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Gail Jefferson, Harvey Sacks
and Emmanuel A. Schegloff

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On Laughter in Pursuit of Intimacy

working paper⁽¹⁾

"Laughter does not seem to be
a sin, but it leads to sin."

St. John Chrysostom

In the course of conversation someone may say something which breaches conventional standards of courtesy, propriety, taste, tact, ethics, commonality, etcetera, etcetera; the breach in conventional standards constituting a potential offense to other parties to the interaction. While there are various ways to breach conventional standards, the focus here will be on such obvious breaches as rudeness and coarseness/obscenity. We use the weak catch-all term 'impropriety' for the various instances of potential offenses we will be considering.

The introduction of 'improper' talk may have an interactional basis. It is a convention about interaction that frankness, rudeness, coarseness, profanity, obscenity, etcetera, are indices of relaxed, unguarded, spontaneous; i.e., intimate interaction. That convention may be *utilized* by participants. That is, the introduction of such talk can constitute a display by a speaker that he takes it that the current interaction is one in which he may produce such talk; i.e., that the interaction is informal, intimate.

Further, the introduction of such talk may be, not only a display of a perception by one party of the status of the interaction, but a consequential, programmatic action. By introducing such talk, a speaker may be initiating a move into intimate interaction from a state he takes to be non-intimate so far. The speaker may be offering an invitation to his coparticipant(s) to produce talk together whereby they can see themselves as intimate; together they will be constructing intimacy.

If that is so, then a recipient's treatment of such talk may be produced by reference to its invitational properties. A recipient, then, may not merely be deciding whether the object itself is acceptable, attractive, repugnant (in general, or for this recipient in particular), but may be seeing an invitation which is to be accepted, rejected, or otherwise managed.

Such a characterization of 'improper' talk provides a framework which leads to examination of the talk following an impropriety; to an investigation of a recipient's treatment of an 'invitation to intimacy'.

A collection can be made of actual responses to 'improper' talk, and instances of such responses can be arranged on a hypothetical continuum ranging from various degrees of rejection of the invitation (disaffiliation, declination to respond, and disattention to the improper component) to various degrees of acceptance of the invitation (appreciation, affiliation, and escalation of the impropriety).

In the following fragment, two young people are closing a telephone call. Here, the recipient of an impropriety (line 7) *disaffiliates* (line 11) ⁽²⁾.

(1) [Cole:RC:13:PR]

- 1 Kathy: Okay, peace brother.
 2 Ron: Love, beads, bedspread dresses, groovy, far out.
 3 Kathy: Happening.
 4 Ron: Easy Rider, [Peter Fonda,
 5 Kathy: Pa.
 6 Kathy: Uhm, (0.2) make sure, everything is, (0.4) organic and
 7 → orgasmic.
 8 (0.4)
 9 Ron: 'hhhh hhhh
 10 (0.4)
 11 Ron: → hh-hh (hh)Y(h)ou said it I didn't,

In the following fragment, two young people waiting for the other members of a group therapy session to arrive, have starter naming ugly color combinations. The last offering has been «puce and magenta». Now one of them recalls a particularly ugly item of clothing worn by a friend.

(2) [GTS:III:8:R]

- 1 Ken: → She's got a jacket that's diarrhoea brhhhoohhhwhnh,
 2 → (0.8)
 3 Ken: 'hhhhhhhh! (h)N(h)o j(h)oke. 'hhhhhhhh! Rea(h)lly. 'hhh
 4 It's horrible. 'hhh Just to think about it. It gets you
 5 si(h)ck,
 6 → (1.0)
 7 Louise: → You know it's almost twenty- it's um,
 8 (.)
 9 Ken: We may not [have a session.] this morning.
 10 Louise: [(seventeen) after?]

In the above fragment, a recipient of an impropriety *declines to respond* (line 2). Response is pursued by the offerer of the offense and again declined (lines 3-6). The situation is resolved with a shift in topic

precipitate a coparticipant's attitude, activity, terminology, etcetera, they are opaque as to the recipient's own position; i.e., equivocal as to affiliation/disaffiliation. A glimpse of the oriented-to equivocality of 'appreciation' may be gotten in the following fragment, in which a problematic assertion (lines 10-11) is followed by laughter (line 12).

(5.c) [TC:II:14]

- 1 BJ: He always comes out smelling well though. That's what
 2 gets me.
 3 Griff: Well? (maybe it's) the way he treats them.
 4 BJ: [You-
 5 BJ: Yeh, I, I guess, I, I'm not ()
 6 Griff: [(It's) like] the uh (.)
 7 Griff: two inspectors now are (.) great pals of his.
 8 (0.5)
 9 BJ: Oh?
 10 Griff: [→ Well one of them looks at his pornographic movies. I've
 11 → never seen a pornographic movie () in my life.=
 12 BJ: → =uhh hhhh uhh
 13 Griff: Have you?
 14 BJ: No I haven't.
 15 Griff: Well,
 16 BJ: I'm ready any time but I've never been seen one,

In the above fragment the 'appreciative' laughter (line 12) is followed by an explicit request for a statement of the laughter's experience of pornographic movies (line 13). And under such urging, the recipient now 'admits' that he is in the same situation as the speaker (line 14). What occurs as an 'admission' at line 14 might have occurred as a 'voluntary affiliation' at line 12 with, for example, «Me neither!»

In the following two fragments a recipient 'voluntarily' affiliates by replicating the impropriety in her own next utterance, and thus accepts the invitation offered thereby (lines 5-6 and 1-4, respectively).

(6) [NB:II:5:R:3]

- 1 Emma: I went to the dentist and [uh G]od he wanted to pull a=
 2 Lottie: [Yeah?]
 3 Emma: =tooth and make me a new gold uh 'hhh (0.2) bridge for
 4 (.) EIGHT HUNDRED DOLLARS.
 5 Lottie: → Oh shhhh [t.
 6 Emma: → [Shit. (0.2) Is right.

(7) [Labov:TA:11-12]

- 1 Don: → and halfway home all of a sudden I just threw up. Dry:.
 2 (1.0)
 3 Don: And I pulled the car over and I was covered with sweat.
 4 Amy: → ['khh! Well(h)wouldn't throw] up wet
 5 in that new car!

Finally, in the following fragment, a coparticipant *escalates* the impropriety. That is, not only does he accept the invitation to intimacy, but he himself adopts the position of an offense-offerer, his contribution now constituting a next invitation.

The fragment is excerpted from a Sensivity Training session for prison guards, recorded by Ward and Kassebaum in 1963, in which the members are being encouraged by the group leader to name things as disgusting to them as homosexual inmates. At first there is a gradual progression from «Oh I can't think of a particular thing right now», to «things... that don't uh, follow in the social acceptance of society, I guess», to «someone who would take off their shoes and put them up on the table». Thereafter some rather more vivid analogies are offered.

(8) [Ward-Kassebaum:PG:II:25]

- 1 Donnelly: I can give you a good example. I was getting ready to go
2 back to the ship one night, and this one fellow who
3 worked for me, he was a little bit drunker than usual and
4 he keph going on a crying tear, and lying on the fence
5 there, and when we had to go back to the ship, «Ain't you
6 gonna help me back?» and then he would heave, and roll
7 [→ around it it
8 (pause)
9 Donnelly: That ain't exactly disgusting. Sickening maybe-
10 Arlett: I'll go for that.
11 Donnelly: You have all the puke and vomit from him, and he rolling
12 around in it, and keep on crying and needs help back to
13 the ship and all that-
14 Falker: I would feel about the same way about that man that I
15 would about a queen. Thanks Mister Donnelly. Disgusting.
16 Arlett: [→ I'd feel the same way about something like that, or how
17 [→ about a handful of shit.
18 Baines: → Or how about some guy drinking his piss or something like
19 that after a twenty mile hike or something like that.
20 Hale: We got a couple of queens over there in my building that
21 disgust me in that same way. Now the rest of them, no
22 trouble whatsoever.

The first strong example of something disgusting is arrived at via a story (line 1-7) and the transcript indicates a silence thereafter (line 8). That is, no recipient offers a response then and there. Perhaps by reference to this observable disinclination to respond, the offerer starts to disaffiliate, from his own proposal (line 9), but is intersected by a recipient's assertion (but not demonstration) of affiliation (line 10). In this 20-year-old transcript a dash at the end of an utterance indicates it has been overlapped by a next utterance.

Thereafter, and perhaps by reference to the assertion of affiliation, the offerer reasserts the impropriety (lines 11-12). And another recipient asserts (but again does not demonstrate) affiliation (line 14).

Thus, over some 15 lines of transcript, a single impropriety is introduced and accepted. Thereafter we find two *escalations* in rapid succession. The first, introduced by the initial affiliator, Arlett (of line 10) who precedes it with another assertion of affiliation (lines 16-17), the second, unpreluded, by a member as yet unheard from (line 18). The potential for further escalation is closed off as yet another member of the group asserts affiliation (lines 20-21) while shifting focus from a continued search for apt comparisons, to the troublesomeness or not of homosexual inmates⁽⁹⁾.

While actual instance of various response-types were arranged on a hypothetical, perhaps arbitrarily-ordered continuum, Fragment (8) indicates that at least a portion of that continuum may reflect an actual type of progression: Affiliation followed by Escalation.

It turns out that another segment of the proposed continuum does occur in sequence: *Disattention* followed by *Appreciation* followed by *Affiliation*. Three fragments will be shown and briefly considered, with this possible sequence within them sketched out.

The first of the three fragments is taken from a telephone call between a man and woman who occasionally «see» each other. He has been phoning and she has not been returning his calls.

(9) [JG:II:1:2:1]

- 1 Gene: Are you avoiding me like the plague,=
 2 Maggie: =No of- well you know you know better than [that]
 3 Gene: [→ I'm not]
 4 [→ syphletic,=
 5 Maggie: → = 'hhhh No I know you're no [t,
 6 Gene: [heh, he-heh-heh-heh-heh=
 7 Gene: = heh- [heh]
 8 Maggie: → h h [heh] heh huh'hhhhhh I keep running tests on you I
 9 know you're not.=
 10 Gene: =ehh he-heh-heh-heh-heh-hh=
 11 Maggie: =UH No Gene I've just been in and been out and sometimes
 12 you know the paths cross, but uh the time is bad,
 13 (0.7)
 14 Gene: Yeh. What's happening.

The second fragment is taken from a telephone call between two men who have completed a bit of business-talk. One has observed that the other sounds sleepy, the other replying that he'd just got up.

(10) [NB:III:2:R:5]

- 1 Ted: we come in from beach and then we come in and take a
 2 nap you know, It's [really] we really ge^t=
 3 Jim: [→ [Y e h] y o u]
 4 Jim: [→ screwing around there huh?]
 5 Ted: → 'hhh [Y e a] h and then we t-t-
 6 (0.8)
 7 Ted: h a v e a b e e [e e r]
 8 Jim: [→ One of those kids] [come] s in and deh †Daddy Mommy (.)
 9 [→ †Daddy he [h heh heh] heh (rhhigh?)
 10 Ted: → [e h Y e h] heh [heh heh-HE] H eh [h e h] 'hhh huh
 11 Jim: [heh eh]
 12 (.)
 13 Jim: heh [heh] 'hh
 14 Ted: → [e c] Get †out of there=
 15 Jim: =heh heh [heh heh heh] heh hu-uh] 'hhhhhhhh
 16 Ted: [h h h h u h h h] heh-heh-uh] -uh-uh-uh]=
 17 Ted: = 'hh [hhh] w [ell (ha) ve a good time.)]
 18 Jim: [Aah] N O N o h a n k] y panky,h
 19 Ted: (.)
 20 No hanky pan [ky huh]
 21 Jim: [No han] ky panky
 22 Ted: (0.3)
 23 Well have a good time.
 24 Jim:

These first two fragments contain the sorts of materials so far considered as types of impropriety (i.e., crude or obscene language or reference). The third is a matter of 'rudeness'. Although it is done 'tactfully', an invitation is rejected, specifically on grounds of preferring one's own company. And that is a potential offense.

(11) [NB:IV:11:R:2-3]

- 1 Emma: Well GLADYS? now I'd love to have you join us, if you,
 2 feel as though you'd like to come over,
 3 Gladys: Well thank you dear I don't think so, I, had my little
 4 'hhh hen, a [nd uh]
 5 Emma: [Mm hm]
 6 Gladys: [→ 'hh I'm looking forward to just uh 'hh having uh (.) 'h
 7 [→ a little (0.7) time to myself=
 8 Emma: → =Alr [i g h t]
 9 Gladys: [I've loo] ked forward t(h)hho ihhht (h)so
 10 [l(h)o-'hh]
 11 Emma: [O o o o o] o o o o oh
 12 Gladys: [You know] like Garbo,
 13 Gladys: 't ['hhh]
 14 Emma: [Y e] hhh [h hheh]
 15 Gladys: [ehhhhh] h heh] heh
 16 Emma: [h I] WANT to be aLO [n e .]
 17 Gladys: [Bat uh]

- 18 Emma: =hh [hh
 19 Gladys: [And Bill- and Bud got do [wn.
 20 Emma: ['hhhh YES HE was HERE...

It can be noted that in the Prison Guards materials of Fragment (8) a single speaker, Arlett, might be characterized as preparing the way for escalation with affiliation (lines 16-17). Specifically, he is demonstrating that his impropriety is occasioned by a prior, and is occurring as an acceptance of a prior's invitation to intimacy. In Fragments (9), (10), and (11), a similar characterization might be applied to cross-party talk. That is, in these cases the participants can be *collaboratively preparing the way for affiliation*, providing a display of its local occasionedness and interactional reciprocity.

The arrival at affiliation in these fragments runs off in three discrete stages, as follows:

1. *Impropriety followed by disattention.* In each fragment, although an acknowledgement is done, there is no exploit uptake of the impropriety (cf. Fragment 3).

(9) [Detail]

- 3-4 G: I'm not *syphletic*,=
 5 M: =hhhh No I know you're not,

(10) [Detail]

- 3-4 J: you [screwing arou [nd there huh?
 5 T: ['hhh [Y e a] h and then we t-t
 6 (0.8)
 7 T: have a *beer*

(11) [Detail]

- 6 G: I'm looking forward to just uh 'hh having uh (.) h
 7 a little (0.7) time to myself=
 8 E: =Allright

2. *Disattention followed by Laugh-Appreciation.* In each case the recipient's laughter is itself arrived at over a series of moves: (a) The offense-offerer issues an invitation to laugh, and (b) the recipient accepts.

In Fragment (9) the invitation to laugh is itself laughter. This phenomenon has been considered elsewhere. Most roughly, someone can be characterized as laughing, not directly by reference to a prior possibly 'laughable' utterance, but by reference to that, plus a coparticipant's laughter⁽⁴⁾.

(9) [Detail]

- 5 M: No I know you're no^t,
 6 G: [heh, he-heh-heh-heh-heh=
 7 G: = heh- [heh]
 8 M: = h h [heh] heh huh

In Fragment (10) the invitation to laugh is a comedic, falsetto-voiced enactment (the falsetto-voicing indicated by the upward arrows) plus laughter.

(10) [Detail]

- 8 J: One of those *kids* (.) comes in and deh ↑Daddy Mommy (.)
 9 ↑Daddy he [h heh heh] heh (rhhigh?)
 10 T: [e h Y e h] heh heh heh-HE] H ch heh

In Fragment (11) the invitation to laugh involves a recasting of the offense-carrying utterance, «I'm looking forward to just having a little time to myself», now with laugh-particles inserted, «I've looked forward t(h)hho ihht (h)so l(h)o·hh». Recipients of such utterances can and do respond with laughter very quickly⁽⁵⁾. For example:

(11. a) [Sch:II:84:R]

- 1 Bill: Did *you* watch by any chance Miss International Showcase
 2 la [st n] ight?]
 3 Ellen: [n n] N o], I didn't [I was reading] my (.)
 4 Bill: [You missed a] really]
 5 Bill: → =great pro(h)g [r(h)am (.)
 6 Ellen: → [OH l(h)T WUH-HUH-HUH ↑HUH heh heh↑

In Fragment (11), however, there is no immediate uptake of the laughter, and the response when it does occur, is free of laughter; a prolonged «Oh» (line 11). Thereupon, another form of 'invitation to laugh' is introduced; a comedic comparison (line 12), which receives laughter (line 14).

(11) [Detail]

- 9 G: I've looked forward t(h)hho ihht (h)so
 10 [l(h)o·hh]
 11 E: [O o o o o] o o o o oh
 12 G: [You know] like Garbo,
 13 G: 't [·hhh] hhh [h hheh]
 14 E: [Y e] hhh [ehhhhh] h heh heh
 15 G: [ehhhhh] h heh heh

3. *Laughter followed by Affiliation*. In each case, a recipient who initially acknowledged but did not explicitly take up an impropriety, now becomes an 'accomplice' to it (cf. Fragments 6 and 7).

In Fragment (9) the recipient now proposes she has been doing inde-

pendent, long-term tracking of the offense-offerer's possibly syphletic condition.

(9) [Detail]

- 3-4 G: I'm not *syphletic*
 ((laughter))
 8-9 M: I keep running tests on you I know you're not.

In Fragment (10) the recipient offers a next activity in the falsetto-voiced enactment: Daddy's and Mommy's reaction to the child's intrusion.

(10) [Detail]

- 8 J: One of those *kids* (.) comes in and deh ↑Daddy Mommy (.)
 9 ↑Daddy
 ((laughter))
 14 T: Get ↑out of there

And in Fragment (11) the recipient affiliates to the comedic comparison with Garbo by producing the Garbo 'signature'.

(11) [Detail]

- 12 G: You know like Garbo,
 ((laughter))
 16 E: I WANT to be aLOne.

Now this configuration of [Utterance → Laughter → Utterance] can be found recurrently in materials in which participants are not (or at least not so obviously) working to manage a possible interactional breach. Rather, they may be characterized as constructing an occasion of 'laughing together', sustaining it with lexical references to the talk out of which the laughter was initially generated.

So, for example, in the following fragment a mid-joke occasion of laughing together is sustained by repetitions of a laugh-cue, «Oops», by two of the participants (lines 5 and 14).

(12) [G:AD:56:R]

- 1 Cal: ah ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha] hhhh [he] he] hh=
 2 Lenny: ah!ah!ah!ah!ah!ah!ah!] ah!al [a!] hh
 3 Bart: [ah] hh
 4 Cal: =he [hh he-ehh]
 5 Bart: → Oooooops,
 6 Cal: =e-he- [he- [c-hhee [hh!]
 7 Bart: [n-he [u-h u h [eh!]
 8 Lenny: [eh!] uh!uh!ah!ah!]
 9 Cal: [c h a h yee]⁰ceee⁰]
 10 Bart: [ehhhh] hh⁰
 11 Lenny: [uhhhhh⁰] =

- 9 (Jim): hhih-hhi [h
 10 (Ken): [ek [hnhh
 11 Roger: [heb-HA HA·hhehh [·hehh] =
 12 (Al): [hnhh] =
 13 Roger: → =It's chea(h)pe(h)er ·hhenh=
 14 (Jim): =hhh ·hehh=
 15 Al: → =We're going Dutch.
 16 (.)
 17 Roger: hha-hha [ha ha-ah
 18 Ken: [eh h hih [-hn
 19 (Jim): [hnh-hnh-hnh=
 20 Roger: → =·h h h h We're GOING GROUP, hheh hih-e·hheh-ih

Following an impropriety, the occasion of laughing together can serve as an environment in which a recipient, to contribute to its extended occurrence, might properly produce a lexical reference to the source of the laughter; i.e., to the impropriety⁽⁶⁾. And as can be seen in Fragments (12)-(14), any next contribution may replicate or be tightly related to its prior; may work off it in a range of ways, and may thus demonstrate understanding of and accord with the impropriety itself (in contrast to the dense or at best equivocal response which occur in the Disattention and Appreciation components of the sequence). By producing a lexical reference to the propriety, the recipient thus becomes accomplice to it; implicated in the sort of mentality that produces such talk.

However, the occasion of laughing together may be seen to provide a *restricted field* within which affiliation is occurring. That is, a field within which a given utterance has as its immediate, sequentially local work, the sustenance of a laughing-together. The fact that affiliation is being offered — for the Nth, or as in the three fragments under consideration, for the first time — constitutes a non-focal, incidental occurrence embedded in the course of a sustained laughing together⁽⁷⁾.

Thus, in Fragments (9)-(11) the laughter which follows an impropriety may be characterized as a systematic component of a sequence designed to arrive at affiliation: *A pre-affiliator*. Produced by the offense-offerer, it simultaneously urges for and provides a restricted field for that activity. Produced by the offense-recipient, it exhibits the local and deeply reciprocal character of its occasioning. In sum, laughter can be a component of a methodically produced sequence of activities.

Now, the three fragments have another feature in common. In each case it can be noticed that soon after affiliation is achieved, the laughing-together, with its combination of laughter and lexicals, is terminated.

In Fragment (9) the offense-offerer follows his recipient's affiliation with laughter. Rather than take up the option to further expand their laughing-together, the recipient returns to their 'serious' business with an account of her unavailability.

(9) [Detail]

- 8-9 M: I keep running tests on you I know you're not.=
 10 G: =ehh heh-heh-heh-heh-heh hn=
 11 M: → =UH No Gene I've just been in and been out and sometimes
 12 you know the paths cross, but uh the time is bad.

In Fragment (10) the offense-offerer follows his recipient's affiliation with laughter, and the recipient joins in; their laughing-together, then, mutually expanded. But at a point where a next lexical contribution may be due, at least the recipient, and possibly the offense-offerer as well, moves to terminate. The recipient produces an emphatic denial of the initial characterization of his and his wife's activities. The offense-offerer is possibly producing a close-relevant felicitation, «Ah well (have a good time)». The parenthesized segment of his utterance is a dubious hearing.

(10) [Detail]

- 14 T: Get *!out* of there=
 15 J: =heh heh [heh heh heh] heh hu-uh]'hhhhhhhh]=
 16 T: [hñ huh hñ] heh-heh-uh]-uh-uh-uh]=
 17 T: = 'hh [hhh]
 18 J: (→) [Aah] w [ell (ha) ve a good time.)]
 19 T: → [N O] N o h a n k]y panky,h

And in Fragment (11) the offense-offerer initiates a strong topic shift as the affiliative utterance approaches its projected completion.

(11) [Detail]

- 16 E: I WANT to be aLO [n e .]=
 17 G: → [But uh]=
 18 E: = 'hh [hh
 19 G: → [And Bill- and Bud got down.

In Fragment (9) it is the offense-recipient who moves to terminate, in Fragment (10) the offense-recipient and possibly the offense-offerer as well, and in Fragment (11) it is the offense-offerer who moves to terminate. It appears, then, that the activity-categories 'offense-offerer' and 'offense-recipient' are not predictive as to which one terminates the sequence.

However, it can be noted that in each case, closure is initiated subsequent to affiliation, with no further lexical contribution to the laughing-together. One way to account for the placement of the moves to

terminate; i.e., prior to or at the point where a next lexical contribution may be due, and for the non-predictiveness of the categories 'offense-offerer' and 'offense-recipient', is to bring to bear the continuum proposed earlier.

In each of the three fragments, three response-types occur in the order proposed for the continuum (disattention, appreciation, and affiliation). The response-type proposed as next on the continuum, *escalation*, does not occur in these fragments, and may be characterizable as not yet having occurred; i.e., as *pending*.

That is, termination of the affiliation sequence/laughing-together may be activated by reference to avoiding a next lexical contribution which might well turn out to be an escalation. The prospect of escalation might serve as an impetus for either or both participants to terminate an otherwise valued and methodically-constructed event (both the laughing-together in its own right, and the offering and acceptance of intimacy via an occasion of laughing together) since escalation, as a next possible breach, might require another round of processing, setting up the possibility of non-affiliation by whichever of the participants happens to be recipient of this new potential offense.

Thus, having achieved a level of intimacy/complicity perhaps not present prior to the introduction of the impropriety, and having stabilized at that level with the occurrence of affiliation, further pursuit is abandoned before escalation and its possible consequences can occur.

To get a sense of that possibility we show two fragments from a long telephone call between two middle-aged sisters, in which a report of nude swimming is initially disattended and eventually receives affiliation, whereupon the offense-offerer produces an escalation. We shall see what happens to the escalation.

The first mention occurs early in the conversation.

(15. a) [NB:IV:10:R:3]

- 1 Lottie: Jesus Christ you should see that house E(h)mme you have
 2 no idea. h [hnhh
 3 Emma: [I bet it's a dream with the swimming POOL
 4 ENCLOSED HUH?
 5 Lottie: → Oh God we ·hhihth uh huh We swam in the nude ·hh Sunday
 6 night u(h)ntil abo [ut] two o' clo] c k .]
 7 Emma: [ehh] h e h] heh] huh h] a=
 8 Emma: =h [a [·hehh
 9 Lottie: [HUH HA HA] a.
 10 Emma: → [CH well I bet the moonlight and the
 11 beautiful stars the WIND BLEW TERRIBLY THOUGH

12 Lottie: Yeah? the *wind* blew down there and the *wind* blew today
 13 but *oh God* coming home through the *canyon* tonight oh man
 14 it was *horrible*. Man *I* really held on to that car.

Although there is laughing together following the problematic report (lines 7-9), it is followed, not by affiliation, but by disattention (lines 10-11), whereupon the offense-offerer closes off the report (lines 12-14). We will consider the recipient's laughter shortly, and argue that it is not 'appreciative' of the nude swimming component, and is thus not operating as a 'pre-affiliator' in the first place.

There are several mentions of the nude swimming incident across this very long conversation, none of which receive affiliation. Eventually, however, a mention does get affiliation (lines 1-14 below). It can be noted that the offense-recipient's reference to her own participation in nude swimming is produced in a manner similar to that of the prison guard Donnely's offering of a first strong example of something disgusting; i.e., via a story (lines 4-12 below, cf. Fragment 8, lines 1-7).

(15. b) [NB: IV: 10: R: 56-58]

1 Lottie: So THEN when Dwight le(h)eft we(h)e took the *suits* off
 2 (h)and swam around in the *nude* eh *HUH-uh* and took a
 3 sunbath in the *nude* and everything *hhh* [hhh
 4 Emma: [Well you know
 5 Evvie and I used to do that on the rivers if the fellows
 6 would go down get gasoline for their boats, h · hhh She'd
 7 say do you mind we'd be in a cove but we'd TAKE IT out
 8 (.) under the water. You know because uh (.) ee we're OUT
 9 in the OPEN. You know · hhhh But we'd just slip our
 10 bathing suits off and g- and swim around in that rIVER
 11 that uh Colorado River til: · hhh · hh (.) Ghhod what a
 12 thrill.
 13 (0.2)
 14 Emma: I always have liked to swim in the nu [de.
 15 Lottie: [M E] TOO YOU KNOW
 16 and we · hhh And then · hh right eh then (.) there's two
 17 places where the hot water comes in and you can get
 18 [→ rright up close to them and it just feels like you're
 19 [→ ta [king] a [dou] CHE.]
 20 Emma: eh [uh] uh] uh] a h] ahh [ahh a h] : hhh] HUH-HA] HA-AHH
 21 Lottie: [bhhHHUH] HHUH] HHUH] HAA ha
 22 Lottie: = a h h] ah] a h] e] h,
 23 Emma: = e-u-e] ah] a h] uh] · hhu hhh =
 24 Lottie: = A [nd we-
 25 Emma: → [I C A] N SEE YOU TWO KID [S ()
 26 Lottie: → [AND SH] E was on ONE END I
 27 [→ was over the other end with our legs up you know and
 28 [→ [Jesu(h)s it] oo [f(h)elt s(h) o g(h)ood] ha ha] =
 29 Emma: [→ [O o o o o o] oo [h G o d] isn't she] cute?] =

- 30 Lottie: =huh [uh huh]
 31 Emma: → [O h] she's a cutey,=
 32 Lottie: O [h-
 33 Emma: → [GO] D she's uninhibited, 'hh 'h [hhh] She's
 34 Lottie: [Y e] ah well]
 35 (0.2)
 36 Lottie: Ye [ah,]
 37 Emma: [O h] that's wonderful Lottie I'm so happy,
 38 (0.3)
 39 Emma: 't' hhh A [nd I-] 'VE HAD A real good time too
 40 Lottie: [Ye-]

Here an Nth mention of the nude swimming (lines 1-3), upon receiving affiliation (lines 4-14), is immediately escalated with a report of some play at the water outlets (lines 16-19), which is not a standard component of a report of nude swimming, which may specifically constitute a new potential offense, requiring processing in its own right. However, the recipient, having finally, after so prolonged resistance, capitulated to the first breach, may, in the canonical manner of seductions, be urged just one step further.

The new breach is processed in what is emerging as a standard fashion; i.e., via a laughing together (lines 20-23). Whereas we proposed and shall shortly argue that the recipient's laughter in Fragment (15.a) is not a 'pre-affiliator', we shall at the same time examine in detail the especially strong pre-affiliative character of the recipient's laughter in this case.

It appears that the offense-offerer takes this pre-affiliative laughter as adequate warrant to proceed; i.e., she does not await explicit affiliation, but starts to elaborate then and there (line 24), breaking off to permit the simultaneously-started affiliation to go to a point of possible completion (line 25), whereupon she 'recycles' the elaboration⁸. The elaboration, with its graphic detailing, may constitute a re-escalation. And it appears that at this point the offense-offerer has 'gone too far'. The recipient begins to extricate herself, producing an appreciation-of-sorts. Note that she is now targetting the non-present third party, coparticipant to (and probable instigator of) the nude swimming and the play at the water outlets (lines 29, 31, and 33). Her final assessment, «God she's uninhibited» (line 33), specifically marks that something was done which she would not/could not bring herself to do; i.e., it clearly *disaffiliates*. And thereafter she closes the sequence with a shift in topic (lines 37-39).

We will now examine in detail the two streams of recipient laughter which follow the Nth mention of nude swimming, and the first reference

to the play at the water outlets; the first of which we proposed to be non-pre-affiliative, the second, pre-affiliative.

In Fragment (15.a) the *placement* of the laughter provides that it is directed, not to the nude swimming as such, but to the more general and innocuous business of swimming until all hours of the night; i.e., is directed to the mention of «until about two o'clock».

(15.a) [Detail]

5 L: We swam in the *nude* ·hh Sunday night u(h)ntil
 6 abo [ul]two o'clo]c k .]
 7-8 E: [ehh]h e h]heh]huh h]a h [a [·hehh
 9 L: [HUH]HA HA]a.
 10 E: [OH well I bet the
 11 moonlight and the beautiful stars . . .

In detail, the laughter does not start up in the vicinity of «in the nude», but well after it, just as the announcement of the time is being projected.

Further, the laughter is shown to have been, not, for example, a delayed response to «in the nude», incidentally occurring across, and disattending, the less exotic announcement of the time, but is indeed targetting the time. Note that there is a fine-grained display of 'anticipating' followed by 'appreciating' the announcement of the time: A rather soft, relatively closed-positioned «ehh heh heh» opens to a «huh» at a 'recognition point' for «two o'clock...», and at completion of the time-delivery, opens further to «ha ha».

In Fragment (15.b) we find an almost identical procedure, of 'anticipation' followed by 'appreciation' to that used in Fragment (15.a) to disattend «in the nude» and target «until about two o'clock», but this time the procedure is used to target the 'key' materials, «and it just feels like you're taking a douche».

(15.b) [Detail]

16-17 L: there's *two* places where the *hot* water comes in and you
 17-18 can get r^hight up *close* to them it just feels like
 18-19 you're [ta]king]a]dou]CHE,]
 20 E: [ch]uh]uh]uh]a h]ahh[ahh a h]·hhh]HUH-HA]=
 21 L: [hhhHHUH]HHUH]HHUH]
 22 L: = HA-AHH]a h h]ha]ha]c]h,
 23 E: HAA ha]e-ye]ah]ch]uh]·hhuhhh=
 24 L: =A [nd we-]
 25 E: [I CA]N SEE YOU TWO KIDS

Here, as what it feels like is being projected we get the 'anticipatory' «eh uh uh uh». At a 'recognition point' for «a dou...», we get an

escalation to «ah», and at completion, a next escalation to «ahh».

In each instance, then, the laughter can be seen to be beautifully fitted to, indeed part and parcel of, an ongoing response by the recipient: In Fragment (15.a), an *offense-disattentive* response through and through, culminating in the lexicals, «I bet the moonlight and the beautiful stars», and in Fragment (15.b), an *offense-affiliative* response through and through, culminating in the lexicals, «I CAN SEE YOU TWO KIDS» (the offense-disattentive laughter followed by a lexical display of averting gaze from the nude swimming to contemplate the moon and stars; the offense-affiliative laughter followed by a perfect contrast, a lexical display of beholding the play at the water outlets).

Conclusion

We summed up our consideration of the three initial fragments, (9), (10), and (11), with the proposal that laughter can occur as a component of a methodically produced sequence of activities. To that we can now add that, as in these latter two fragments, (15.a) and (15.b), laughter can be seen to be methodically produced in its course. In conclusion, then, we can propose that laughter is a socially organized activity; at a gross productional level; i.e., in its sheer occurrence at some specifiable point in the course of talk, and in its own fine-grained productional particulars.

Gail Jefferson, Harvey Sacks and
Emmanuel A. Schegloff

NOTES

(1) This paper is a revised and shortened version of a manuscript produced in 1974, prior to the untimely death of Harvey Sacks.

(2) The fragments shown in this report are rendered in standard orthography and are simplified, a range of symbols indicating various prosodic features having been eliminated. Following are explanations of the symbols which still appear in these fragments (others are used as sparingly as possible, and are explained when necessary).

- [*bat*] Italics indicates emphasis.
- [Brackets indicate the point of overlap-onset, and are used to parse segments of talk across overlap.
- = Equal signs indicate no gap between the utterances or utterance-components connected thereby.
- (0.2) Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenths of seconds. (0.2) indicates 2/10ths second.
- (.) A dot in parentheses indicates a very brief silence, no more than 1/10th second.
- 'hhh A row of 'h's precoded by a dot indicates an inbreath.
- (h) An 'h' in parentheses indicates a particle of within-speech laughter.

(3) The search of apt comparisons is also characterizable as terminated at a point where an adequate number of examples, three, have been offered. For a consideration of the adequacy of a three-part list, see Jefferson, G., «List-construction as a task and interactional resource», in G. Psathes, R. Frankel, and J. Coulter (eds.), *Interactional Competence*, Ablex, forthcoming.

(4) See Jefferson, G., «A technique for inviting laughter and its subsequent acceptance/declination», in G. Psathes (ed.), *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*, New York: Irvington Publishers Inc., 1979, pages 79-96.

(5) *Ibid*, pages 82-83. The example shown here is a refined retranscription of an instance used in that article.

(6) Laughing together may be characterized as a 'base environment' which can be adapted to the management of a possible interactional breach. For a consideration of the notion of 'base environment' see Sacks, H., *unpublished lecture* 3(R), 1964-1965, pages 5-10.

(7) For a consideration of another activity which may be done in 'embedded' form, see Jefferson, G., «On exposed and embedded correction in conversation», *Studium Linguistik*: 14, Germany, Hain, 1983, pages 58-68.

(8) For a consideration of the 'recycle' as a device in the management of overlapping talk, see Schegloff, E. A., «Recycled Turn Beginnings», a paper presented at the *Conference on Linguistics*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973.

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- Schegloff, E. A., «Recycled turn beginnings», a paper presented at the Conference on Linguistics, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973.

<p>A</p> <p>semiotica, linguistica, semantica sémiotique, linguistique, sémantique Semiotics, Linguistics, Semantics</p>	<p>B</p> <p>Semiotica narrativa e discorsiva. Rhetorica. Sémiotique narrative et discursive. Rhétorique. Semiotics of narrative and discourse. Rhetoric</p>	<p>C</p> <p>Socio-semiotica (socio- ed etno-linguistica) Socio-sémiotique (socio- et ethno-linguistique) Socio-Semiotics (Socio- and Ethno- Linguistics)</p>
<p>D</p> <p>semiotica letteraria; mitologia e folklore; poetica sémiotique littéraire; mythologie et folklore; poétique. Literary Semiotics; Mythology and Folkloristics; Poetics</p>	<p>E</p> <p>Semiotiche auditive. Sémiotiques auditives. Audio Semiotics.</p>	<p>F</p> <p>Semiotiche visive e audio-visive Sémiotiques visuelles et audio-visuelles Visual and audio-visual Semiotics</p>