Talking City Trouble: Interactional Vandalism, Social Inequality, and the "Urban Interaction Problem"[1]

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This article uses ethnography and conversation analysis to pinpoint what "goes wrong" when certain so-called street people "harass" passersby. The technical properties of sidewalk encounters between particular black street men and middle-class white female residents of Greenwich Village are compared with interactions expected from studies of other conversation situations. The men attempt to initiate conversations and to deal with efforts to close them in ways that betray the practical ethics fundamental to all social interaction. In this way they undermine the requisites not just for "urbanism as a way of life," but the bases for how sociability generally proceeds. These acts of "interactional vandalism" both reflect and contribute to the larger structural conditions shaping the local scene.

In July 1996, New York City passed an antipanhandling statute in the context of other local initiatives to control so-called street people, including rapid response to even minor infractions of the law, city partnerships with private business associations to thwart unauthorized commercial street activity, and—as evidenced by certain interim reconstruction within Pennsylvania station—the architectural redesign of public spaces (Duneier 1999).[2] These were responses to widespread claims that, along

[1] We wish to thank Hakim Hasan, Gene Lerner, and Don Zimmerman for invaluable and detailed guidance; we are also grateful for the helpful comments of Deirdre Boden, Debbie Carr, Jane Collins, Eric Grodsky, Tess Hauser, Pam Oliver, Constance Penley, Jane Piliavin, Lincoln Quillian, Franklin D. Wilson, and Katherine Zippel. We also thank Mardi Kidwell and Michele Wakin for their consultation and support. Several *AJS* reviewers were especially helpful. Direct correspondence to Harvey Molotch, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, California 93106.

[2] These efforts embraced the concept of "community policing," gaining wide acceptance in New York as in other U.S. cities (Kelling and Coles 1996).

0002-9602/99/10405-0001$02.50

with such things as unsanitary streets, crime, and graffiti, interactions between street people and pedestrians were eroding the city's "quality of life." In the words of the New York City Council's legislative finding, the "increase in aggressive solicitation throughout the city has become extremely disturbing and disruptive to residents and businesses, and has contributed not only to the loss of access to and enjoyment of public places, but also to an enhanced sense of fear, intimidation and disorder" (NYC Council 1996).[3]

This article has four primary goals, all related to these evident tensions and the efforts they stimulated to reform New York's street life: (1) to identify the precise properties of interactions between certain street people and pedestrians that make them so problematic for participants; (2) to exhibit a research strategy through which they and other problematic interaction settings can be studied to determine why they are experienced as so troublesome; (3) to illustrate how microinteractions (talk on the streets, in our case) can help constitute larger social structural phenomena (like new police policies) just as those phenomena "come back" to constitute the nature of microinteraction—the micro-macro interface as a structuration process (Giddens 1984); (4) to use what has been learned to revisit the classic paradigm of urban interaction in light of our findings.

To accomplish these various aims, we "zoom in" on several very concrete interactions between a subset of street people and female pedestrians, utilizing the tools of conversation analysis, abetted through an ongoing ethnographic and interview study. We believe that whatever problems may be caused by the content of what gets said and by difference in class, race, and gender categories, there is something about the micromanagement of the encounters themselves that is essential to explain the felt difficulties of those "only" passing by.

Although our work focuses on one urban site, we do not regard the substantive problems or research issues as limited to the few blocks we study. During our five-year research period, statutes of the kind passed in New York also became law in Seattle, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Dallas, the District of Columbia, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Long Beach, Philadelphia, New Haven, Raleigh, and Baltimore, among other places. An awkward tenseness in dealing with street people was massively reported not only in journalistic accounts but to us directly by our colleagues, friends, and associates. In describing a small number of interactions, we offer a conceptual and strategic framework for studying problematic interaction across a wider realm.

[3] The Mayor's memorandum in support referred to the legislation as an effort to curb "inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm" (Office of the Mayor, City of New York, June 25, 1996).

SETTING

Our site is Manhattan's Greenwich Village, a place of contemporary extremes of wealth as well as marked ethnic and racial difference. Although this neighborhood, far more than most, is one of social variety, we center on what is plausibly the most loaded site of difference not only here but in U.S. society as a whole—encounters between black street men and middle-class white women.[4] Our focus on relations among these two groups arose when initial ethnographic observations implied they were more problematic than any others, an impression confirmed by listening to many hours of tape involving interactants of different sorts. Our knowledge of the Village is based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, primarily on three adjacent blocks along Sixth Avenue, from Eighth Street and Greenwich Avenue to Washington Place, over the period September 1992–October 1998, with daily observation from September 1992 to June 1993 and complete immersion during the summer months of 1996 and 1997 (for more detail, see Duneier [1999]).

These blocks of the Village are densely built-up with stores, bars, and restaurants, primarily in midrise buildings. Traffic is heavy, both on the streets and sidewalks. Adjoining sidestreets provide residence (as well as some additional commercial activity) at varying levels of density, from large apartment buildings to single-family townhouses. Some Villagers are very affluent (the median 1990 family income on the blocks we study was $66,869).[5] Property values are some of the highest in the United States; narrow rowhouses can cost upward of $1 million, with condominiums sometimes in the same range. Partly because of New York's rent control laws, some units rent at rates within reach of middle-class tenants, at least those who can make do with the modest spaces they usually contain. Otherwise, this is an area that reflects the increasing social and economic bifurcation found in the United States, sometimes said to be especially marked in the global cities (see, e.g., Sassen 1991; Fainstein 1986; Mollenkopf and Castells 1992).

Not captured by any standard sociodemographic profile is the Village's cultural tradition, well known across the world as arty, bohemian, and free thinking. As one continuing manifestation, it has come to hold the city's highest concentration of gay men. In part because of these distinctive traits (and the kind of retailing and semiotic features that accompany them), it is also a visitor destination for people coming from other parts

[4] From slave times forward through Southern lynching and contemporary urban white anxieties, the black male fills the position of sexual threat and mythic "true brute" (Gardner 1995, p. 116; see also, e.g., Hodes 1998; Blauner 1989).

[5] These data correspond to the adjacent census block group, 006500–1, which has 2,018 residents, 6.6% of whom are African-American and 3.1%, Hispanic.

of the world or other neighborhoods of the city.[6] Troubles based on race and class here clearly cannot be attributed to an especially reactionary group of people; instead any such difficulties arise under more or less "best case" conditions.

Part of the Village's heritage is also a prior history of ethnographic description (Ware [1935] 1994), especially Jane Jacobs's late 1950s observations of Village social interaction as representing the ideal for what makes up a "great" American city (Jacobs 1961). Jacobs described the Village sidewalks as having much convivial contact among acquaintances and even strangers, but within a context of mutual respect for appropriate limits on interaction and intimacy. "Cities are full of people with whom, from your viewpoint, or mine, or any other individual's, a certain degree of contact is useful or enjoyable; but you do not want them in your hair. And they do not want you in their hair either" (Jacobs 1961, p. 56).

For Jacobs this balance of contact and separation made for interactive pleasantness, adding up to "an almost unconscious assumption of general street support when the chips are down" (Jacobs 1961, p. 56). Because of the presumed good intentions ratified by the experience of even minor interchanges, the Village's "eyes and ears on the street," in her famous dictum, indicated they were safe and thereby produced safety in fact. There was a choreography based in Goffmanian "civil inattention"—acts of glance and gesture that provide the benefit of recognition while simultaneously "conveying that the other was of no special threat" (see Gardner 1995, p. 92; also Anderson 1990; Lofland 1973, p. 140). There was a system of trust.

However, as much as today's Village may still contain people living as these depictions suggest, certain changes have taken place stemming from the fact that there is another, less venerated Village, which likely did not exist in Jacobs's day. She does not report homelessness, begging, or racial tension (although ethnic tension is described), perhaps because racial segregation and well-policed skid row areas then kept the marginal more at bay (Bittner 1990; Wiseman 1970).[7]

In 1997, there were a total of 31 vendors, scavengers, and panhandlers

[6] Many have documented the Village's distinctiveness (e.g., Banes 1993; Beard and Berlowitz 1993; McDarrah and McDarrah 1996).

[7] But there were many white ethnics working as vendors on the Lower East Side, and panhandlers had been a mainstay of city life during the Depression (although none of them are reported in, e.g., Ware's Village study). Ware does make passing reference to beggars and homelessness in the case records of social workers, but not as a problem in public space (her book is Depression era). In terms of gender, young men were expected, according to Ware (p. 147) to "chase women" and engage in the "Tom-cat code" of local Italian culture. Both Ware's and Jacobs's work preceed feminist problematization of gender and public space.

on our blocks,[8] almost all of whom were African-American men. Taking advantage of a New York City ordinance that makes special allowance for the street sale of printed matter,[9] some of the street people sell books (mainly used) and magazines from tables they set up on the sidewalk. Contrary to stereotype, some of these vendors are drug free and have apartments, a status akin to conventional citizens who support families with the proceeds of their work. Lower down, in terms of the status street people accord one another, are scavengers who work as "hunters," supplying the vendors with the goods gathered from dumpsters and recycling bins. Still lower in the hierarchy are panhandlers. Many of the scavengers and panhandlers, as well as some of the magazine vendors, are excessive drug users or alcoholics who sleep on the same sidewalks where they spend their waking hours or in nearby doorways or in the subways. This is a rough guide only, and some of the people have multiple roles at the same time or shift specialty over time—experiencing both upward and downward mobility in terms of ways of making money, substance dependence, and homelessness.

Although on various blocks of the Village there are some white men working as scavengers and a few women of color who live as vendors or panhandlers, none in our experience are white women. White women on Village sidewalks are heading for a destination; if they are operating in a more leisurely manner, they are taking a walk or walking a dog. They are not on the sidewalk to make their lives. Our two protagonist groups come into direct contact because of the niche the white women fill in the street men's routine as potential customers or sources of spare change. In the possibility of talking with them (or at them), they are also vehicles for helping pass the time, an ongoing challenge, says Liebow (1993), for those without regular employment or residence.

METHODS

Access to sidewalk interactions and entree to the local street scene in general began when one of the authors—Mitchell Duneier ("Mitch")—lived in the area and became a frequent customer of the vendors. Mitch is a white man in his midthirties. Through slowly built up relations, these vendors introduced him to their scavenger-suppliers; these relations then led to panhandlers. Once Mitch was in the network, contacts and introductions took place, almost always cordial, across the various spheres.

[8] Because people come and go from the scene at various times of day and night, only about a third of this total is visible on the streets at any given time.

[9] New York City Law no. 33 (1982).

Mitch became a general assistant to the street vendors, sometimes watching their merchandise while they went on errands, occasionally also buying up merchandise offered in their absence, and assisting on scavenging missions. He also performed such favors as going for coffee. He eventually worked for two full summers as a scavenger and vendor. He was treated as a routine fixture of the blocks, occasionally referred to as a "scholar" or "professor"—but overwhelmingly as another street character known only by a single name, with no title or family name. His role and designation was "Mitch."

Mitch carried out approximately 30 interviews—instances when he explicitly requested an informant to tell their story. These tape-recorded sessions, held on street corners, in coffeeshops, on the floors at subway landings, lasted between three and six hours; Mitch paid his informants $50 on a one-time basis. But most of the data, including all data detailed in this article, came from Mitch's continuous participant-observation among the people of the street, including their interactions with passersby. During the last two years of the study, Mitch also taped ordinary conversations, usually keeping the recorder running on a milk crate under his or a street colleague's vending table.[10]

Because Mitch lived in the area, he knew many residents in addition to the street people. These people—among them many white women—were continuous informants. But Mitch also managed, on several occasions, to interview the very women whose interactions with the street men he previously had observed. This was done either by catching up with the women after they passed the scene or simply waiting for them to again pass by so that an interview could be arranged at a different time. Through one such effort, an interview was gained with a woman whose conversation figures large in this report (referred to below as "Laura").

Not participating in the fieldwork directly, the second author, Molotch (also a highly educated white man) has had some running familiarity with the area based on having lived there during Jacobs's era (in 1963, two blocks from the main corner in the present study). He has returned several dozen times over the years for brief visits to be with friends who have maintained residence near these blocks. During the study period, he developed an ongoing relationship with one of the vendors on the streets

[10] Street people were told of the taping and after a period of weeks seldom behaved in ways different than at prior times. Even on tape, the men trusted the researcher with embarrassing details of their lives as well as of acts that were either illegal or could have resulted in violence toward them from others. Taped and written records of any such details have now been destroyed. For additional methodological discussion regarding the taping process as well as general issues of reflexivity and mutual awareness of the research activity, see Duneier (1999).

through repeated meetings, shared meals, and phone conversations, along with more casual contacts with some of the other men. He was present on the block on the day of one of the two primary interaction stretches analyzed in this paper.

Studies of troubled public interactions have tended to rely on postevent interviews (Gardner 1995; Feagin 1991) or reconstructions based on a combination of interviews and observation (e.g., Suttles 1968; Anderson 1990). Motivated by a desire to go beyond our own impressionistic accounts and interview data, we moved toward conversation analysis as a method. Subjecting talk to the technique of conversation analysis requires capturing virtually every aspect for later examination, including split second silences and small utterances like "umm," "oh," and "uh" as well as interruptions and overlaps (as when two people speak at the same time). Also, stretches of talk should be long enough to permit the analyst to determine the meaning of a given feature of talk in light of prior or subsequent utterances in the same stream. These conditions can be difficult to achieve under even ordinary conditions; with honking horns, sirens, yelling, and other background noise, the streets present an extreme challenge. Complicating matters, street people move about, talk away from a microphone, and, especially if eating, drinking, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, do not speak clearly enough for accurate transcription. Likewise, pedestrians are in motion and, often trying to avoid street people, talk away from a microphone or slur words meant more to evade talk than to convey substance.

Although we have recorded hundreds of hours on the streets, the two primary stretches that we here present are among the few instances of data technically good enough for our full purpose. We think of these finds among our stacks of tape as akin to fossil fragments that, although a small sample indeed, can yield considerably more than casual clues to the way life is constructed.[11] Schegloff (1987) has provided a full-scale demonstration of the payoff of even a single episode of conversation. Conversation analysts have now accumulated a large technical knowledge base of how people pattern their talk under relatively unproblematic conditions. The key principle is that in everyday talk parties keenly attune to the cues offered by the other, mutually seeking and finding the appropriate moments and methods to begin a conversation, take turns within it, or facilitate its ending. Conversation analysis strives to determine, through close

[11] We know of no other successful efforts at tape recording such spontaneous interactions involving street people. For other instances of "small sample" analyses, see Schegloff (1987), Whalen, Zimmerman, and Whalen (1988), and in a very different realm, Barker and Wright's (1951) study of one boy's day.

(even split second) empirical observation, precisely how individuals, through mutual awareness of unfolding conversational trajectories, manage to talk with one another. Besides the original formulation (Sacks 1992) and successor summaries (Heritage 1984), a more recent presentation by Schegloff (1996) in the pages of this journal has painstakingly laid out a concise statement of the basic precepts of conversation analysis and of how it contrasts and at least potentially complements more traditional work in the discipline.

Without repeating Schegloff's exegesis yet again, we note that the conversation analysis program consists of " 'noticings' of initially unremarkable features" of talk and conduct, "unmotivated" by any political or theoretical goals of citizens or conventional sociology (Schegloff 1996, p. 172). We too make use of these "noticings," but in contrast to basic scholarship in conversation analysis, we *are* motivated by a substantive set of concerns: how in the process of deploying the procedures described in conversation analysis, people make trouble in the streets. The talk carries great tension—tension we think we can find in its formal properties as defined by conversation analysis. Thus, we use what conversation analysis has already learned, trading on its specific "discoveries," as Schegloff (1996, p. 174) appropriately terms them. We are doing a kind of sociological and policy-oriented *applied* conversation analysis.[12]

Most of the data used so far in conversation analysis comes from taped phone conversations, videorecordings of family and work settings, and some institutional milieus such as court proceedings (rather than sidewalks). But the findings have been sufficiently robust to hold even across diverse language and national groupings—besides the languages of western Europe—Japanese (Lerner and Takagi, 1998), as well as Farsi and six other Indo-European languages (Boden 1983). We thus infer, given the diversity of the base, that conversation analysis (or CA) provides an appropriate template against which to look for distinctive attributes of the conversations we examine. We will compare the technical properties of our street conversations with CA findings of how talk ordinarily operates. We draw upon only a few of the most replicated and straightforward findings from CA scholars to do this. We contrast our actual findings with "expected" findings, with the difference revealing the distinctive nature of these street interactions. This provides for a quasi-experimental design otherwise difficult to approximate in ethnographic method.

[12] As CA scholars gain an "understanding of how interaction works, and based on this understanding, it then may be possible to examine distributions of phenomena in terms of structural orother identities," as Maynard (1988, p. 317) says. See his essay for examples of work in which such an approach appears at least implicit.

OUR PROBLEMATIC INTERACTIONS

It is noteworthy that, given their prevalence in discourse in the Village and across the city, only a small fraction of interactions seemed to involve the kind of problems complained of by so many. We found that, on our three blocks, only three of the 21 "regulars" caused problems and even they would do so for only a minority of the moments they were on the streets. They are Mudrick, Keith, and Butterroll,[13] three of the homeless panhandlers who also occasionally work as assistants to magazine scavengers and vendors. While our analysis here centers on their behaviors that passersby tend to find objectionable, it cannot be overemphasized that at other times on the sidewalk (and in other parts of their lives) each of these men would be seen as acting in positive and straightforward ways toward others, including the women in their lives—girlfriends, mothers, and granddaughters as well as general passersby. When they do act problematically, the other men on the block regard their behavior as deviant and detrimental to their entrepreneurial activity.[14] They tell the three such things as "shut up," "stop messing with my business," or "you giving the rest of us a bad name." Usually the behavior persists despite the entreaties to stop (one of the vendors, in response, left the area to find a space where he could be alone).

We present various examples of talk involving the three men. In formal CA terms, these episodes revolve around fundamental aspects of any conversation—opening them and closing them.[15] Doing the kind of coordination involved in accomplishing openings and closings is prerequisite for any conversation and hence for urban civility in general. For two stretches of talk we present, involving Mudrick and Keith, there is both enough auditory detail to permit CA treatment and also sufficient length to display how sequences unfold, including the way different types of participants pursue distinctive strategies over time. For Butterroll's talk, we have shorter sequences that, while ancillary, further display problems in opening a conversation.

Based on the examples that follow, we study the mechanisms behind (1) problematic openings in which street men make efforts to open conversations that are not reciprocated by women passing by even when the men persist and (2) problematic closings in which the women try to close

[13] Except as stated in n. 22 below, all names in this article are used by the participants themselves in real life. Each has been read the contents that refers to him, and each gave consent.

[14] We use the term "deviant" advisedly, based on the labeling done by the confreres on the street.

[15] One of the significant books presaging advances in discourse analysis was entitled *Opening and Closing* (Klapp 1978).

conversations, but the men do not respond in a way appropriate for ending the exchange even as the women persist.

Our main analyses turn out to rest on four different forms of data derived from the same interaction streams. We have, at least in regard to Mudrick and Keith (1) researcher's memories and notes from first observing the conversations on the street, (2) voice tapes (which we listened to repeatedly), (3) conventional transcriptions of those tapes, (4) detailed CA transcriptions, made for us by Mardi Kidwell, a person trained in the technical conventions of conversation analysis (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974).

For Mudrick and Keith, our presentation strategy is to first display and analyze our conventional transcription and then represent the same material using CA notations, pointing out the kind of knowledge gained with the fuller treatment. Only by recourse to this level of detail, as will become evident, can the nature and full force of the sidewalk tension be appreciated. All through, we supplement conversation analysis with our ethnographic understandings of the street—body language, the physical setting, individual histories, as well as past events known to us. In this way, we take the liberty to merge the two distinct research orientations, using CA to enrich the more conventional sociological ethnography (rather than the other way around)—an appropriate stance given our ultimate analytic target of a recognized social problem.[16]

FAILED OPENINGS: QUESTIONS AND COMPLIMENTS TO WOMEN

A common genre of street talk involves men calling out to women who do not respond. These are hence not really conversations at all, even though talk occurs. In various settings, most famously the edge of construction sites, men, sometimes handing off turns to one another as a "team performance" (Gardner 1995, p. 106), evidently earn esteem of other men in earshot.[17] Gardner (1995, p. 146) calls attention to these types of interaction as something women frequently experience as abusive; they signal, perhaps, the oft claimed fact of male privilege in public spaces, enforced at the extreme through women's physical vulnerability and the omnipresent threat of rape (Bart and O'Brien 1985; Stanko 1990; see also Spain 1992; Hayden 1981, 1995). We note, however, that these calls are often interpret-

[16] We take the Schutzian natural attitude as fundamental and privileged not only for making mundane reality (see Pollner 1987; Cicourel 1970), but also for making "findings" about that reality, as in the practice of sociology we are here conducting.

[17] Goffman (1963, p. 63) refers to women serving as "open persons," who can be addressed without conventional opening devices; African-Americans, gays, and children are also such persons—depending on time and circumstance.

able as "merely" questions ("Where ya goin, honey?") or compliments ("nice legs") and in content not necessarily even hostile ("Are you married?"). But a formal indicator, from within the talk itself that these are not taken as "innocent questions" and that something is indeed "going wrong," is that the women tend not to respond. Nor do they, as people do in ordinary talk, ask for a repeat of the question or for a clarification. They are not interested in responding. This is all striking given CA findings that questions ordinarily induce some kind of answer, requests produce a declination or are granted, compliments are an engine for acknowledgments. These expected couplets are examples of what conversation analysts call "adjacency pairs"; they massively recur (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks et al. 1974). Generally, withholding a second part of such a pairing is noticed, something evident in the participant's tendency to repeat their first part if the second does not follow. To not respond at all is notably disaffiliative.[18] For men to keep asking, when knowing "perfectly well" they have been heard, is—in our interpretation—a kind of disaffiliative escalation.

Following is a stream of examples of questions and compliments from Mudrick that gain no response, including a pursuit in which he explicitly states he knows he was heard "the first time." Mudrick, approximately 57 years old, with a history of alcoholism, scavenges and occasionally sells printed matter on the streets. This verbatim transcript, with nothing left out of the stretch, comes from talk taped as the researcher, Mitch, and Mudrick were left to mind the table of used magazines and books for one of the vendors who had gone on an errand. Although Mudrick is temporarily "in business" (and hence stationary enough to be taped) he does not alter the kind of patter we have often seen him engage in with women passersby when panhandling or merely passing some time. He begins this interaction as a white woman who looks about 25 approaches at a steady pace:

1 Mudrick: I love you baby.

She crosses her arms and quickens her walk, ignoring the comment.

2 Mudrick: Marry me.

Next, it is two white women, also probably in their midtwenties:

3 Mudrick: Hi girls, you all look very nice today. You have some money? Buy some books.

They ignore him. Next, it is a young black woman.

[18] Speaking of the "maintenance of the relevant forms and observances," Heritage comments, "it is deviance from these institutionalized designs which is the inferentially rich, morally accountable, face-threatening and sanctionable form of action" (1984, p. 268).

4 Mudrick: Hey pretty. Hey pretty.

She keeps walking without acknowledging him.

5 Mudrick: 'Scuse me. 'Scuse me. I know you hear me.

Then he addresses a white woman in her thirties.

6 Mudrick: I'm watching you. You look nice, you know.

She ignores him.

7 Mudrick (to Mitch): She was looking dead at me. You could see it. They be watching you. Most ladies, they be waiting for you to say something to them.

Three white women in their twenties approach.

8 Mudrick: Hi ladies. How you all feeling, ladies. You all look very nice, you know. Have a nice day.

The women ignore Mudrick. Thinking that Mudrick's approach is not "good for business" prompts a question.

9 Mitch: Let me ask you a question, Mudrick. When you do that, explain to me the pleasure you get out of it.

10 Mudrick: I get a good kick out of it.

11 Mitch: Explain to me the kick you get out of it.

12 Mudrick: It make me feel good and I try to make them happy, the things I say to them, you understand? The things I say, they can't accept. They gotta deal with it.

Sometimes Mudrick, as with other street men, does gain some small response from the women. Here's an example of that "success," achieved on a woman Mudrick was able to begin speaking with just before she reached the vendors' tables:

1 Mudrick: Hey pretty.

2 Woman: Hi how you doin.

3 Mudrick: You alright?

4 Mudrick: You look very nice you know. I like how you have your hair pinned.

5 Mudrick: You married?

6 Woman: Yeah.

7 Mudrick: Huh?

8 Woman: Yeah.

9 Mudrick: Where the rings at?

10 Woman: I have it home.

11 Mudrick: Y' have it home?

12 Woman: Yeah.

13 Mudrick: Can I get your name?

14 Mudrick: My name is Mudrick, what's yours?

She does not answer and walks on.

In this sequence Mudrick used all nine of his turns (out of a total of 14 turns for both of them) as strategy to initiate conversation. Every one of his utterances is designed to sustain talk in that it provides the first part of what would ordinarily be an adjacency pair. He asks questions of different forms at lines 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 14 and pays three compliments (one on line 1, two in line 4). In fact, some of these turns have forms that have been previously noted by CA researchers as quite specific ways to generate responses. Hence, the "huh?" on line 7 is a request for clarification ("request for repair" in CA terminology), line 11's "Y' have it home?" is a request for a confirmation; asking for the woman's name in line 13 is another request and the asking again for the same information on line 14 is a "pursuit." In sequential terms, this represents a pattern of increasingly strong efforts to generate a response.

In substantive particulars, Mudrick's line of questioning is especially artful because in asking the woman whether or not she is married (line 5), he gives her a question she will likely want to answer. He evidently knows that, as reported by Gardner (1995, p. 131), an item of information that "may be manipulated by the woman to her advantage" is to inform a strange man that "she is married or has a boy friend," and hence is not a candidate for further talk much less romantic liaison. But since Mudrick is pursuing a conversation rather than a date, the question works for him because of its special likelihood of gaining an answer—which it does. Since he sees no wedding ring (maybe he saw she wore none even before asking his question), he has her trapped in a contradiction, one she feels compelled to then explain ("I have it home"). So Mudrick has her on the edge of a "real" conversation (two responses) through his savvy crafting of talk content as well as form.

Otherwise, the woman gives no indication of a desire to talk. Mudrick's opener on line 1 ("Hey pretty") contains, in CA terms, a summons as well as a compliment and it brings the only response that could possibly be interpreted as a question (but see below) from the woman (her "Hi how you doin"). The woman offers no summons, compliment, question, or other talk that implies she wants to interact. From Mudrick's standpoint, he got some talk but under circumstances—now becoming visible to us in both substantive and technical terms—that most would find demeaning. From the woman's standpoint, Mudrick ignores her cues that she does not want to talk, ordinarily evident when one does not reciprocate by also asking questions, offering compliments, or using other techniques to display a desire to carry on. The two individuals are actively failing to collaborate in accomplishing a "normal" interaction.

Even in the face of the woman's disaffiliative moves, Mudrick performs the substantively radical action of asking for her name, a crucial bit of

what Goffman calls "access information" that women understand may enable a strange man to learn one's phone number, address, workplace, or other personal routines (see Gardner 1995, p. 131). Not hearing an immediate reply, he bolsters his request by offering his own name (line 14); something that, in CA terms, can be a way to simultaneously ask for the other person's name (Sacks 1992, 1:3, 4). But not chancing it will work on its own, he asks explicitly—and in effect, "again," with the question "What's yours?"—another pursuit. Under most circumstances, one would read the disaffiliative features of this woman's turns to indicate she would never provide something so intimate as her name. Coming as it does in this place in the stream of technical displays, it is indeed a question "out of place."

By asking for the woman's name in the face of her prior cues, Mudrick aggressively displays he pays no allegiance to the way the woman has painstakingly designed the timing and sequencing of her responses (or lack of them). At the heart of Mudrick's incivility was his betrayal of the underlying tacit conventions of sociability. We refer to this kind of impropriety as "technical rudeness" to distinguish it from offenses to substantive norms and rules (which are things named, discussed, and legislated).[19] For her part, the woman—as with prior women Mudrick talked to—is also technically rude by her nonresponse to his repeated "requests" for talk.

Evidence of the asymmetry in these two people's desire to talk is actually stronger than the transcript indicates because the timing of the woman's responses provides additional display, for Mudrick as for us, of her reluctance. People know how to read and deploy timings in extremely precise ways; three-tenths of a second delay is more than enough to signal a conversational event to interactants as well as to the analyst (e.g., that a compliment was not heard, was misunderstood, or is being ignored). Similarly, people know that a silence following their last utterance may well signal "there is nothing more to say" and is hence a move toward closure.

By presenting the same conversation using the transcribing conventions of conversation analysis, we can see the timing (as well as other features of interest to specialists). Notice, in the following stretch, that the woman delays her responses (when she offers them), but Mudrick speaks immedi-

[19] CA scholars do not classify behaviors as being such things as "rude" or "not rude"; these are folk categories that people invoke as opposed to formal properties of turn taking. Our aim is to show a connection between the way individuals substantively experience encounters and the CA-identified formal properties of those interactions. "Technical rudeness," a term for which we thank Michele Wakin for suggesting, identifies a variant of that connection.

ately following her turns—evidence again, of his desire to keep the conversation going in contrast to the woman's desire to close. Even asking a question of the sort ordinarily designed to get a quick affirmative ("you alright?" line 4) gets Mudrick not an answer, but a full 2.2 second silence that he must end by taking still another turn (line 6). As for the woman's one "question" (Hi, how you doin?), it does not, when heard on tape, have the rising inflection associated with requests or inquiries, but is instead spoken in the manner of a closure, a "greeting substitute" that proposes to end the interaction. Similarly, when the woman says her ring is at home (line 18), she hits the word "home" with an intonation intended to close the subject, not continue it.[20] Here it is again, this time in CA notation (numbers in parentheses indicate silences in tenths of a second; brackets like "[" mark places where a turn is overlapped, as in a very quick response, by the next turn below it):

	1	Mudrick:	Hey pretty.
	2		(0.8)
	3	Woman:	Hi how you doi[n.
→	4	Mudrick:	[You alright?
→	5		(2.2)
	6	Mudrick:	You look very nice you know. I like how you
	7		have your hair (pinned)
	8		(0.8)
	9	( ) (O↑h↓)( )((said in high pitched voice)) ((tape recorder shakes))	
	10	Mudrick:	You married?
	11	Woman:	Yeah.
	12		(.1)
	13	Mudrick:	Huh?
	14		(.)
	15	Woman:	Yea[:h
	16	Mudrick:	[( ) where the rings at.
	17		(0.5)
	18	Woman:	I have it ho:↑me↓
	19	Mudrick:	(Y') have it home?
	20	Woman:	Yeah.
	21	Mudrick:	Can I get your name?
	22		(.)
	23	Mudrick:	My name is Mudrick what's yours.

[20] As she says the word ("ho:↑me↓"), she drags (":") her emphasis on the "ho" with an upward inflection ("↑") to the "me," said with a downward inflection ("↓"); this gives the pronouncement a tone used to end a contentious "debate," as in resting one's case.

The line of talk Mudrick uses is similar to Butterroll's (but Butterroll's occurs only in short snatches). Butterroll, 42 years old, is an alcoholic who has spent the last 10 years of his nights in the subways, either at the bottom level, which the men call "the dungeon" or the intermediate level, the "bat cave." The others regard Butterroll as the most aggressive of all the panhandlers on Sixth Avenue, an opinion which jibes with our own. On at least two occasions during the summer of 1998, his behavior attracted sufficient police interest to bring him jail time (once for 10 days) for violating the city's ordinance against agressive panhandling.

Butterroll, sitting on a crate, rhythmically shakes his coin cup as he greets women coming out of the subway (all are white women in these examples). They ignore him with silence after each of his "turns":

1 Butterroll: Hello, doll baby.
2 Butterroll: You like that?
3 Butterroll: Bullshit!

The woman walks on.

Here Butterroll makes explicit what is otherwise implicit in such interactions: he wants to talk (again, a white woman's silence follows each of his utterances).

1 Hello.
2 You might as well speak.
3 I like you too.

And

1 Hello, doll baby.

The woman apparently grimaces.

2 I only spoke!
3 At least you can speak.
4 And maybe one of these days! Yeah?
5 (He laughs) You know what I'm talking about.
6 Never say never, baby.

Once again we see women confronted by a man who continues in pursuit in the face of disaffiliative silences. In terms of content and also true to type, the proposed greetings, question, and compliment ("doll baby") carry sexual innuendo.

We know that "streetwise" middle-class people, women and men alike and across racial categories, do develop skills—"the art of avoidance," as Anderson (1990, p. 209) terms them—to deal with their felt vulnerability toward violence and crime. According to Anderson, whites who are not streetwise do not recognize the difference between different kinds of black

men (e.g., middle-class youths vs. gang members). They may also not know how to alter the number of paces to walk behind a "suspicious" person or how to bypass "bad blocks" at various times of day (Anderson 1990, p. 231). But we argue that even those who are streetwise in all these ways still run into forms of copresence they would rather not have. In our terms, distressing disaffiliative displays can come even while no one substantively opposes, threatens, or reprimands. Yelling and profanity—which do sometimes occur on the blocks (from both sides)[21]—is far less frequent than technical rudeness. Criminal acts of violence or theft toward passersby under these "broad daylight" conditions is extremely rare: police data indicate the neighborhood (sixth precinct) has one of the lowest crime rates in the city. So much of the trouble is at another level.

THWARTED CLOSINGS, ENTANGLING THE WOMEN

We have indicated how women resist invitations to open and how men ignore their resistance. Because the women generally succeed in avoiding such talk, it is rare to find instances when any kind of "real" conversation takes place. But our stretch of talk involving Keith is such an instance. As such it allows us to focus on how the men may not respond to women's cues for closure of conversations once they are under way. Keith accomplishes this conversation with the use of other parties—a dog and Mitch. This gives us a mixed case of turns, in which "disinterested" parties provide us further clues to how things work. The dog and the researcher function as perturbations which, in the way they are handled by the protagonists (differently than how they handle one another), further reveals the kind of struggles taking place.

Pets, as also in the case of small children, figure into social strategies; walking the dog can convivially attract interactions (Messent 1985; Adell-Bath et al. 1979; Robins, Sanders, and Cahill 1991). In the Village as elsewhere, strangers pet one another's animals or ask of a toddler's identity or habits ("Oh, is this your grandson?"). Gardner (1995, p. 93) reports in her Indianapolis observations that "stranger etiquette" permits someone with a dog or a child to be "approached at will." Perhaps to the advantage of both parties, the dog or child serves to modulate intimacy, permitting, in effect, indirect communication via the dependent creature. A pet serves as social "conduit," say Robins et al. (1991, p. 22), a conclusion based on their study of dog owners' interactions in a city park. People say things to other people's dogs that can make no sense to dogs and ask questions

[21] An occasional woman passerby will respond with angry profanity, sometimes generating a similar outburst from the man as she moves out of shouting distance.

dogs can not answer ("Was it too cold for you, little guy? Poor baby"; Robins et al. 1991, p. 15). But "by addressing the dog instead of the person, regulars avoided greeting and saying good-bye to a person they did not really know nor perhaps were not ready to know." In ongoing interactions, the parties can engage in exploratory, low-risk parries with each demonstrating their degree of commitment without needing to insult the other when reaching their interactional limits.

But dogs (and children) can also induce (and sustain) unwanted interaction. Butterroll, for example, directs remarks to dogs as he panhandles its white woman owner

1 Look at that dog.
2 Oh, she's glamorous.
3 I love you baby.

The woman and dog walk on.

A small child is crying as she walks by with her mother; Butterroll keeps shaking his cup as he says (with no prior opener) "toward" the mother:

1 Mommy's right.
2 Don't give Mommy a hard time.
3 She's right.

While each of Butterroll's lines is met with silence (no matter if the woman has a dog, a child, or is alone), our talk stretch involving Keith follows a very different course. Keith, 42 years old and an alcoholic who suffers from health problems with one of his legs, sleeps on a bed of cardboard on a building roof. Keith and Mitch were minding two adjacent tables for one of the magazine vendors who had gone off to place a wager at a nearby betting parlor. They were sitting on milk crates adjacent to the tables with their backs to the street and their bodies oriented to the sidewalk. A white woman named Laura, whom we later learned through interview was 34 years old and living in a nearby small apartment,[22] walks her pug dog, Dottie, down busy Sixth Avenue. She is a graduate of an elite woman's college, has lived in the Village seven years, and works as a secretary to a venture capitalist. At the sight of Keith and Mitch, she straightens her back and looks dead ahead. As she passes Keith's table, he interrupts his conversation with Mitch to call the dog by name. Street men often know the names of neighborhood dogs (and babies and toddlers) and routinely call out to them:

[22] We gained this interview only after seeing how useful the taped interchange with her was going to be; we were forced to wait almost a year before her return to the scene coincided with Mitch's presence at the tables. "Laura" and "Dottie" are pseudonyms.

1 Keith: Hold on, I gotta talk to my baby.
2 Keith: Come here, Dottie

Dottie goes toward Keith.

3 Mitch: Hi, Dottie. This is Dottie, right?
4 Laura: Yes.
5 Keith: Miss.

Pulling on the leash, the dog tugs her owner over to Keith who begins playing with Dottie.

6 Keith: Sit down.

The dog sits as Laura, the dog's owner stands by looking distracted, pulling on the leash. As Keith pets the dog he says to Mitch:

7 Keith: One o' my babies. No, no . . . pushy woman (in jest, looking down toward the dog jumping on him), kiss me. OK. Get off me, get off me. Oh that's better, Look at 'er, she's a laughin' or somethin'.
8 Mitch: How old is Dottie?
9 Laura: Eight months.
10 Keith: She see her boyfriend (referring to another dog nearby). She likes younger men.
11 Laura: They ran into each other tonight for the first time.
12 Keith: An' he's big as a ox (referring to the "boyfriend").
13 Laura: She looks very happy (referring to Dottie).
14 Keith: He's big as a ox (referring to the "boyfriend").
15 Mitch: Really?
16 Keith: He's about five months old.
17 Laura: Six.
18 Keith: Six. He's like this much bigger than her owner (referring to the owner of the "boyfriend"). She's like, "Ohh, what a man."
19 Laura: She's a pioneer. She's out there.
20 Keith: Always.
21 Laura: Yes.
22 Keith: Well she can't make me no granpa. That's my baby here (referring to Dottie).
22 Laura: Come on. Dottie Dog. ((clapping)) Hey! Come.
24 Keith: Drop the leash for a minute, walk away I wanna see what happens.
25 Laura: No, you know I can't. I'm not gonna drop my leash.

As is characteristic, Keith initiated the interaction, not the woman. While the substance has the form of coming on to a female ("my baby . . . I love Dottie . . . pushy woman . . . where you goin?"), in this case the female is a dog (Butterroll did the same). Having a dog to talk to spares Keith the need to open with a compliment or a question, but rather an instruction (or "summons" in CA terms): "Come here." Just as adults talking to children do not "need" to rely on adjacency pairs to gain their attention (West and Zimmerman 1977), calling out an instruction (like a summons) is conventional in dealing with dogs. That is what dogs respond to, and it is socially permissible to treat even other people's dogs that way. In gaining the dog's attention and her movement toward him, Keith sets up a capacity to hold on to the woman.

Some of Laura's utterances are in response to Keith's questions to her (under these conditions, they work—see lines 4 and 8); others represent her speaking on the dog's behalf—saying what a dog who could talk might indeed say, like her references to the timing of Dottie's first meeting with her boyfriend (line 11) and Dottie's "happy" emotional state (line 13). In various ways, the dog has brought the woman into conversation with Keith. The woman has the dog by the leash, which means that when Keith gains access to the dog, he has the woman by the leash.[23] Developing rapport with a dog who does not recognize class or race distinctions helps Keith entangle a woman who does.

The first time the woman speaks, it is as a response to Mitch. While Mitch may have an advantage over Keith in not having offended Laura with prior sexual come-ons, his presence, on its very face, implies the kind of ally that—according to the work of Anderson (1990)—middle-class people seek out and rely on in the context of disquieting street encounters. Mitch aids Keith's effort at being "in" conversation with the woman in that he produced talk from her in Keith's presence. Here it is again, but in segments and in CA transcription:

1 Keith: .....Hold on, I gotta talk to my baby
2 Come here, Dottie
(1.0)
3 Mitch: Hi, Dottie. This is Dottie, right, =
Laura: = Yes

Whereas there is a pause (one full second) after Keith's turn (after line 2), the woman responds to Mitch without even the customary single beat that usually comes between speakers' turns (the "=" indicates that there is no detectable silence between Mitch's question and the woman's an-

[23] Gene Lerner gave us this formulation.

swer; it comes so fast it is a virtual continuation of Mitch's turn). This interaction event between Mitch and Laura displays, within this otherwise disaffiliative stretch, the common pattern found in the CA literature for performing an affiliative gesture.

Keith's control over the dog introduces a certain parity into his relationship with Laura. In the following sequence, Keith talks to the dog who is alternately in his arms, on his lap, or otherwise in his control. In calling her "Miss," and in subsequent lines (4–18), Keith does all the talking, either speaking to the dog, "for" the dog, or referring to the dog. In the 14.2 seconds that pass from line 1 to line 18, the woman says nothing (no chuckle, nor an "oh" nor an "uhm" that people often inject between sentences; see Schegloff 1981). She fails to participate either as a stand-in for the dog (e.g., expressing its feelings) or as an "audience" appreciating the pleasure her dog could be seen as gaining from Keith's fondling. The animal's presence as a "conversation piece" generates minimal talk from Laura compared to what dogs make possible.

Keith's control over the dog allows him to tolerate many silences (at lines 4, 9, 11, 13, 15, 18), relaxing his need to fill in with a banter of compliments and questions that otherwise would appear necessary to delay the woman's departure (recall Mudrick's contrasting rapid fire). Here is the CA version (with arrows highlighting silences):

→	4		(0.8)
	5	Keith:	Miss
	6		(0.2)
	7		((car alarm goes off))
	8	Keith:	One o' my BABIES=NO(.) no.
→	9		(1.0)
	10	Keith:	(pushy woman/kiss me)
→	11		(0.5)
	12	Keith:	OK. Get off me (.) GET OFF me::
→	13		(2.2)
	14	Keith:	Oh that's better?
→	15		(3.0)
	16		(Look at 'er)
	17		(She's a laughin') in 'er ( ) or somethin'
→	18		(3.0)

For his part, Mitch felt the woman's silences and the imposed constraints on her movement as painfully awkward—an experiential symptom, we believe, of technical conversational conventions being ignored to entrap the listener. The last silence, at line 18, is especially long—truly long enough to signal a disinterest in continuing the conversation (Jefferson 1989). The awkwardness of the moment (Keith is not saying "good-

bye" and the woman is not able to) is the interpretation that Mitch gives, in retrospect, for his coming to Keith's aid (line 19) by asking the woman a question of his own. Predictably, the woman again responds readily to Mitch:

19 Mitch: How old is Dottie?
20 Laura: = Eight months.

The couplet goes smoothly with zero silence between turns (indicated by "="); Laura's voice evidences a positive tone. This again demonstrates that her problems are with Keith in this interaction, not with strangers in general.

Much of the conversation that follows (lines 21–35), including the exchanges between Keith and Laura, is an artifact of Mitch's interchange with the dog owner that has given new life, along with Keith's hold over the dog, to the conversation. But when Laura does volunteer a rare comment to Keith, it is a substantive disagreement. As she offers up the information that the dogs had not met before, she contradicts Keith's statement that the nearby dog is Dottie's "boyfriend" (22–24). Notice that her disagreement comes even faster than immediately, actually overlapping Keith's prior turn (note the transcript brackets). Whereas people frequently overlap when agreeing with one another, they hold off their response when it is going to be a negative by providing a silence or creating a delay with utterances like "well," "umm," or "gee" (Jefferson 1973; Pomerantz 1984). Laura's use of an overlap to deliver a negative is a strongly disaffiliative move—technically rude in our terminology. Her only other comment to Keith (29, 30), correcting his estimate of the dog's age, is again a kind of contradiction, albeit softer than before, and again it contains no cushioning delay.

21 (1.0)
→ 22 Keith: >Sh see her boyfriend (0.1) She likes youn[ger men.
→ 23 Laura: [They ran
24 into each other tonight for the first time
25 Keith: An' he's big as a ox=
26 Laura: =(She looks) very happy.
27 Keith: He's big as a ox=
28 Mitch: Really?
→ 29 Keith: He's about five months old?
→ 30 Laura: Six
31 Keith: (.) He's like this much bigger than her (own/owner).
32 She's like, ''Ohh, what a ma::n''. Huh-huh
33 Laura: She's (.) a pioneer. She's out there.
34 Keith: Always

35 Laura: Yes.
36 (3.0)

This last three second silence (line 36) is reinforced by other cues-to-end that are not evident in the CA transcript, like Laura's distracted facial gestures and continuous jerks on the leash. Although she uses a "yes" (line 35), it comes without the kind of elaboration (e.g., "Yes, how interesting") that might invite an extension of the topic or an invitation for a new topic. It is an agreement but nothing more, a kind of minimal summary statement that more plausibly stands as a signal to end. Keith does not "take the hint" from any of this (including the silences and physical gestures she coordinates with them). Keith does not let go of the dog or the conversation.

Instead, Keith does something else not oriented toward helping with a closure; he raises a somewhat new topic:

37 Keith: Well she can't make me no gran::pa.
38 (0.5)
39 That's my baby here.
40 (2.5)
41 ((yelping, whining sound.))

Standing in silence, pulling on the leash, Laura fails to respond to any of Keith's statements; seconds pass and the dog begins to whine (line 41), an event that induces Laura to make still stronger moves for closure. She looks only at Dottie and calls loudly at the dog (lines 42, 44, 46, 48) to come while Keith continues, now silently, to maintain his hold:

42 Laura: Come o::n.
43 (0.5)
44 Do::tie Dog.
45 (0.2)
46 ((clapping)) Hey!
47 (0.5)
48 Come
49 (0.5)

Laura's agitation coupled with the dog's movement toward her leads Keith to a bold move: he makes a substantive demand that the owner shows, in an uncharacteristically direct way, she will not abide:

50 Keith: Drop the leash for a minute walk away I wanna see what
51 happ[ens
52 Laura: [No, you know I can't. I'm not gonna drop my leash.

Again, Laura's declination comes as an overlap—quite in contrast to the usual pattern (found in CA) in which individuals preface a declination with a pause or prefatory buffer (like "gee" or "well uh"; see, e.g., Sacks 1987; Davidson 1984). Such buffers, among other things, allow space for requesters to inject a revised version that would forestall the refusal (e.g., quickly injecting something like "Maybe when there's less traffic"). Her no (line 52) is, in technical terms, harsh because it does not allow enough time for such a face-saving maneuver. She does soften her technical rudeness by following up with "You know I can't," thus trying, albeit as afterthought, to observe more substantive versions of courtesy.

As Dottie responds to her master's calls, Laura desists from telling Keith to let go of the dog, it seems to us, because this would risk further conversational entanglement. Nor does she move physically closer to retrieve the dog, perhaps for the same reason or out of deeper fear (suggested, we think, in her voice as well as stance). As Keith playfully continues trying to hold on, the dog gets away over a 3.5 second interval, but with Keith maintaining a stream of questions that might have been answered by a dog owner more in sympathy with her dog's questioner. But the woman, gaining access to her dog, need no longer bother:

53 Keith: Where you goin'.
54 (1.0)
55 0Where you goin0.
56 (2.5)
57 Now wait 'till I get (.) you can't wiggle down like a
58 snake. You gotta wait 'till I get ready. See ya later
59 baby.

The woman walks off. The conversation ended without so much as a good-bye or other form of reciprocity to Keith's "see ya"—still another adjacency pair deformed (good-byes ordinarily happen in pairs).

INTERACTIONAL VANDALISM: WHY IT IS TENSE OUT THERE

We are now in a stronger position to understand why comments and requests made by the black street men to the middle-class white women are so fraught with tension. From the dog walker's standpoint, Keith has shown in a string of turns that he betrays the system of practical ethics requisite for conducting social life (see Cicourel 1970). His "rudeness" is made visible not just through the content of his remarks, sometimes quite benign in themselves, but in disattention to the procedures whose tacit recognition provide for trust and a sense of security. So-called small talk is a kind of proving ground of benign intentions, as sensed by Jacobs and as more fundamentally worked out by CA scholars (e.g., Boden 1994).

After Keith's active disregard for the kind of conversational work, hard work, that people tacitly coordinate with one another, how could Laura trust him with her pet? Indeed, how could she trust him at all? Ironically enough, what might seem the technically difficult task of honoring a three-tenths of a second cue to end a conversation is presumed as so ordinary that an individual's failure to do so is threatening.

For many residents of the Village, political liberalness may enter into the dilemmas of their interactional experience. There is apparent discomfort of being "pushed" toward what they evidently do sense as performing some kind of rudeness—a problem for most people but perhaps especially an issue for people with the Villagers' politics. The Village is a stronghold of organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union that have secured the street people's very rights to "bother" the residents in the first place.[24] Indeed, a civil liberties tradition is a source of local pride; residents readily declare they live in the city to experience diversity; some may well have been attracted to the Village by Jane Jacobs's book or the authors she influenced.

We gave Laura a transcript of her conversation with Keith (as quoted above) along with our interpretations of them from a prior draft of this paper (largely intact in this version). She agreed we got it "fairly close," the exceptions being we overestimated her occupational standing as well as her age (both now corrected). She also added that many people, not just street people, talk to her since she got her dog and she is irritated when men of any sort (it is always men) assume they have a right to pick up her dog. She confirmed her special anxiety in encounters with men like Keith as well as her discomfort in being rude: "I think what you said about our white liberal guilt is true. . . . I was thinking about the fear in my voice and I think you are right about people having a hard time saying no, that you're not supposed to say no."

Laura then reflected on how street encounters had challenged her liberal views: "I'm getting more conservative as I get older and its not taxes. I don't mind paying taxes. I guess I don't mind some of the street cleaning up around here . . . [and I] HATE my reaction" (emphasis hers).

In the months after we taped her encounter with Keith, his leg problems had deteriorated; gangrene had set in after frostbite, complicated by cellulitis, a bacteriological infection that had gone untreated.[25] He was now forced to rely on a wheelchair, a possible reason why, as Laura reported to us, she had become more at ease in his presence, sometimes choosing

[24] One of the neighbors who has represented some of the men on the street was the late William Kunstler, one of the country's preeminent civil rights lawyers.

[25] With Keith's permission (a signed written release), we were able to inspect his medical records.

to talk with him and sometimes to ignore him. Picking up, we think, our use of the term in the analysis we showed her, she said in a tone resigned to the awfulness of the situation: "I have been rude to him and I'll be rude to him in the future."

A similar concern for her "rudeness" was conveyed by another resident, this time a white female academic whose walks were complicated by now having a baby with her. Speaking of the internal conflict caused by her interactions with the homeless in Greenwich Village (but also reflecting on her former life in Chicago as well) she said: "That's what cities are about. . . . You want to be able to trust in the kindness of everyone around you . . . [but] you can't ever look anyone in the eyes, you have to be really guarded and it actually ends up being sort of rude . . . especially now with a baby, it raises a whole host of other issues. People are always trying to touch [my baby] Danielle. When a homeless person who may or may not be diseased comes over or even heckles me or is excessively aggressive, I don't have the vocabulary to not be rude. And what ends up happening is that one has to be rude. And that's actually what's really upsetting about it."

From our perspective, neither the women nor the men lack anything in terms of "vocabulary"; more than that, they know the precise timings and other exquisite interactional maneuvers. The problem arises because the men use their tacit knowledge of conversational technology in a way that undermines the basis of talk. Prior studies show how the structurally more advantaged do something like this against the less advantaged (West and Zimmerman 1987) or how those of approximate equal status strive to do it vis-à-vis each other (Molotch and Boden 1985). Here the less powerful mobilize it as a resource against their "betters," a turnabout contributing to the threat. Akin to the more familiar form of vandalism involving assaults against the taken-for-granted ordering of physical property, these apparently "senseless acts are also, in fact, artfully constructed oppositional moves" (Cohen 1980). We define this phenomenon as "interactional vandalism" in that a subordinate person breaks the tacit basis of everyday interaction of value to the more powerful.

Dealing with such assaults presents a distinctive challenge, different from finding police when property is done in or protecting one's physical safety through streetwise strategies. It is also different from dealing with coarse vulgarities sometimes found in Gardner's (1995) "public harassment." More than in any of these cases, interactional vandalism leaves victims unable to articulate what has happened—another "problem with no name," to adapt Betty Friedan's phrase.[26] For this, indeed, there is no

[26] Betty Friedan (1963) was describing the plight of middle-class women caught in the bind of lacking a way to express the sexist sources of their unhappiness.

vocabulary (apart from the esoterica of conversation analysis) much less a ready redress. Mudrick was precisely correct when he says of his calls to the women that "they gotta deal with it." Perhaps the women could effectively revolt by themselves deeply breaching expected behavior—something no doubt possible but involving a radical reversal of how they otherwise conduct themselves—a challenge, in other words considerably beyond most forms of being streetwise.[27]

We know from direct observation that the street men conform to the practical ethics of ordinary talk with each other and with ourselves—and even when arguing with police or local shopkeepers. But when they wish, they are masters of the breach, superior to many of Garfinkel's students assigned to do it in his legendary classes (Garfinkel 1967) and at a par with telemarketers, con artists, and nightclub magicians practiced at mobilizing people's dependence on conventional cues to keep them on the phone, make them go for the bait, or have them watch the wrong hand (Schiffman 1990; Sisk 1995). Besides such technical acumen, the street men also understand the substantive cultural truths that police do not make an arrest for ignoring a woman's pause and that Village women may feel obliged to appear "nice" even to people like themselves. This is not the place for still another exegesis on the meaning of "culture," but such accomplishments imply the men understand the local modes and folkways very well indeed.[28]

However much trouble they create for the women, the street men pay their dues. Their way of passing time and gaining livelihood is hardly ideal from any standpoint, nor is the mechanism through which they "do" their gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). In the women's initial tendency to withhold even the civil glance of urban life (a technically disaffiliative move in the first place), the men face a hard challenge. In their mode of response the men gain—at most—a delay in the women's gait, a hesitant response to their parries, or the satisfaction of having enough power to create an attentive anxiety in those whose social position stands higher than their own. The street men's ability in these regards delivers, perhaps, a kind of pleasure at "getting over," as they sometimes say, on

[27] Anderson describes an apparent success of such a breach; a young white woman turned the tables on the black girls who habitually asked her for "loans" when she passed by. Seeing the request coming, she caught the girls off guard by asking them for fifty cents, and then seeing them befuddled walked off feeling victorious (Anderson 1990). Carried forward as a system, such behavior would yield, as both Garfinkel and Tönnies would agree, utter chaos.

[28] These observations conform to others' research demonstrating the "enormous linguistic, social, and cultural competencies" of those who, by virtue of race, age, or class are otherwise thought deficient (Maynard 1988, p. 315; see also, e.g., Labov 1972; Goodwin 1990).

another person. But they are stuck with talking to someone who does not want to talk, and the indignities, usually tacit, such people deliver to show it. Even as they precisely place their compliments and questions and as they cleverly mobilize dogs, researchers, and babies, the men endure a gauntlet of "small insults."[29]

CONCLUSION AND SPECULATIONS

The strategy we have used to access these conclusions—contrasting observed technical deviation from patterns expected on the grounds of accumulated CA findings—lends itself to wider applications, including other sites of troubled contact. Researchers can contrast a presumed normal mode of conversational conduct with instances at hand to find and analyze difference. This can occur in any sort of setting, including those in which powerful people are vandalizing the weak. At a time when so many scholars are studying structural power as it operates in discourse (as when trying to depict hegemony vs. contestation among dominants and subalterns), this strategy would have utility.[30]

A critical aspect of the "abuses, harryings, and annoyances" (Gardner 1995, p. 4) that make up our cases, are the men's methods of depriving the women of something profoundly crucial not just to them but to anyone—the ability to assume in others the practices behind the social bond. Much more is going on then the breaking of conventional "rules of etiquette" or even offering contemptuous substance. Through the pacing and timing of their utterances, the men offer evidence they do not respond to cues that orderly interaction requires. And because social construction of a real world has to be built out of conversations (heavily face-to-face, sometimes through other media), the absence of a "public show of respect" (Garfinkel 1963, p. 238) for this necessarily joint project deeply undermines ontological security (Pollner 1987). That another cannot be presumed to, *of course,* socially collaborate, even if to substantively disagree on what that world actually is, undermines trust—the "great civility" at the base of all human accomplishment, great or small (Shapin 1994, p. 36). Without it, the individual teeters on social vertigo, a "bewilderment" as Garfinkel (1967, p. 53) sometimes says. Even when performed among members of the same gender, class, race, or even family (as in the case of Garfinkel's experiments), breaching mundane orderliness undermines and

[29] West and Zimmerman use this term to describe how men talk to women, such as interrupting them (West and Zimmerman 1977).

[30] Regardless of the degree to which future CA studies show that findings hold across other language and national groups, the relevant principle is that CA findings derived from any group can act as template for deviant instances within that group.

threatens. Not just conversation, but cognition itself being a moral matter, the apparent presence of such uncooperative others understandably gives rise to tensions ungoverned by material or physical threat.

There are, we believe, layers of trouble, each intensifying the effect of the other. The class and status of these men, not just poor but apparently homeless and not just without good attire but sometimes disheveled, bespeaks a kind of distinction that itself has been much remarked upon as engendering anxiety and suspicion (e.g., Snow and Anderson 1993; Jencks 1994). On top of that, at least in our cases, there is gender hierarchy which, once again from the evidence of much commentary, threatens women in public. Finally, racial difference comes into play. Taking these abstractions to a concrete, intimate level, we are saying that interactional vandalism carries the status, class, race, and gender structures into the interaction experience. The social differences help constitute what the interaction troubles mean to the participants (they become more threatening than they otherwise would be) just as those displays of technical rudeness fill in the meaning of the gender, race, and class statuses on evident display.

In this way, we can see how it might be that interactional tensions both derive from "outside" statuses and forces, while feeding back into constituting them.[31] In disregarding their gaze, walking past them as though they were not there and returning compliments with silence, the women appear to the men as beyond human empathy and, in their coldness and lack of respect, appropriate as men's interactional toys.[32] For the women, the men's behavior and the predicaments to which it leads further reinforces their view of these men—and others who appear to be like them—as dangerous objects. Anxiety transfers to "innocent" panhandlers, book vendors, and, to some degree perhaps, poor black men in general; so-called stereotypes are given their life.

While not in themselves definitive compared to other urban experiences, these microlevel interactional breaches add in, we presume, to heighten residents' support for state controls over certain aspects of informal life—new laws, walls, and penalties (presumably the kind of responses our dog walker has come to accept). We glimpse a bit of the coher-

[31] No doubt, the intensities and textures of the interaction problem would be different if the interactants were all men, all women, people of the same race, or individuals who knew one another well. For example, although the street men use both compliments and questions on women (both white and black), they only use questions (like the classic and amateur "Any spare change?") and rarely compliments toward men. Among women, black women, perhaps in sharing something of a common racial history with the black men, appeared more willing and able to talk back, move on, and with less apparent guilt than their white counterparts, but on this we lack strong evidence.

[32] For some of the men's interpretations of the women's behavior, see Duneier (1999).

ently self-reinforcing system of mutual suspicion and incivility that, in structuration terms, links microinteractional process with social structural outcome.

As Jacobs used Greenwich Village to represent the "great city" and the basis upon which urban interaction can rest, we now use these blocks as a window on city troubles. The street men's eyes and ears do not bode security but angst. In the writings of Tönnies, Simmel, and Weber—encompassing sociology's founding paradigms—urban dwellers somehow solved their interactional problem. As Wirth was to later explain, people dealt with Simmel's "unceasing external contact" (Wirth 1938, p. 11) brought on them by numbers, density, and heterogeneity by erecting and respecting social boundaries. Parallel to Jacobs's concerns about people "getting in your hair," Wirth (1938, p. 12) elaborates that "the reserve, the indifference, and the blasé outlook that urbanites manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others."[33]

But such "immunization," as interaction scholars know to their intellectual cores, cannot happen as some mechanistic wonder of a setting—whether urban, rural, or in between. Rather, it is accomplished through moment-to-moment and cooperatively coordinated behaviors. But what people "give" one another, people can take away, again regardless of the setting. As the ethnomethodologists have long argued, all social relations require continuing reassurances that the procedures of practical ethics are in play. In this light, the urban interaction problem is only a subtype of the universal social condition. While the presence of strangers and heterogeneity help shape the problem (Lofland 1973, 1998), all people, contra Simmel et al., must manage social boundaries and access the microprocedures to do so—as has been found as far afield as Western Samoa (Duranti 1994) or among the African Poro people (Bellman 1984). We suspect that the difficulties we report on Sixth Avenue have less to do with urbanism, per se, and more to do with the contemporary character of class, gender, and resentment in settings like New York—another topic, but one massively addressed in popular and scholarly discourse.

Not wanting to risk errors of our forbears, we leave open as a historical and anthropological question just where interactional vandalism will or will not be found. Here we try to clarify how it works in one kind of scene, a realm implicated in the quality of urban public life and the cleavages that surround it. A part of this problem, likely one of the key icons standing for it all, are the handful of people who—as an aspect of their social

[33] Although Wirth (1938, p. 14) saw ethnic and class segregation obviating much of the problem, he noted that "frequent close physical contact, coupled with great social distance, accentuates the reserve of individuals toward one another."

location rather than participation in a sociological experiment—fail to respect others' efforts to coproduce mundane society. In behaviors that, we think, arise from and feed into deep social structural separations, the man and the woman do not always afford one another the capacities they need to make life together.

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