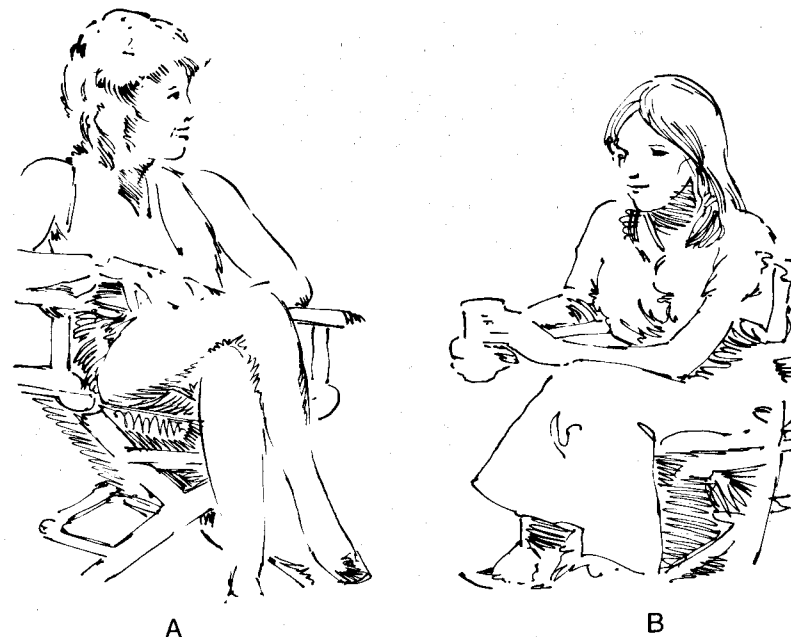


FIGURE 3.3

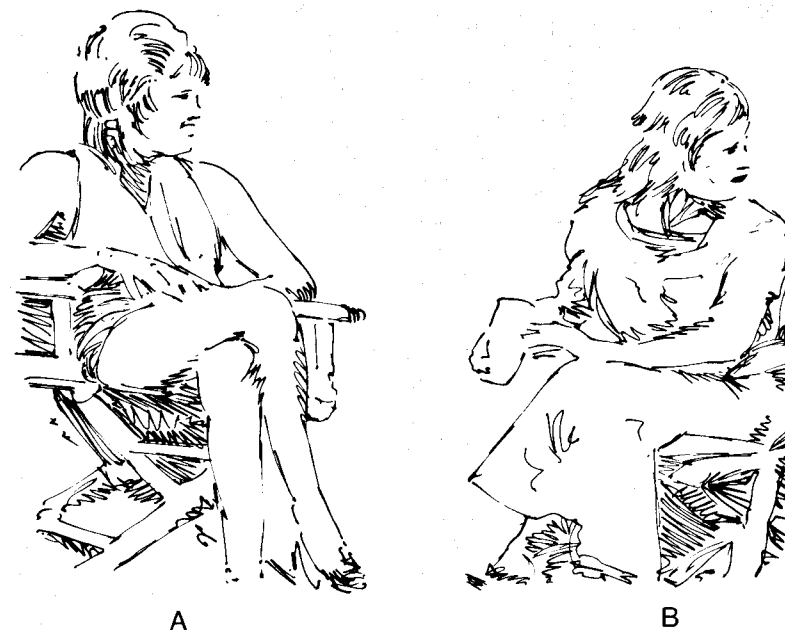


FIGURE 3.4

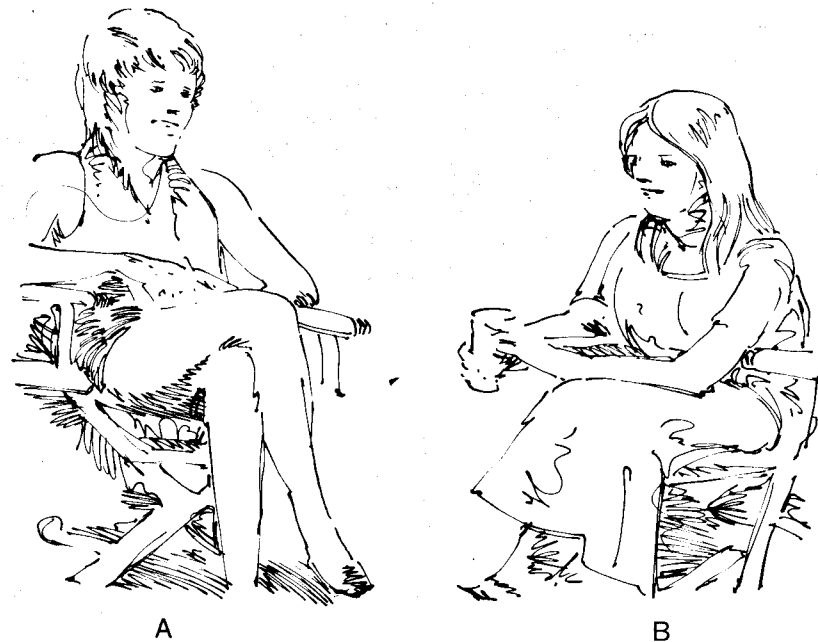


FIGURE 3.5

These data raise the possibility that one feature of the analysis B is engaged in is that of distinguishing actions of A that provide the possibility of coparticipation in them (such as a noticing) from actions (such as "staring into space") that do not permit such a possibility. Examining activities in terms of such features would seem to be relevant to the embedded sequential position within which the analysis is performed. First, even while displaying disengagement, the participants are situated within, and collaboratively sustaining, a framework proposing the relevance of collaborative activity such as talk. The absence of such multiparty activity is therefore a relevant and noticeable absence. Second, the resumption of collaborative activity will involve a change in the actions and participation status of the party doing the analysis. Such a distinction is therefore relevant to that party and consequential for what he is to be doing. Monitoring for the resumption of collaborative activity might therefore be one of the systematic activities that disengaged parties perform.⁵

⁵ Analysis to be developed at a later point in this chapter will show that opportunities for returning to engagement are not evenly distributed throughout disengagement, but rather emerge with special salience at particular points within it, such as when various

Such phenomena shed further light on the events examined in the last chapter. Processes of reengagement do not operate in a vacuum, but rather build upon the types of analyses participants are already engaged in during disengagement (for example, monitoring for the possibility of reengagement) and the availability they manifest to each other by the collaborative framework of orientation being sustained by their lower bodies.⁶ The use of an action such as a phrasal break to secure a co-participant's gaze succeeds in part by dealing with a possibility that is already being treated as a relevant one by participants.

During periods of disengagement, participants are explicitly displaying lack of orientation toward each other and nonparticipation in collaborative activities such as talk. However, the data examined so far support the possibility that such official displays of noncollaboration are in fact organized interactively and collaboratively sustained by the careful, systematic work of participants who maintain an ongoing monitoring of each other and an orientation toward the possibility of relevant changes in their mutual participation status.

Entering Disengagement

Analysis will now turn to investigation of how participants move from a state of engagement to a state of disengagement. To simplify the discussion, much of this analysis will focus on a single strip of conversation. The participants in this conversation, both of whom went to the same 2-year college, Marjorie Webster, have been discussing college days. We will first examine how the transition from talk to disengagement is accomplished at the end of Line 11. Next we will examine how talk is organized once disengagement has been entered, focusing in particular on Line 13. It will be found that the talk here is produced within an engagement framework quite different from that analyzed in the last chapter. Finally, we will look at how the participants might make use

activities come to recognizable completion. Insofar as this is the case, participants do not engage in uniform and homogeneous monitoring, but rather treat a strip of disengagement as a structured field of action.

⁶ Thus Kendon (1973:37) notes that

each participant, by maintaining a spatial position, posture and orientation that is appropriate to his role in the gathering, signals to the others that he is committed to joint engagement with them. In so doing he signals that he is claiming certain rights as well as taking on certain obligations. He claims the right to listen and to speak, but he has an obligation also to attend and to speak when addressed. . . .

of the engagement possibilities available to them to manifest different types of coparticipation in the talk of the moment. This stretch of talk will thus provide the opportunity to examine in a systematic fashion a range of phenomena relevant to the organization of engagement.

(1)

1. A: No I:, (we-) wouldn't of fit in there *either* I'm *su:re*
2. but it's (0.2) a *hell* of a lot better than uh, (0.8)
3. Marjorie Webster.
4. (0.4)
5. A: The most *ih-* the most *ama:zing* thing was to see the
6. tuition we pai:d, hhh and to go *over:* and I was a
7. *cheerleader* (when I went) there, and we'd go over
8. to Mount Vernon? and play a ga:me? and see Mount Vernon.
9. (0.7)
10. A: Christ it was just go:rgeous. It was *so* beautiful.
11. And our place was such a *dump* compared to it.
12. (1.2)
13. B: It really was a dump.
14. (0.5)
15. A: Yeah and I *know* we paid about the same a-amount of
16. tuition. I think our tuition when *I* went there was
17. one of the highest *it* was the highest in the country.
18. for even (a) four year college it was incredible.
19. (0.8)
20. A: And it went up, (0.2) the second year I was *the:re*.
21. (2.0)
22. A: But I: uh,
23. (0.9)
24. A: Do:n uh::, Don's family moved into (Serrano Park)

During the silence in Line 12, the participants display mutual disengagement toward each other. Analysis will begin by investigating how the transition from the talk preceding it to this state of disengagement is accomplished.

OPERATIONS BY RECIPIENT DURING TALK

One principal place where hearers display their understanding of a piece of talk, and where speakers can look to see if such understanding has been adequate and appropriate, is in a next utterance. The absence of an adjacently placed subsequent utterance to the talk in Line 11 raises the question of whether the work that such a next utterance does is

absent. Thus one issue that may be posed by the occurrence of disengagement after a strip of talk is whether the talk that preceded it has been understood, attended to, and dealt with in a relevant fashion by its recipient.

When a visual record of this conversation is examined, it can be seen that, though recipient does not produce talk-relevant actions immediately subsequent to A's turn, she does perform operations on it while it is being spoken. Over the talk in Line 10 (beginning at the word "gorgeous"), she produces a series of nods. Moreover, these nods are not only seen by the speaker, but seem to be organized precisely so as to be seen. They begin just after the speaker, who has briefly turned her head away, returns her gaze to the recipient.

A:	X	_____
		[
10.	Christ it wa s	just go:rgeous.	
B:			
			Nod Nod

Because of their placement at particular points in the talk, actions such as these nods enable a recipient to display, not simply hearership, but some aspect of his understanding of the talk then being produced. Indeed, as the work of M. Goodwin (1979, 1980a) on mutual monitoring has shown, such displays may permit speakers to find even as they are talking that recipient's ongoing understanding of that talk is in some way inadequate. Speakers may then modify their talk to obtain more appropriate understanding. Thus, in this data, recipient's nods and speaker's acceptance of them permit the participants to collaboratively establish that recipient is operating on the talk in some systematic fashion and that speaker is finding no problems in her understanding of it. Insofar as this process provides some demonstration that the talk in progress has been attended to and dealt with in a relevant fashion by its recipient, some of the issues raised by the occurrence of silence after this talk are resolved; the talk has been ratified as a relevant event within the conversation through actions of recipient as well as speaker.

Nodding during a turn in no way precludes the possibility that recipient might produce subsequent talk to that turn or that speaker might expect such talk. Thus, although recipient's operations show that the talk has been attended to, they do not deal with the issue of whether the space just after the talk is or is not to be treated as a place where further talk is relevant.

Analysis will now turn to investigation of some of the systematic

operations participants perform to collaboratively establish that at the termination of this turn further talk is not immediately relevant.

VISIBLE WITHDRAWAL FROM TALK BY SPEAKER

Further observation of the data reveals that, shortly after recipient begins to nod, speaker withdraws her gaze:

- A: X _____ ↓
[
10. Christ it wa s just gorg eous. It was so beautiful.
B: _____
Nod Nod Nod Nod

This raises the possibility that a speaker might use presence or absence of gaze toward recipient to display whether or not a next utterance is expected from recipient. However, speakers look away from their recipients quite frequently during talk without in any way proposing that their recipients may/should start to disengage from the talk. The silence in Line 9 of the present data provides a good example. Speaker withdraws her gaze from her recipient at the beginning of this silence and continues to look away from her until the word "was" in Line 10. However, during this silent look-away, speaker continues to produce her telling, performing an eye roll and head shake that provide a visual version of the assessment spoken in Line 10:⁷

- A: _____ , , ,
8. and play a ga:me? and see Mount Vernon.
B: _____
A: Eye roll with
head shake
9. (-----)
B: _____

⁷ For more detailed analysis of how participants utilize head shakes in the production of assessments, see M. Goodwin (1980a).

- A: X _____
[
10. Christ it wa s just gorgeous.
B: _____

Though speaker both withdraws her gaze and becomes silent here she is still actively involved in producing her talk.

If only some gaze withdrawals are disengagement-implicative, the issue arises as to how recipients recognize these and distinguish them from those that are not. The events just noted would suggest that recipients do not attend to the gaze withdrawal as an isolated event, but rather analyze it with reference to other activities the speaker is performing at that moment.

At this point in the conversation A has a lit cigarette in her hand. During the talk in Line 10, the cigarette is held slightly to the side of her face with its tip pointing upward. As speaker's head starts to move away from her recipient at the end of "beautiful," the hand with the cigarette is dropped to the front of her mouth and the cigarette pointed forward. Thus, as Line 11 is entered, the cigarette has been moved from a holding position to a preinhaling position. Such positioning of the cigarette makes the activity that A is performing here not simply gazing away from her hearer but rather withdrawal in preparation for another activity, one that does not involve the coparticipation (for example, through gaze) of the present recipient.

A's activities at this point thus have a rather distinctive character. She is still performing actions within the conversation, and in fact producing talk, but doing this with something less than full engagement, as shown by both the withdrawal of her gaze from her recipient (which is not offered as an event in the talk as the gaze withdrawal in Line 9 was) and her displayed preparation for engagement in another activity, smoking. Thus, in comparison with the talk that preceded it, the talk in Line 11 is done while speaker is manifesting diminished engagement in the conversation, which is no longer the exclusive focus of the activities her body is performing.

RECIPIENT WITHDRAWAL

The events described in the last section may constitute displays that recipient can attend to as relevant for the organization of her own actions. During the talk-relevant look-away in Line 9 recipient continued to gaze steadily at the speaker. However, just after speaker withdraws her gaze

toward the other when the silence in Line 12 is entered. The lapse that follows is not entered through a recycling of turn-taking options (one possibility for entry into a lapse noted by Sacks *et al.* 1974:715) with first one party and then the other choosing not to exercise the opportunity to talk provided them by the turn-taking system. Rather, the identities of speaker and hearer are from the beginning of the silence no longer a relevant framework for the organization of the participants toward each other. Through their collaborative work, they have managed to construct a place immediately subsequent to a strip of talk where further talk is neither present nor absent but rather no longer being treated as either relevant or necessary.

Some Alternative Possibilities

The structure of the space the participants have managed to construct in the data just examined might be made more clear by comparing it with other examples in which different courses of action are taken. Three further pieces of data will now be examined. In the first, rather than withdrawing, speaker continues to gaze at recipient after his talk is brought to completion; recipient treats such gaze as proposing the continued relevance of conversation and puts aside another activity he was about to perform. In the second, speaker stops talking without displaying involvement in another activity; rather than either continuing to display engagement or moving immediately to disengagement, recipient adopts a transitional posture until the course of action that speaker is to pursue is clearly established. In the last, actions sufficient to provide for collaborative movement from talk to disengagement are performed right at the transition point, quite literally in the blink of an eye.

REFUSING TO WITHDRAW

In Example (2), as A's talk approaches completion, B is raising a can of beer to his mouth. When the turn ends and a silence ensues, B tilts the can, which is now just in front of his lips, to his mouth. A, however, continues to gaze toward B. B removes the can from his mouth without taking the almost accomplished drink and produces a next utterance to A's talk:

Some Alternative Possibilities

(2) A: ... er up on the back of his pickup truck with a, (0.4)

A: _____
with a jack. (----- +)

B: _____

Raises beer can to lips Tilts can slightly toward lips

B: Moves can away from mouth

Who de Wald?

A: _____

The actions occurring here, and in particular B's putting aside another activity which has already been begun in order to produce his talk, are consistent with the possibility that B sees A's continued gaze as proposing that further talk from him is relevant at that point.

In Line 11 of Example (1), when speaker started to move from talk to another activity, her recipient showed that such a change was acceptable to her by also withdrawing from the talk. Here, by way of contrast, one party counters the state of engagement being proposed by the other. B starts to perform private actions while A is talking. Instead of either permitting this during his talk, or withdrawing until B has finished, A performs actions that propose that B should be fully engaged in the conversation and B acquiesces by putting aside the competing activity.

MAINTAINING AVAILABILITY

In Example (3) A terminates her talk, without, however, displaying engagement in another activity. Just as A finishes her utterance, B withdraws her gaze from her. However, rather than immediately moving to a state of full disengagement, B quickly stops her move away and holds her head so that it is facing just to the side of the speaker (this position is indicated in the transcript by "#"). After a period of time during

which A does not produce further talk, B drops this position and moves to a state of full disengagement:

- (3) A: X _____ , ,
 [she dated another guy up (-----) in another
 B: _____
 A: X _____ , , ,
 [fraternity and we'd go up there and we'd have a good time,
 B: _____
 A: ----- + ----- + ----- +
 B: , , #####

By moving away while remaining silent, B displays, first, that she will not become a speaker herself, and, second, that she is not now treating A as a speaker. However, by not moving to a position of full disengagement, she also displays that she remains ready to return as a recipient should A choose to resume speaking. B's body position thus shows an analysis not simply of what A is doing at the moment but also of the texture of possibilities still available at that point: A, though not speaking at the moment, *may continue* her talk, *but need not* do so; B, though not willing to become a speaker herself, demonstrates her availability as a recipient should A continue, without, however, treating A as a speaker. B's position displays a readiness for explicit collaborative action without requiring it. Insofar as from it one can move either to complete engagement or to complete disengagement, this position allows the party adopting it alternatives for dealing with and adapting to subsequent events in the interaction. When it becomes clear that A has chosen one of the possibilities open to her to the exclusion of the other, B moves from this position in a way that maintains the appropriateness of her body for the current state of the interaction.

MATCHING DISPLAYS

In Example (4), just as speaker's talk comes to completion, recipient performs a very visible action with her face, noticeably raising her brows. For convenience, this action will be called an eyebrow flash.⁹

⁹ For analysis of how eyebrow flashes function as signals from an evolutionary and cross-cultural perspective, see Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1974).

- (4) A: And she now lives in downtown Philadelphia
 A: _____ , ,
 studying photography. (----- + -----)
 B: _____
 Eyebrow
 flash

Recipient's eyebrow flash does many of the same things as the nods performed during the phased withdrawal in Example (1). First, by making visible specific operations on the talk, recipient is able to display, not just attentiveness to the speaker, but also that she has in some way dealt with the particulars of the talk of the moment. Second, the eyebrow flash enables the recipient to perform an activity-occupied withdrawal from the talk in progress. When the action is examined in detail, it is found to have several distinct components: first, the actual raising of the brows; second, a hold of that position; and, third, the dropping of the brows. Although the raising and hold are done while recipient is displaying full orientation toward the speaker, the brows are dropped in such a way that, at the termination of the movement, recipient is no longer gazing at the speaker. By organizing the eyebrow flash in the way that she does, recipient avoids performing the withdrawal as an explicit, noticeable act in its own right.

Examining the data further, it can be seen that just after recipient's move (less than a tenth of a second), speaker also performs an eyebrow flash.¹⁰

- A: _____
 Eyebrow
 flash
 studying photography. (----- + -----)
 B: _____
 Eyebrow
 flash

By each selecting the same display, the participants demonstrate to each other that they have come to the same analysis of the talk being produced and appreciate it in a congruent manner.

¹⁰ It may be noted that even though speaker's eyebrow flash begins after recipient's, it is ended while recipient's is still being held. The participants thus arrange their actions so that even though speaker's eyebrow flash is placed as a response to recipient's, recipient, by holding her display longer, maintains orientation toward speaker until after speaker has withdrawn.

Such a display of congruent understanding may in fact be relevant to the issue of not providing further talk at this point. Insofar as recipient's action constitutes a type of response to speaker's talk, it may be examined by speaker to see whether recipient has dealt with the talk in an appropriate and relevant fashion. The selection by each party of the same action provides an economical but elegant demonstration that in fact their minds are together and that they have reached a common and congruent understanding of the talk.

It may be noted that the actions being examined here provide responses that do not themselves require further responses.¹¹ Given this characteristic, it is not surprising that matching displays are in fact found quite frequently at places where the transition from talk to disengagement is being accomplished. Further instances of this phenomenon will be examined later in this chapter.

¹¹ One might ask how an eyebrow flash in Example (4) can be seen as a response to this talk and, further, a response that speaker can and does readily treat as adequate. When speaker's actions at the beginning of this turn are examined, it is found that she performs another facial display there and that one component of this display is an eyebrow flash.

A: Another interesting group were the ones from Philadelphia.

Eyebrow flash

Mainline Philadelphia.

(0.7)

A: One of them was my roommate And she was unbelievable.

S- Y'know. Very very wealthy. Came right out of (0.2)

where'd she go (to wuh Magnus Erwin). And I was, a,

course I was- at that point a public school girl.

(0.2)

very much different than she was. And she really changed

(0.3)

And she now lives in downtown Philadelphia studying photography.

(1.7)

The preface of a multiunit turn is in fact a place where speakers regularly perform actions such as displaying what an appreciation of the talk to follow may consist of and in other ways providing their recipients with information about how to deal with the upcoming talk (Sacks 1974). In the present data, recipient has taken what speaker has provided her and used that to construct her own response. She thus ends up with a product that speaker not only finds acceptable as a response, but in fact herself selects for her comment on the talk.

It is also relevant to note that recipient *does not* do an eyebrow flash at the preface, before she has heard the talk to follow. Her actions are thus not the products of a simple stimulus-response reaction, or an instance of synchrony, but rather constitute recognizable acts that are produced and placed with reference to a sequential analysis of the talk then in progress and the tasks that talk sets for her at particular points.

Talk within Disengagement

Having examined some of the interactive work through which the transition from talk to disengagement is accomplished, we will now begin to explore what consequences such a change in coparticipation status has for the subsequent activity of the participants. Some of the ways in which a state of disengagement is organized have already been examined. It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that, though participants officially disattend each other during disengagement, they in fact pay close attention to each other, monitoring in particular for moves toward reengagement. We will now find that the interactive possibilities they might attend to are in fact more complex than has so far been suggested. Specifically, it will be seen that, once a state of disengagement has been entered, it is possible to produce talk that does not propose full engagement. It is thus not sufficient for participants to simply monitor for the resumption of talk. They must also determine what form of engagement is appropriate to a particular piece of talk. This will be found to have implications for the processes of reengagement examined in the last chapter.

Returning to the state of disengagement entered at the end of Line 11 in Example (1), it can be seen that, after over a second of silence, B produces further talk:

Cigarette held in
preinhaling position

11. A: _____
And our place was such a *dump* compared to it.
B: _____
Nod Nod Nod Nod

Puff is taken

12. A: {-----+-----}
B: _____
B: _____
13. It really was a dump.
A: _____

B:

14. (-----)

A:

The placement of the talk in Line 13 makes visible one further feature of the monitoring process participants are performing during disengagement. In Line 11, A accounted for her withdrawal from talk by showing that she was about to become engaged in smoking her cigarette. B begins her talk in Line 13 immediately after A withdraws the cigarette from her mouth. This suggests that the activity providing a warrant for the move to disengagement might also provide some organization for the strip of disengagement itself. Specifically, participants might attend to points of possible completion in that activity as opportunity places for the resumption of talk.¹²

Examining the actions of the participants during Line 13, it can be seen that speaker never moves her gaze to her recipient. Instead, she maintains the posture of disengagement assumed when the silence in Line 12 began. By not bringing her gaze to her recipient, speaker does not locate a place in her turn where recipient's gaze is relevantly absent (i.e., a place where speaker could be gazing at a nongazing recipient never arises). The displays speaker is making are matched by recipient, who does not in any way move toward the speaker during her talk. She does, however, produce subsequent talk, but only after a half second of silence.

The talk in Line 13 thus appears to be organized within an interactive framework quite different from that of a hearer attending a speaker who is addressing talk to her. Speaker makes her talk available but does not propose that the recipient should explicitly demonstrate that it is being heard. By producing her talk in this fashion, speaker also avoids dis-

¹² One of the strong currents in the contemporary social sciences is a push toward quantification whenever possible. One feature of interaction that apparently lends itself easily to precise measurement is the duration of various events such as silence, talk, and eye contact. However, it would appear that abstract clock time in seconds and tenths of a second is not an appropriate metric for the silence observed here. Participants appear to time the silence by attending to natural junctures in the activities in which they are engaged. Measuring the absolute duration of this silence with more and more precise instruments would produce no analytic gain (though observing what the participants are doing with greater detail might well be very fruitful). Indeed, the participants might treat two actions of quite different duration as functionally equivalent in terms of the possibilities for action they provide. This is not to deny the value of appropriate quantification, but merely to emphasize that the apparent rigor obtained with ever more precise measurement may be quite illusory if one has not found the relevant objects to measure, that is, the natural units being used to organize the activity under analysis.

playing that she is awaiting a next utterance to it (for example, she is not gazing toward her recipient at and after the end of her turn), without however indicating that subsequent talk would be inappropriate.

The way in which the talk in Line 13 is treated by both its speaker and its hearer, and, in particular, their lack of explicit orientation toward each other, makes it relevant for us to examine its structure more closely.

Through the way in which it is constructed, the talk in Line 13 appears to be specifically designed to provide a next utterance to Line 11 without proposing that further talk need be tied to it. Thus, it is not only tied to the talk in Line 11, but, with the words "was a dump," literally repeats some of that talk. By using the same words her coparticipant has used, B not only shows the closeness with which she was listening to what A was saying even while she was withdrawing from her, but also shows that she is in agreement with the assessment made with those words. The parts of Line 13 that are not a repeat nonetheless operate in a similar fashion. Thus the pronoun "it" explicitly instructs a recipient to look to prior talk to find the item now being indexed, without, however, further transforming that item. The only place in Line 13 where new material is added to that available in Line 11 is the word "really." That term escalates the assessment made by prior speaker while at the same time arguing that such a view of the object being assessed is the result of an independent appraisal of it by second speaker.

The utterance is thus systematically constructed to demonstrate that the second speaker is in agreement with the first about what is currently under discussion.¹³ Such an action permits but does not require a next utterance to it. Other ways of showing how the prior talk was understood—for example, constructing a next utterance that both transformed

¹³ Though the operations B makes visible in Line 13 systematically argue for congruent understanding, they do not exclude the possibility that the understanding displayed might be found inadequate. Indeed, such a possibility might be systematically engendered by the very way in which the particular operations used to argue for congruence tie the talk that they produce so closely to the specifics of the immediately prior talk. Thus, in these data, A's assessment of "Marjorie Webster" is presented as something to be compared with "Mount Vernon"; in turn, this comparison is to be analyzed with reference to another phenomenon: "the tuition we paid" (Lines 5–6). By tying so closely and selectively (note, for example, that the focus on the comparison at the end of Line 11 is not picked up in Line 13) to the local details of the just-prior talk, the talk in Line 13 fails to demonstrate explicitly that its speaker agrees with the larger point that the assessment was intended to provide evidence for (the "amazingness" of the tuition) or even that she has analyzed the assessment in terms of the other issues raised by prior speaker's talk. Note that in Line 15, A, without in any way challenging the analysis B has made of her talk, nonetheless returns the conversation to the issue of tuition in a way which reinstates the comparison with "Mount Vernon." A thus revitalizes aspects of the prior talk not focused on in B's talk.

the prior utterance and added substantial new material to it (consider, for example, the phenomenon of second stories as analyzed by Sacks 1971)—might well have made relevant further talk. With the operations performed here, second speaker manages to transform the prior talk just enough to show that prior speaker's position is also her position, without changing it so much as to show that a new display of understanding from prior speaker is expected.¹⁴

In short, the speaker, by maintaining her posture of disengagement during this turn, shows that, though her talk is available to be heard, neither explicit hearership nor a next utterance is required. The structure of the talk itself—which systematically shows that it is a next utterance to the prior talk but does not require a subsequent utterance tied to it—is consistent with the nonverbal evidence.

It would thus appear that, though talk can be produced within a framework of disengagement, such talk is organized differently from talk produced during full engagement. It has both a looser sequential structure at its boundaries and proposes a structure of coparticipation in its course that is quite compatible with the framework of mutual disengagement being maintained by the participants while it is being spoken.

It is sometimes convenient to think of talk in conversation as being produced by a speaker who addresses it to a hearer. However, in this data, one finds a range of participation structures within which the production of talk is possible.¹⁵ These structures have consequences in detail for the organization of the talk, being relevant to such basic issues as whether or not the talk of the moment is to be treated as heard and sequentially implicative.

Selecting from Coparticipation Alternatives

The availability of alternative engagement frameworks for the organization of coparticipation during talk has a range of consequences, some of which will now be examined. Analysis will first focus on how the

¹⁴ It may be noted that in many respects this utterance is quite similar to recipient's matching eyebrow flash in Example (4). Both have a retrospective, rather than prospective, orientation; both display agreement and use actions already utilized by coparticipant. Such similarity is not surprising since the operations being performed are quite relevant to disengagement.

¹⁵ For other analysis of talk produced beyond the framework of a focused speaker-hearer relationship see Goffman (1978). Also relevant is the concept of a "continuing state of incipient talk [Schegloff and Sacks 1973:325]."

possibility of talk with different types of coparticipation affects processes of reengagement. We will then look at how recipient might make use of resources provided by alternative engagement structures to display not just hearership but different types of coparticipation in the talk of the moment. This will be found to be consequential for speaker's own subsequent actions. Engagement alternatives permit participants to deal with the talk in progress in a differentiated fashion, and these resources become implicated in the organization of the talk.

The possibility of talk without gaze after a state of disengagement has been entered raises systematic issues for the types of analysis necessary for the achievement of reengagement. If all talk received the same type of coparticipation, the types of phenomena that a potential listener would have to attend to in order to satisfactorily achieve reengagement would be quite clear and straightforward. In essence, all that a listener would have to do would be to distinguish between talk and nontalk and, when talk occurred, move his gaze in a relevant fashion. With the present data we find, however, that such a movement is not appropriate to all talk. Rather, talk calling for gaze must be distinguished from talk where gaze is not relevant.

The issue arises as to how potential recipients make this distinction. Raising such an issue casts light on some possibly puzzling features of the analysis presented in the last chapter. Specifically, one might wonder why talk alone was not sufficient to secure recipient's gaze. Why were speakers found to place special signals, such as phrasal breaks, in their talk? The present analysis would suggest that such signals provide speakers with the ability to distinguish for their recipients talk where recipient gaze is relevant and expected from talk where it is not. In essence, after disengagement has been entered, a new speaker does not simply start to talk, but organizes the production of that talk so as to make visible to others present whether or not their explicit coparticipation is relevant. From the work that speaker does, a potential recipient is able to find whether or not the talk in progress is calling for his gaze.

In Chapter 2, phrasal breaks were found to be one set of signals that could be used to request the gaze of a recipient. However, other actions, such as the movement of speaker's gaze, might also be inspected for what they might propose about the participation status of the current talk. During Lines 13 and 14 of Example (1), A moves her head past B as part of the activity of flicking ashes to her side. This movement is done with lowered face and eyes, and B maintains her posture of disengagement even after A starts to talk again in Line 15. However, when A moves her head back, she sweeps her gaze past B, but hesitates in that movement just as her eyes reach B. She thus manages to glance at

her gaze toward A, but she stops this movement before she actually gazes at A:

- ↓
- B: y-----, , ,
- [
5. couldn't stand him. I don't wanna m(h)a(h)rry this guy.
- A: Nod Nod Nod °Nod °Nod
- B:
6. °really, 'hh (----- + --)
- A: Nod Nod Nod Nod

In Line 2, gaze movement toward recipient acted as a successful solicit for recipient's gaze. This time, however, A does not move toward full engagement. By not bringing her gaze to B in this sequential position, A might be seen as not agreeing to provide the type of coparticipation speaker is then proposing to be relevant. With respect to this possibility, it may be noted that by continuing to nod recipient does do operations on the talk the speaker is producing. It is thus not the case that coparticipation in the speaker's talk is absent, a situation that might be dealt with by further attempts to secure coparticipation. Rather, recipient fills the space provided for her coparticipation with relevant activity, but not with the type of activity speaker has displayed to be preferred.¹⁷ A refusal to coparticipate in a particular way (as opposed to simply a failure to achieve coparticipation) is thus visible. In the face of this, B, who has stopped the movement of her head so that she is gazing not at A but slightly in front of her, withdraws her gaze completely.

¹⁷ There is one further subtlety in this process. In that the nods A performs over Line 5 continue an activity performed throughout the intervening silence, they might be seen as continuing responses to the prior talk rather than actions specifically addressed to the talk in progress. The way in which A organizes her nods may attend to such a possibility. Just before the talk in Line 5 comes to an end, she stops her nods briefly and then begins them again when B reaches termination. By breaking up the stream of nods in this fashion, she is able to establish that at least some of them are specifically directed to B's later talk. By not disrupting the stream of nods earlier, A may also be able to display that she is treating the talk then occurring as continuing appreciation of the prior talk rather than as the beginning of some new activity which requires new coparticipation from her.

These data thus provide support for the possibility that the engagement formation found to be operative over a stretch of talk may be the product of an active process of interaction between the participants and that the ability to formulate a piece of talk as not requiring mutual orientation between speaker and hearer constitutes a resource for the participants in their dealings with each other about the talk in progress.

The ability to display different types of engagement in the talk of the moment provides recipients with resources for making visible to speaker not only their alignment to that talk but also their enthusiasm for it. One possibility raised is that, by operating on a piece of talk but showing less than full engagement in it, a recipient might be able to close down a line of talk that speaker is prepared to develop further. This might be relevant to recipient's own projects. For example, in these data, after nodding for a while at the end of B's talk, A introduces a story of her own (Line 8).

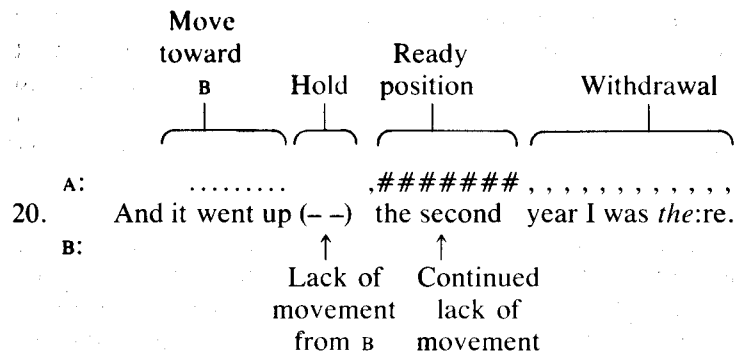
Returning to Example (1), a refusal to coparticipate is found in Line 20. After her talk has begun, A moves her head, though with lids down-cast, slightly toward B and then pauses briefly. B makes no move whatsoever toward A:

- A:
20. And it went up (--)
- B:

A then moves her head slightly away from B, opens her eyes without looking in B's direction (indicated in the transcript with #), and produces further talk. When B still does not move, A withdraws her gaze sharply and completely from B's vicinity:

- A: #####,
20. And it went up (--) the second year I was *there*.
- B:

These data are consistent with the possibility that B is refusing to bring her gaze to A (note that both the beginning and end of the pause, as well as speaker's movement, might constitute requests for gaze) and that A, seeing this, first withdraws her own gaze prior to the point where it actually reaches B and then holds briefly in a ready position that maintains her availability should B choose to move after the pause is closed. When this does not happen, A withdraws her gaze entirely.



The effect of all this is that the turn is found to have a structure similar to Line 13: that is, it does not require the mutual orientation of speaker and hearer. The actions of the speaker suggest, however, that this formulation of what is happening is arrived at only after recipient is found to be unwilling to move to full engagement.

Two seconds later, in Line 22, A again starts to move toward her recipient while producing further talk. B, however, makes no move toward her, and A both stops her gaze movement before it reaches B and interrupts the talk she is producing in midunit:

22-23. A:
 But I: uh, (-----)
 B:

It was seen in the last chapter that such phrasal breaks are frequently interpreted by recipients as requests for their gaze. Here, however, B continues to maintain her posture of disengagement. B's failure to move at a place where such a move is relevant raises in stronger fashion the possibility that she is actively refusing to coparticipate in A's current talk.¹⁸

When A starts to speak again, the talk she produces is quite different from the aborted talk just prior to it. Instead of the pronoun "I" this talk begins with the name of the speaker's husband. The sequence until this point has been concerned with female colleges. By producing a male name, A shows that the talk she is now proposing will be significantly

¹⁸ When the data are examined in more detail it is found that just after the phrasal break B makes an almost imperceptible head movement toward A which she immediately stops. Such action both shows the coercive power of phrasal breaks as requests for gaze and provides further support for the possibility that B is actively refusing to attend to her coparticipant's current talk.

different from the talk that preceded it, that is, she makes visible a topic change. Such a move might, of course, be responsive to the possibility that B is refusing to coparticipate further in the prior topic. As soon as the name is produced, B starts to bring her gaze to A:

22-24. A:
 But I: uh, (0.9) Do:n uh: :, Don's family moved
 B: .. X_____

Accounting for Withdrawal

Analysis will now turn to the actions speaker performs after recipient fails to coparticipate in Lines 20-23. It was noted earlier that one way in which a speaker might account for her withdrawal from talk is by displaying that another activity is claiming her attention. Throughout the present sequence, speaker—but not recipient—continues to fill the silences between talk with other activity. The silence in Line 19 occupies just the time it takes for speaker to readjust a package of cigarettes sitting on her lap; during Line 21 speaker is adjusting her blouse; and, in the silence after Line 22, speaker turns to her side and flicks ashes from her cigarette into an ashtray:

18. A:
 for even a four year college it was incredible.
 B:

19. A: Adjusts cigarettes
 (-----)

20. A: ,##### ,
 And it went up (--) the second year I was *there*.
 B:

21. A: Adjusts blouse
 (----- + ----- +)

B:

- A:
 22. But I: uh,
 B:
 A: Brings
 cigarette to
 ashtray
 └───┬───┘
 23. (-----)
 B:

The timing of these activities relative to the talk makes visible reasons for why speaker has withdrawn from the talk. It has been seen that Line 20 might be formulated as a turn not requiring explicit coparticipation only after recipient fails to give speaker her gaze and that speaker's interruption of her talk in Line 22 might be responsive to recipient's failure to move toward her. By offering the activity in Lines 21 and 23 as accounts for her withdrawal from talk, speaker is able to argue that she is leaving her talk, not because of her recipient's refusal to coparticipate in it, but because she herself has other matters to attend to. The accounts thus provide A with the ability to display that the decision to stop talking, rather than being responsive to her recipient's lack of interest, emerges from her own actions.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the structures organizing coparticipation during the production of talk. Participants utilize both their bodies and a variety of vocal phenomena to show each other the type of attention they are giving to the events of the moment, and, reciprocally, the type of orientation they expect from others. Such phenomena are not just responsive to the talk (or silence) in progress but consequential for its current structure and future possibilities, showing, for example, what type of coparticipation is appropriate to the talk of the moment, whether a next utterance is relevant, and whether the talk has the full involvement of the participants. Of central importance is the fact that the engagement displays of the separate participants are organized relative to each other through an ongoing process of interaction.¹⁹ This

¹⁹ Since completing this analysis a paper by Heath (1980) on the display of reciprocity has come to my attention. Among the phenomena he examines are ways in which parties

can perhaps be most clearly seen at points where the transition from one type of engagement to another is being accomplished. However, even displays of mutual disengagement are collaboratively sustained through careful organization of the participants' bodies and their ongoing monitoring of what the other is doing. Insofar as engagement frameworks are interactively achieved and sustained, participants are able to negotiate even as the talk is being spoken the type of coparticipation it is to receive. For example, recipient may refuse to provide the type of orientation that speaker is proposing to be relevant, and speaker may acquiesce to recipient, with the effect that the utterance in progress is ultimately formulated as talk requiring only minimal coparticipation. This may be quite consequential for the continued viability of speaker's current projects and the directions that future talk will take. Indeed, what appears to be a change in topic by a single speaker may in fact be a response to the diminished coparticipation of the recipient in the prior topic, something that speaker is clearly able to see even though recipient does not say anything. The displays made by the participants' bodies also help shape the perceived meaningfulness of the events they are engaged in. Not only can particular reasons for why something is happening be made visible, but even withdrawal from talk can be embedded within heightened attention to it and thus not emerge as an act of disaffiliation. Engagement displays thus integrate the bodies of the participants into the production of their talk, and are important constitutive features of their conversation. They permit those present to display to each other not just speakership and hearership but differentiated attention to, and participation in, the talk of the moment.

might align themselves toward each other as speaker and hearer before the production of a strip of talk begins, a process that has a clear relevance to many of the phenomena examined in both this chapter and the last.