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Everyone Has to Lie[1]

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This chapter reports an attempt to develop an experience for the problem: What should an analysis look like that has as its aim proposing that something that a member says about the social world is true? I will proceed by seeking to show that a particular commonplace statement that members make, *Everyone has to lie,* is true.

In its character, this discussion might be considered an "exercise."[2] By calling the discussion an exercise, I intend to point up the following features. When the study was undertaken, what a solution to its problem should have consisted of was not known. Instead, the investigation was undertaken so as to see, by producing a possible case of such a solution, what "solutions" might look like. On constructing what seems to be a satisfactory solution, that solution could be examined so as to find, e.g., what features such a solution should have *or* to determine how the given solution might be inadequate. We would hope to come up with something that could be investigated itself to see whether it was what we would like to have a theory be, and criteria for a theory could be constructed by reference to what it seemed to contain or lack. In that sense, then, it is an "exercise."

[1] This is essentially a transcription of a lecture, last delivered in 1968 in one of my courses on the analysis of conversation. Parts that served to integrate it into that course have been deleted. It represents a last point at which two strands of my research, on identification selection and on the sequential organization of conversation, were both current. More recently, the latter strand has been exclusively pursued. An extensive revision of the parts that deal with greetings and the *How are you?* sequence is now in progress as part of a general treatment of the openings of conversation that Emanuel Schegloff and I are preparing. The decision to publish it unrevised is based on the following considerations. First, the study has widely circulated in manuscript form for some years. Second, the revision will concern only certain parts of it, and, though we believe we have rather more powerful ways of dealing with those sequences, they are not inconsistent with the presentation here. Third, I am out of touch with its other parts but would not presume to say that, not now working on such matters, I know better than I once thought. The lecture has been befriended by various readers and is an old friend of mine, too—a distant friend but not an enemy or an embarrassment.

[2] I owe the observation that discussions like these should be called "exercises" to Erving Goffman.

Let us proceed to a preliminary consideration of what sociological interest there is in determining the truth of—being able to warrant as "true"—some statement that members make about the social world. First, in a sentence: An investigation directed to determining—that is, to constructing a sociologist's warrant for—the truth of some member's statement about the social world is one way of producing studies of social organization. That is to say, in seeking to find how it is that a possibly true statement that members make about the social world *is* true—can be said by sociologists to be true—what we are led to do is to examine the social arrangements whose organization can be said to constitute a "production procedure" that could provide for the truth of the statement in question. Now, so far there is no basis to differentiate a sociologist's statement about the social world and a member's statement about the social world, and, as such, no particular gains with regard to the study of social organization are made by virtue of the statement's having been a member's statement about the social world. Let us, then, turn to those gains. What is distinctive—for studies of social organization—about the fact that a member made such a statement, is this: We are led, in our construction or characterization of the arrangements of the social world that provides the "truth" of some statement, to possibly find *such arrangements as are available to members*. That is to say, one possibility is that if some statement is true, then if members make that statement they may know it is true. And if members know it is true, then they may know *how* it is true. So in constructing how it is true, we may be constructing that which—if not thereby proved to be available to members—is possibly known by them. We will have selected some phenomenon whose "known-ness" to them can then be investigated.

We note that, of course, the fact that members make a statement and that statement is true does not mean they know it is true. Furthermore, that they know it is true does not mean necessarily that they have available how it is true. Those matters need to be investigated separately.

That we can perhaps come up with or focus on features whose organization is available may be a relatively distinct gain. That is, studies of the truth of some statement that members make may have that gain. This is, then, one sort of interest in possibly true statements that members make. Again, the interest is that we are led to make controlled inquiries—controlled by the statements we deal with—into social organization. And the statements we select isolate for us states whose availability to members is directly of interest.[3] Also, a more academic interest is that, at least in ancient times, there was a rather deep relationship

[3] Such considerations as have just been presented heavily underlie the sort of inquiries presented in Sacks (1971).

between logic and sociology. The ancient relation between logic and sociology turned, in part, on the fact that, in its early days at least, logic was specifically, overtly interested in actual processes of argument and was specifically concerned to formalize actual processes of argument. Currently, such an interest seems again to be emerging on the part of logicians.

It would appear that sociology might have some part in such an interest in actual processes of argument and "various other logical issues" such as, of course, issues with regard to truth. Under that circumstance, then, the question *What would a demonstration of the truth of some member's statement look like?* is directly interesting. Further, in passing, insofar as the usual sociological and anthropological methodologies involve the use of members' statements about the social world, we may ask, *What would it take to warrant the strong use of such assertions?* e.g., the making of inferences from them. (I only mention this issue, but the reader might want to think about it.)

Let us turn, then, to consideration of the selection of the materials we will be examining, i.e., to the virtues of the statement *Everyone has to lie* for such an inquiry. First of all, that it is a commonplace, proverbial expression suggests the possibility that its reference might be something quite general, that the experiences it reflects are, and are perceived by their user to be, common and thereby, for a sociologist, possibly organizationally based.

Also, the research I have done on the topic "selection of identifications" has led me to believe that, probably in contrast to what we would intuitively think, a statement with "everyone" as its subject may be more amenable to a determination of its truth than a "more limited subject statement," such a one as would include, e.g., *doctors, wives, Protestants, Germans,* etc., as the subject term. I would guess that one would figure that the truth of a more "limited" statement, i.e., what we would figure is a more limited statement, would be more amenable to demonstration than the truth of a statement whose subject is *everyone.* For the detailed reasoning underlying my suspicion that our intuition on this is wrong, reference to the work on identification selection is necessary. However, let me sketch some of the reasons that recommend a statement with "everyone" for selection for determining truth.

First of all, as we shall see, it is not at all obvious that a statement with the subject term *everyone* names a larger population than a statement with, e.g., the subject term *doctors* or *men,* etc. Second, what may be crucial for a statement's truth is *how it is that a population is formulated,* i.e., what identificatory term is used. In saying this, what I want to notice is that, given a same-population in the sense of some bunch of people of whom something is to be predicated, the accept-

ability as correct of a statement saying something about them may turn on which of some set of correct identifications are used in the statement. For example, if *males* is used and is correct, then the statement may be accepted as correct, whereas if *children* or *Protestants* is used with "the same" predicate and the same set of people being referred to, the statement may be taken as incorrect or bizarre. In that regard, then, the formulation of the population or the choice of a subject term may have some important bearing on the acceptability of a statement by reference to considerations other than that the term chosen designates some set of people. It also ought to be noted in this regard that it may well be the case that the selection by a party of an identificatory term may in part be directed to such a selection as will involve, for what is predicated of the identified people, that it be acceptable as true, or be heard as absurd or beside the point. Consider in this regard possible variations in selectional criteria for "The babies cried," "The males cried," "The Protestants cried" [Sacks, 1972].

Third, one basic trouble with regard to determining the truth of statements that have such terms as *lawyers, males, women,* etc., as their subject terms is that it is not obvious what constitute tests of the incorrectness of such propositions. In particular, it is not obvious that showing that a person who could be so characterized, i.e., could be characterized as "a male," but doesn't behave as the statement proposes constitutes a counterexample to the assertion. Instead, statements in that circumstance may be treated as "programatically relevant" [Sacks, 1971] such that a discovered case that might stand in contravention of the proposition has as its consequence, not asserting the error of the proposition, but leading such a person as is not correctly characterized by the proposition to change his ways so as to bring himself under its auspices. Also, if a person seems not to be correctly characterized by the proposition, then again, it may turn out that not the proposition but his status as a proper member of that class is questioned. Let me present an instance of this possibility: A woman asks, *What man would want a forty-year-old, divorced, childless, neurotic woman? No man.* That apparently does not mean for her that no one approaches her, but that those who do approach her are not "men," i.e., not socially males, not properly motivated to pick a woman as one they might marry, etc. That is, "He's not really a man," or not really what a proper man is. All I want to note here is that one should not rush to employ the obvious test of a proposition having, e.g., *men* as its subject term, i.e., to find a case it does not characterize and thereby show its falsity—; for that technique may be found to be inappropriate and not used for actual statements in conversation, and is then not a suitable instrument for evaluating truth or falsity in that domain. A search for the possible truth of a statement in

conversation can have as an alternative procedure and outcome a search for the procedures for evaluating truth or falsity in that domain, used in it, appropriate for it.

There is yet another problem: At least some—perhaps many—of the statements that have these "more limited" identificatory terms as their subjects seem to have the occasion of their use being just the occasion of their correct characterization of some circumstance. The consequence of this is that although one might treat such a statement as a thing one could monitor the world with, it does not turn out to be so used. And therefore, on occasions when it might appear to be usable to find that it is incorrect, such occasions might be characterized by another term than its subject term. So, e.g., the statement *women are fickle* might be used only on some occasion when someone who happens to be a woman was fickle. On some occasion when someone who could be so characterized was faithful, she might be otherwise characterized, as, for example, by saying *Older people are faithful.* It is not—at least for the researcher—obvious what is involved in selecting an identification that is used on some occasion. In short, the burden of my remarks so far has been, under this first issue with respect to the selection of a statement with *everyone* as its subject term, that selections—and in particular the selection of such identificatory categories as I have mentioned so far—seems troublesome with respect to determining what it is that would stand as an occurrence that faults them, how such an occurrence should be located with the assurance that the identificatory term in question would be used there.

A virtue of the statement *Everyone has to lie,* for having its truth determined, is, again in a sentence, this: For that statement it appears that you can state some ways that the contrast class true–false is relevant on that statement's occurrence. Having some way of showing that the contrast class true–false matters for some statement is necessary because it is no longer seriously assertable that that contrast class is relevant for any statement. Large groups of statements have been exempted from such a supposition of the relevance of this particular contrast class to their assertion.

Consider, for example, the following possibility: Let us suppose that a first contrast class relevant upon the occurrence of a statement is whether it is intended to be serious or a joke. Then it may be that the relevance of true–false is conditional on the determination that it is intended to be serious, whereas if it is intended to be a joke the contrast class true–false is not relevant in dealing with it.

Since I wanted to reserve the application of the contrast class true–false to such a statement as seemed clearly to make that contrast class relevant, one ground for the selection of *Everyone has to lie,* is that

there are means for establishing the relevance of true–false for it. This has at least the interest that establishing the relevance of true–false for *Everyone has to lie* will constitute a finding.

The line I am going to take is as follows. One way of fixing on "relevance" is in terms of "sequential relevance." Sequential relevance can involve sorts of actions that utterances can accomplish. In the case of actions like *complaining* or *offering an excuse,* one recurring type of utterance that goes directly after the action is an utterance that proposes either its truth or its falsity. Also, such utterances seem to implicate the effectiveness of the proffered complaint or excuse. Given a complaint or an excuse, a sequentially relevant next utterance can be concerned with acceptance or rejection of the excuse or complaint, and one way acceptance or rejection of a complaint or an excuse can be done is by reference to assertions of the truth or falsity of the *complaint* or the *excuse.* That is to say, at least with respect to certain ways in which *complaining* or *excusing* is done, acceptance of a complaint or excuse can be made via *That's true.* Rejections of a complaint or excuse can be made via *I don't believe it, It's not so,* or *It's false.* Then, as acceptance or rejection is relevant on the making of the complaint, the contrast class true–false is thereby relevant, that is, sequentially relevant.

Given the foregoing, we need now only note that the statement *Everyone has to lie* **can** be made either as a complaint or as an excuse—of course, other things also. When it is either of these, assertions about truth or falsity would thereby be sequentially relevant; and thereby, then, for some occasions of the utterance *Everyone has to lie,* its truth or falsity would be sequentially relevant.

We may also note in this regard that one way we have of determining that some statement is intended to be true is that it is used in the making of a complaint. That it is used in the making of a complaint or an excuse stands as one basis for seeing that at least the member who used that statement takes it that it is true. For such a statement it is not incidental that it is true—not incidental to its user. And for such a statement it is not merely that it is uttered and that we found it to be true that is relevant but, also, that the fact that it was uttered turned in part on its intended truth. In short, I suggest that one procedure for locating a corpus of statements intended to be true involves locating the set of statements used in the making of complaints or excuses.

For the actual case in which the utterance was used, it appears that *Everyone has to lie* was offered as a complaint, that is, as "Everyone has to lie and isn't that terrible," "Everyone has to lie and I can't do it," "Everyone has to lie and I hate to do it." What we may then be heard to have said is that the fact that members assert a statement in the doing of some activity can be informative for us of the status of that item in their

corpus of knowledge. That they take it that the statement is true is evidenced by its use for doing some class of actions such as, for example, complaining. And the way it is dealt with can then be further evidence with regard to others' understanding that it is true. This, of course, is a matter that must be dealt with cautiously. For how it is that an utterance is dealt with—its acceptance or rejection—turns also on other things than whether, e.g., its recipients figure it is true or false, and whether they are then and there ready to acquiesce to the complaint. But, anatomically speaking, in any event, such sequences as *complaining and accepting, complaining and rejecting,* using a proposition for a complaint and making an acceptance of the complaint by acquiescing to its truth, are recurrent, actualized possibilities.

At this point I want to insert some further remarks about "everyone." I want to mention two ways in which "everyone" might be construed. The first I call "summatively." That is, for that usage "everyone" involves some list of people such that if the statement were true for "everyone" it would be true for the set of eaches. And it could be false for everyone were it not true for some one of those eaches. It is clear that some terms that refer to people seem to have such a usage. If I said *We went to the movies* and you took it that "we" was intended to include myself and my wife, then if you asked her and she said she did not, you might take it that the assertion "We went to the movies" was false, though, perhaps, "I went to the movies" was true.

I have noted that some of the categorical identificatory terms do not appear to be regularly used in the sense that, for them to be correct, each person they could characterize needs to have what is predicated of them true of them. And perhaps *everyone* is a sort of categorical term. If so, what sort might it be? "Everyone" is used for various category collections. For example, I have seen an advertisement that goes: *Something for everyone: An X for Dad, a Y for Mom, a Z for Brother, a T for Sister.* Here, *everyone* refers to the category collection "family." Now, what that suggests is that the size of the population being referred to by "everyone" can be quite small. That is to say, "everyone" could, intentionally, understandably, refer to "all the members of some family" or "all the persons playing some bridge game." If, now, "everyone" were used for reference to some family's members, while it may have a summative intention—be intended to hold for each—it would nonetheless be holding for what might be a rather small group. And then, too, if it held for a category, it might not have a summative intention to it.

In short, when "everyone" is used summatively it might not have a very large set-population intended; and when it is used where it might have a rather large population intended, it might not be used in such a way as to have *each* of that population intended. Consider such uses as

Everyone's going, can I go? This is not—though it might be so construed—a paradox. "Everyone" here is apparently being used in a programatically relevant fashion.

The upshot of this last discussion is: It may be the case that a determination of what "everyone" refers to turns on the utterance and the occasion of its use. Some readings were suggested—such as that "everyone" can be used programatically, can be used for a rather small set-population, can be used for categories. By use of these, an approach that seeks, as ours does, to find how the statement might be possibly true seems not necessarily burdened with what might appear to be a more attractive approach—that is, to find that it could not be true (i.e., to formulate such a sense of "everyone" as permits the ready location of falsifying evidence). Such an approach might simply not be terribly informative about the *uses* of *everyone,* or about its social organizational aspects.

With these considerations in hand, let us turn to another body of material, the use of which will set up our detailed analysis.

Several years ago I was working on a study of "greetings"—things like *Hi–Hi, Hello–Hello,* etc. I had acquired various small points, and finding them not overly interesting, sought—as a way of increasing their interest—to see if some of those results could be incorporated into a more extended investigation that would involve, by its turning on them, a way of developing some of their interest. That rather independent study of greetings turned out to have use for the consideration of the truth of the statement *Everyone has to lie,* which I was also studying.

We will proceed with some points about greetings. First, two small points: (1) greetings are ahistorically relevant, and (2) when they occur they properly occur at the beginning of a conversation. To say that greetings are ahistorically relevant as compared to, say, "introductions" (which, having been gone through once or perhaps twice, or erroneously three times or five times, are no longer appropriate) intends that in the case of greetings as between any two people, without regard to how long they have been acquainted, there is no rule that says "On some $N + K$ conversation, no longer begin conversations with greetings." Instead, every conversation those two people have—they could have been married 30 years—can begin with some greetings. Not only that; their first conversation can also begin with greetings. This is not to say that every conversation must begin with greetings, but that there is no exclusion rule for greetings.

With respect to the placing of greetings, there is a technical relevance to the fact that greetings properly occur at the beginning of conversations. This relevance concerns the technical issues of an analyst's being

in the position to say that something did not happen, that it was absent. Now, saying that something was absent and thereby making some point is not, obviously, a simple task. For to say simply that any event T was absent, that T did not occur, potentially allows indefinitely extending the list of things that did not occur, and insofar as T is thereby a member of an indefinitely large class, the point that some particular T did not occur is made trivial. It is not discriminable from the rest of the things that also can be said to have not occurred.

However, insofar as there is a rule that says "If greetings do occur, they ought to occur at the beginning of a conversation," and insofar as there is a further rule that says "Greetings may occur at the beginning of any conversation," i.e., there is no exclusion rule for greetings, then there is a place to look to see where greetings should be found, such that if they are not there, they can be said to be absent in a way that other things cannot be said to be absent. For the relevance of occurrence of other things cannot be so established—or, in any event, unless their relevance of occurrence could be established, their absence is differently assertable than is the absence of greetings there. In that regard it may be noted that talk of absences, i.e., members' talk of absences of occurrence, is not apparently randomly done. That is to say, not anything is asserted to have been absent. Furthermore, of the things asserted to be absent, they are not asserted to be absent just anywhere.

Greetings are, however, asserted to be absent, and they are asserted to be absent when they do not occur at the beginning of a conversation.

OPERATOR: *Mister Savage is gonna pick up an' talk to* [*yuh.*
LERHOFF: [*All right*

(Approx. 50 seconds intervening)

OPERATOR: *Did Mr. Savage ever pick up?*

LERHOFF: *If he did, he didn't say "Hello."*

OPERATOR: *Oh, all right* [*sma(hh)rty, just hold on.*
LERHOFF: [*heh heh heh heh heh*

OPERATOR: *heh!*

In this regard, note that for something like greetings to be asserted to be absent it is not necessary that nothing have happened. Greetings can be asserted to be absent when something, indeed, occurred. Here is a quotation from *The New York Times,* Tuesday, January 11, 1966, under the heading "Film Producer Lists Trials in Egypt" (about the movie producer Julian Blaustein):

> Mr. Blaustein, in town briefly from his temporary London headquarters recalled how, on a location-hunting trip to Egypt he had come upon the craggy Mr. Huston sitting desolately on a rock in the eastern desert while technicians were setting up a scene for Mr. Huston's 'The Bible'. "John looked up. He didn't say 'hello' or 'how are you', all he said was, 'You're here as a tourist. You can't be thinking of making a film here. You must be mad.'"

In this regard, then, the fact that greetings have a place is of some technical interest. And we may be said to have shown one more extended interest of the otherwise no-news point that greetings occur at the beginning of conversation.

With these two facts in hand—greetings are ahistorically relevant and greetings properly occur at the beginning of a conversation—we proceed to construct some classes of conversationalists. We will establish a class of "proper conversationalists" and construct subclasses of that class. Let us call the first subclass Subclass A. We will say about Subclass A that what is definitive of it is that its comembers may engage in something we will call a "minimal proper conversation" and no more.

There is, of course, at least one other subclass, subclass B, about which we will say, for now, that what is definitive of it is that its co-members can properly mutually engage in a minimal proper conversation and more, or more than a minimal proper conversation without use of that set of objects that constitutes the objects of the minimal proper conversation *or* (what is crucial here) on any given occasion a minimal proper conversation and no more. The point is this: were the doing of a minimal proper conversation to reveal its performers as member of a subclass who could do only minimal proper conversations, that subclass might be vulnerable to exclusion from the class "proper conversationalists," and "minimal proper conversation" might become other than a sub-class of "proper conversation." If those who could do more on occasion do no more than a minimal conversation, then the integrity of the classes "proper conversation" and "proper conversationalists" is preserved. Let me emphasize at this point, though, that I do not intend that that line be some achievement of ours, i.e., something we choose to assert, but that it indeed characterizes conversationalists' real circumstances. We are trying not to arrange things conveniently but to find out how they are arranged.

The New York Times, July 20, 1967, reports a procedure used by an "influence peddler" which uses the inferences that are made by virtue of greeting exchanges for its effect. Here is a quotation from the story:

> "Julius Klein is a top operator with unlimited guts and all," says a Republican politician who has known him for thirty years. "He rushes up to say hello to Senators, who of course, say hello to anybody, so as to give the impression he is on close terms with them."

The effectiveness of Klein's procedure turns not on having people see that he can engage in an exchange of greetings with a senator, but on their not being able to know from that, that he might be in a position to do *only* that (even if they were not "open people," or even if he knew them). What is, of course, of some technical interest is not merely that such an occurrence as the Klein procedure can be accounted for by the analysis we have been developing but also that Klein seems to have had the kinds of inferences that might or might not be made from an exchange of greetings available to him as a program that he could use so as to produce the inferences that he wanted. Again, that such a trick as Klein's could work stands for us as at least indirect data on the possibility that rather intimate people may merely exchange greetings on some occasions. It follows that the exchange of greetings only is not restricted to, e.g., Subclass A.

If we can say that a "minimal proper conversation" can consist of an exchange of greetings, then in the first instance we know—or at least have so far asserted—that Subclass A can do that. Comembers may be able to do no more, properly, than exchange greetings, but they can do that.

It is worth noting in this regard that there are people who do engage in conversations who are not comembers of a subclass of proper conversationalists but are, instead, "improper conversationalists." That they do engage in conversation is not itself evidence of the incorrectness of the claim that there is a class of proper conversationalists and a class of improper conversationalists, for it may be seen that when people who are not proper conversationalists engage in conversation, they do so, or begin to do so at least, often in special ways. Thus, for example, if a person seeking to engage another in conversation, and not being a proper conversationalist for that other person, is to bring off a conversation with that other person, then one sort of thing he may do—and does—is to begin not with greetings but by using an utterance, which we call a "ticket," that indicates the reason he is starting to talk with that other person. He may, for example, say *Excuse me, I'm lost.* That is to say, he uses such an utterance to locate how he comes to talk to that other person. This means that we are not merely saying that the class of improper conversationalists is coextensive with people who do not converse with each other—though there are many, and that fact is, of course, relevant—but also that it may be seen that when "improper conversationalists" converse, such conversations begin in distinct, i.e., characterizable ways and also, in particular, without greetings. And when they do not so begin, that matters. Regularly, if a greeting is offered by one it is *not* returned by the other (see page 74).

If the various subclasses other than Subclass A are somehow ranked

by reference to intimacy, status relations, and the like, it nonetheless appears that even the most intimate of such people can on some occasion make only an exchange of greetings, without one party of such a pair feeling wronged. A couple married 30 years may, in passing on the dance floor, at a party, or elsewhere, just exchange greetings. And neither feels that the other has, by not otherwise talking, done an improper act.

Let me note that in talking of an exchange of greetings as a minimal proper conversation, I have not thereby intended to fit the notion "minimal proper conversation" to what Subclass A can properly do. Instead, the notion "minimal proper conversation" arises in the following way. First, it seems that the only satisfactory definition of conversation involves reference to the operation of the sequencing rules of conversation to characterize some body of talk (Sacks *et al.*, 1974). The sequencing rules of conversation do characterize an exchange of greetings; sequencing rules such as "a conversation may begin with an exchange of greetings" and "given a first greeting for proper conversationalists, a second ought to follow," do operate.

There are two issues for our consideration. The first—the placing of greetings—has been discussed. The second matter—that on a first greeting a second should follow—is evidenced not only by the fact that that does happen but also by the fact that when it does not happen it is notable. So, for example, a child may be told, *Didn't you hear A say* **hi** *to you?* which is itself an interesting way to inform the child that he or she should also have said **hi.** Also, when a first greeting is offered and not returned, a repetition may occur (Schegloff, 1968).

Since the exchange of greetings proceeds according to the sequencing rules of conversation, the exchange of greetings is at least part of a conversation. Insofar as the exchange of greetings is not required to be followed by more talk, the exchange of greetings is, thus, a minimal proper conversation.

I want now to introduce something I call a "greeting substitute." The particular sort of greeting substitute we shall be most interested in is such a thing as *How are you?* Let me state some features of the class. First, a greeting substitute may be used as a greeting. Instead of using *Hi,* one may use *How are you?*. You might ask, since *how are you?* can go where greetings can go, why not call it a greeting? Why call it a greeting substitute? A first reason for differentiating *How are you?* from greetings is that one property of greetings seems to be — and this property will then exclude *How are you?* from that class—that greetings are not repeatably used. That is, greetings should not be combined with greetings sequentially. That is, a pair of people should not, after saying

Hi–Hi, say *Hi–Hi* again. There is an exception to this: In the case of telephone calls, in which *Hello* is the appropriate utterance of the first speaker, i.e., the one who answers the phone, the answerer regularly does not know who it is he is saying *Hello* to; and while *Hello* is then returnable when on an exchange of *Hellos* the initial speaker discovers from the second *Hello,* by recognition of the voice, to whom he is speaking, he may then say *Hi,* and the other may then also return *Hi.* In the case of telephone calls, then, one does get *Hello–Hello, Hi–Hi.* But that is a special situation (see, for this sort of thing, Schegloff, 1967).

I have said that greetings are not repeatably used; i.e., a sequence of them does not occur directly upon completion of a prior sequence of them. But greeting substitutes can be used in combination with greetings. That is to say, one can have:

A: *Hi.*

B: *Hi.*

A: *How are you?*

B: *Fine, how are you?*

Furthermore, if greetings and greeting substitutes are combined, and both occur, they occur in a fixed order. Greetings precede greeting substitutes. But—and this is the point we want to retain—speakers can choose to use greeting substitutes when they do not use greetings, and a greeting will not be absent. In that regard, then, what I have said about greetings holds for greeting substitutes; that is, an exchange of greeting substitutes can constitute a minimal proper conversation. In other words, whoever may do greetings may do greeting substitutes, and perhaps no more; or, people who may do greetings may also do greetings *and* greeting substitutes.

With our new resource in hand, let us proceed further. Two more classes are needed. One of them I call "personal states," which consist of things like *mood, appetite, sleep,* etc.; the other I call "value states," which consist of terms like *good, lousy, great, rotten, wonderful,* etc. The latter terms are organized into three subsets, which I will denote by the symbols [−], [0], [+]. We will label personal states "describables" and value states "descriptors." Any of the value states can describe some personal state for some person at some time. *How's your appetite? Great!* (or *Rotten!*). Prototypical terms: for [−], *lousy,* for [0], *ok,* for [+], *great.* The organization of the terms into subsets involves mutual exclusion as between subsets. If a term belongs to one, it does not properly belong to another.

Now, *How are you?* has its proper answers among the value state descriptors. So if you ask somebody *How are you?*, he or she should pick a term from among those.

Let me make a remark about a sufficiency that obtains for the use of the descriptors. We may get at this sufficiency by imagining that in order for the import, the use, the effectiveness of the value state descriptors to occur, it would be required that a recipient be in a position to determine, for the person who is to offer an answer, how that person goes about determining that he is *ok* or *lousy* or *great.* At least with regard to sequential relevance, such is not the case. (I will shortly state some of the sequential relevancies of alternative answers.) Here I mean only to point out that it is the business of an answerer to produce an answer in such a fashion that the sequential relevancies that turn on the occurrence of that answer turn on the occurrence of his particular answer. Access to possible private uses of each term, or to the measurement systems employed by each user, to determine the appropriateness of "lousy" as compared to "normal," is not required for one who would deal with a received answer. Instead, subclass membership is what the recipient may use; that an answer is a member of the [−], [0], or [+] subset.

To say that subset membership is mutually exclusive involves noticing such a thing as the fact that when correction takes place, by self or others, it occurs across subsets. If a person, upon being asked *How are you?,* answered *Lousy!* and corrected himself, the correction would be, e.g., "Actually, I'm ok" and not, e.g., "Actually, I'm rotten." If a person answered *Wonderful!* and another corrected him by virtue of, e.g., other information he may have, or the person's appearance, etc., he would not say, "You're not either. You're in the pink!" However, he might say, "You're not either. You're feeling lousy, aren't you?"

The sequential relevance of the answer proves to hold for any of the personal state questions. Given the occurrence of an answer from subset [0], e.g., *ok, fine,* etc., no further inquiries are appropriate. Given the occurrence of an answer from the [−] subset, a sequence is appropriately launched, directly, to determining "what's the matter." For example, that question or *Why?* should be used when, e.g., the answer to *How are you?* has been *Lousy!* (In the case of the [+] subset, some "comment" like *Great!* may follow the answer *Wonderful!* or an inquiry might also be launched via things like, e.g., *What happened?*) The sequence launched on the occurrence of an answer from the [−] subset, e.g., *Lousy!* to the question *How are you?* (launched, e.g., by the question *Why?* or *What's the matter?* I call a "diagnostic sequence," and it has at one point in it the offering of such an account as explains how it is that the answerer is in the [−] subset. It may be noted, also, that what will stand as an account is something that also regularly need not be a

"private" matter—i.e., not private as to its understandability as an explanation: *I have to have an operation, I have an exam, My kid got arrested,* etc.

The occurrence of an answer from the [−] subset is a sufficient condition for engaging in the diagnostic procedure. The relevance of *Why?* is established by the occurrence of an answer from the [−] subset, i.e., to the question *How are you?, Lousy!* And recall that the question *How are you?* usable as a greeting substitute, is usable between *any* proper conversationalists.

Now, let us consider the information that may stand as the "diagnostic information." In particular, let us consider the *regulation* of its exchange as between any two parties. It seems, in the first instance (grossly), that it may be said that for any two parties not any item of such information may be offered to any given other. Stated otherwise, exchange of information serving as an answer to a diagnostic inquiry is independently regulated—independently, that is, of the regulations that provide for the relevance of the occurrence of diagnostic answers. In this regard it is, of course, also the case that such information need not, for its offering, turn on the occurrence of the *How are you?* question. One may call someone up and announce *I have to have an operation* instead of, e.g., standing in front of the other's house until he or she comes out and says *Hi. How are you?*

We need not deal in detail here with the particulars of that regulation of information exchange with regard to, e.g., "troubles." That is, we need not specify for any item who it is that can be told. We need only, in the first instance, establish that there *are* regulations on that score.[4] For such information as constitutes an answer to the question *Why?,* given the answer *Lousy!* to the question *How are you?,* regulations that exist concern such matters as what it is that should be held within the family, what should be told only to your doctor or a priest, and the like.[5] Fur-

[4] See, for example, Sacks (1971) and, with respect to the sequencing of the telling of such news (Sudnow, 1967).

[5] Such a situation of information regulation is, of course, a rather widely found phenomenon. To quote only one instance of its presence in other societies, we refer to Ethel Albert's (1964) observations with regard to the Burundi:

> In lesser matters than life and property and position, discretion still has its place. One may discuss with close friends and neighbors the problems created by a spouse who is a bit slow-witted, but not broadcast the fact far and wide. If one suspects that a neighbor is a witch, one refrains from mentioning it in his presence . . . There are then some truths not to be spoken aloud to anyone; some to a faithful spouse but nobody else; some to close relatives and neighbors. Only rarely is any statement so innocent that it is not necessary to consider the possibility that it will bring trouble [p. 47].

thermore, such regulations not only hold to exclude some people from hearing some items of information, but even for those who may hear such information there are appropriate sequences whereby they should be told, such that some people should not hear before others. Information varies as to whom it may be given to. Some matters may be told to a neighbor, others not; some to a best friend, others, while they may be told to a best friend, may only be told to a best friend after another has been told, e.g., a spouse.

Those two sets of facts with regard to (1) relative exclusion of people and (2) relative sequencing for those who can be told, turn out to be very important. We shall pick up their importance after we pause to formulate a notion of "lying" with respect to the question "How are you?."

We may say that the presentation of an answer to the question *How are you?* proceeds in two steps. A first step I call "monitoring" and a second step "selecting a term." The first step involves selecting a subset. The second step, given the selection of a subset, involves selecting a term from that subset. There are ways in which it would appear that the notion "monitoring" is artificial. Let me attempt to indicate what I intend by the use of that term. I intend to notice a difference between the way two different sorts of statements are dealt with. For the first, if, e.g., a little girl comes home and says to her mother, *Mama, I'm pretty* or *Mama, I'm smart,* the mother could say "Who told you that?." For the second, if someone says *I'm tired* or *I feel lousy,* etc., no such thing is asked. One is responsible for knowing some things on one's own behalf, in contrast to the situation in which one is treated as likely to be repeating what another has told him about himself. We have data to that effect: *You keep saying you're insane. Has somebody been telling you that recently?.* The notion, then, of "monitoring" attempts to come to terms with the difference between things that are heard as things you know on your own behalf and things that are heard as things you know by virtue of another's having told you. The answers to *How are you?* are things you know on your own behalf.

We will proceed, then, to the notion "lying." Lying, we will say, consists of announcing in your answer a term that is excluded by the monitoring operation. So if the monitoring operation comes up with [+], then one uses a term from [0]; if the monitoring operation comes up with [−], then one uses a term from [+] or [0], etc. With that in hand we can return to the regulation of information on "troubles" and to the question, How is it that, given the regulation of information about troubles, conformity to the rules that regulate that information is achieved? We will turn, also, to a newer question: Given the formulation of lying, why should anyone lie?

How, then, are the regulations about information transmission enforced? Let us note that the relevance of such regulations can be occasioned by the occurrence of the question "How are you?", since the answer *Lousy!* occasions reference to such troubles in the diagnostic sequence occasioned by that answer. And, as we have noted, the question *How are you?* is offerable by any proper conversationalist, including those who may exchange only greetings with one another. Thus, the problem of the operation of those regulations is of very extensive relevance. The regulations may be operative for any conversation—given, that is, that any conversation may begin with greetings or greeting substitutes and *How are you?* is a greeting substitute.

It is certainly imaginable that regulation of information (about, e.g., troubles) transmission is achieved by having a potential elicitor of such information, one who might ask *How are you?* and thereby potentially engender a diagnostic sequence, be constrained from asking that question if he is not in a position to receive the sort of information he might receive. If, for example, a possible asker of *How are you?* were not one—and knew that he were not one—who could receive certain information from the other person, e.g., a runaway child, a wife in an accident, or a parent who just died, then *How are you?* should not be asked, since if *How are you?* were answered *Lousy!* then *Why* should be forthcoming, and such a piece of information might be the answer to *Why.*

Such a system of regulations does not seem to be workable. In any event, it is not used. It does not seem to be workable by virtue of the fact that, even though a great deal of the information that *Lousy!* might occasion the offering of could be given to any person by another, some information might not be giveable, or, even if that information were giveable to a person, it might not be giveable *now,* i.e., until someone else had been given it. If such a set of regulations were operative, *How are you?* would be an almost unaskable question, but *How are you?* is not an unaskable question. It is, instead, the most askable of questions. The system of regulations involves not a potential asker's determination of whether he could handle any information but, instead, an answerer's determination of whether a given asker can receive the particular information or handle it now. That is, it is the business of one who is asked *How are you?* to determine whether the asker can handle that information, and to control his answer by reference to that determination. If such information as is not giveable to the asker obtains, and occasions that the monitoring product is [−], then the procedure for not getting into the diagnostic sequence is: Do not offer such an answer as generates the diagnostic sequence. Answer, e.g., *Ok* or *Fine.*

Let me note here that having the burden of enforcing some regulation on respondents is not unique to the *How are you?* situation. Campbell,

(1964), in his study of a Greek mountain village, reported that there are rules providing that "un-married, opposite sex persons should not converse." He notes, further, that "when an un-married male encounters an un-married female he may offer a greeting. It's the business of the female to not offer one back [p. 275]." In the classic ethnography *Deep South,* (Davis, Gardner, and Gardner, 1941) the rule against infidelity of a married person is discussed, and it is reported that "a male may make advances on another man's wife; it's her business to keep him off [pp. 100–101]."

What we have arrived at is that any person feeling lousy and having some trouble as the explanation of feeling lousy, if asked how he is feeling by someone who ought not to hear that trouble or hear it now, may control that one's access to that information by avoiding the diagnostic sequence, and the diagnostic sequence is avoided by choosing a term from a subset other than the subset the monitoring operation comes up with; that is, he may lie.

Now for a brief remark on the term *has to.* It might be said that while somebody in that situation might lie, we really should not say *He has to lie.* On the contrary, however, it is the case that such a situation is properly characterized by the term *has to,* for conforming to a violable rule is something one can say one *has to do.* People say, for example, *Everyone has to pay their taxes.* You do not have to pay your taxes, you can take your chances on going to jail. "Has to" apparently can properly be used where there is some rule that says "you ought to" and that rule has sanctions.

The foregoing seems to leave us in a situation in which we can say that it is at least conceivable that anyone might be in a position in which such "need" to lie would be present. This does not say that anyone *will* be in such a position. A generalization of the notion "lying" may be of assistance.

Before providing that, however, a remark about the possible "knowableness" of such a possibly true statement is in point. It happens to be the case that the particular occurrence of *Everyone has to lie* that occasioned the research I am here reporting on was asserted complainingly by one who had as part of her troubles that not only did she feel seriously lousy but also that others were routinely asking her *How are you?* while sometimes being quite uninterested in being recipients of a report of troubles and sometimes being distinctly improper recipients. Then, it is not unreasonable to suppose that she could see how the arrangement of conversation was a source of her troubles, or the part of them that focused on their being raised as potentially tellable to be then rejected for actually being told, and that such troubles were not at all hers in particular.

What we have seen about what we have called "lying" with respect to

the *How are you?* situation is that lying involves the selection of a known incorrect answer to the question, Which of the value states is correct for you?, where what the possible answers are is known. We have, then, a situation in which the selection of a known-to-be-false answer can occur by virtue of its offerer's orientation to the sequential implications of alternative answers. This notion of "lying" is directly generalizable and, as generalized, seems to capture a correct sense of lying.

In circumstances in which alternative answers to a question are known, and the alternative answers have alternative consequences for that conversation or for other events, then one way in which people are known to attempt to control those alternative consequences is to select answers by reference to their intended selection of a consequence. If children are asked some question, one of whose alternative answers may occasion a rebuke and another not, then apparently they learn, and apparently it is learned that they have learned, to produce answers that are directed to avoiding the rebuke, which answer production can involve them in lying. Further, consider a seduction situation involving two college students:[6]

BILL: *Well, why not?*

ANN: *I won't; that's because that's the way I am.*

BILL: *Are you a virgin?*

ANN: *No.*

BILL: *Then, why not?*

ANN: *I mean I'm not gonna lie about it.*

BILL: *Oh // All right eh eh*

ANN: *I mean—that's // ridiculous. I never have lied about it.*

BILL: *Ehhhehh no doubt about that . . .*

BILL: *Oh well, that's good but there's no doubt about that, I w'uh so why are y'uh so what's the deal? I mean if you're not a virgin, hh //( ).*

ANN: *"What difference does it make?" It makes a lotta difference // because when I give my love I give it because I* love *somebody.*

BILL: *hhhh!*

[6] The transcriptional conventions are Gail Jefferson's: // means overlap, and is placed where the overlap starts; ( ) means the segment of the recording cannot be heard.

In this regard, then, the situation of occasions of lying is much more general than the special case we have been considering, and indeed, many other cases may be much better as evidence than the case we have considered. For not only can it be argued that it isn't a "lie" to say *Fine!* when one is feeling lousy, but, e.g., etiquette books will advise you to say *Fine!* and propose that it is proper, not wrong, not really a lie. For example, Emily Post (1955), in a section entitled "The Answer to 'How are You?," writes:

> The trait of character which more than any other produces good manners is tact. To one who is a chronic invalid, or is in great sorrow or anxiety, a gay-toned greeting, "Hello Mrs. Jones, how are you! You look fine!", while kindly meant is really tactless, since to answer truthfully would make the situation emotional. In such a case she can only reply, "All right, thank you." She may be feeling that everything is all wrong, but to 'let go' and tell the truth would open the floodgates disastrously. "All right, thank you" is an impersonal and therefore strong bulwark against further comment or explanation. As a matter of fact, "All right, thank you" is always the correct and conventional answer to "How are you" unless there is reason to believe that the person asking really wants to know the state of one's health. [pp. 16–17]

Amy Vanderbilt (1963) writes:

> In greeting people we say "How do you do." We do not really expect an answer, but it is all right to reply "Very well, thank you," even if it is a blue Monday and you feel far from well. No one wants a clinical discussion in response to this purely rhetorical question. In fact you may answer Socratically with "How do *you* do?", expecting and getting no answer. [p . 212]

It may be noted that in both cases the notion of "truth" is used and that *Lousy!* will occasion a diagnostic question is assumed.

Note both that the effort to argue that saying *Fine!* when one is feeling *Lousy!* is not really a lie is, of course, evidence that an attempt at change is involved, that this sort of lying needs special extrication from its supposed status, and that with the generalization that has been offered, "having to lie" has been so extended that the possible exclusion of some instances for *How are You?* is inconsequential.

Some final remarks about "everyone" will suggest some further extensions of these phenomena. In returning to "everyone" we may proceed by considering the following conversation:

A: *Why do you want to kill yourself?*

B: *For the same reason everyone does.*

A: *What's that?*

B: *You just want to know if anyone cares.*

Now, in this excerpt there is a rather characteristic use of "everyone." It seems to be something we might put as "for the same reason as anyone in such a situation." If "everyone" can mean "anyone in such a situation as I" or "anyone in such a situation where what that situation is is characterizable," then a rather important shift may be made with respect to the issue of what people "everyone" characterizes. At least for some uses, "everyone" characterizes no people at all. This is not to say that it characterizes nothing. Instead, however, of "everyone" being another way of referring to, e.g., a designated person or to a category or a collection of categories, or to the incumbents of a collection of categories, "everyone" may also refer to what Garfinkel (personal communication) has characterized as "the sociologist's person, ideally," that is to say, a "course of action" person. Let me elucidate this concept.

There are uses of "everyone" that seem to be noting that the people so identified are sufficiently identified if the situation they are in is stated. That is, for whomever is in that situation, the specification of that situation constitutes a sufficient account of what they may be expected to do, how they may be expected to feel, or how they may be expected to behave.

Let it be noted that such uses of "everyone" are not at all infrequent.[7] And, among other things, it appears that what such uses of "everyone" accomplish is that having specified a situation—and again, this is so only, apparently, for some situations and members—no addition of iden-

[7] a. "Hardy might bawl the hell outta somebody but he can't do anything about something that everybody does—especially when it's already done [from Dalton, 1959: 32]."

b. A: *Do you have a gun at home?*
B: *A forty-five.*
A: *You do have a forty-five?*
B: *Uh huh. Loaded.*
A: *What's it doing there, whose is it?*
B: *It's sitting there.*
A: *Is it yours?*
B: *It's Dave's.*
A: *It's your husband's huh?*
B: *I know how to shoot it.*
A: *He isn't a police officer?*
B: *No. We just have one. Everybody does, don't they?*
A: *It's a forty-five and it's loaded?*
B: *Uh huh.*
A: *And I suppose maybe everyone in Glasgow Park has one?*
B: *I don't know. No, but I mean a lot of people have guns, it's not unusual.*
A: *Oh, sure, I see.*

tificatory references gives, for example, motivational gains or explanatory gains with respect to formulating an account of what it is that that one did or will do, or why, or how. Such a use of "everyone" has as its specific import (not merely making irrelevant any numerical identifier or categorial identifier) that it is *productively* usable. By "productively" I mean the following. What is relevant for things that are known in such a way that "everyone"—properly used in the sense I have stated—is appropriate is not whether in the course of his life each person in fact finds himself in such a circumstance, or is found in such a circumstance, but that "anyone might." These matters, formulated situationally for such situations, seem not to be the specific troubles of "men, women, or children," "professional people," "members of various sects," and the like. Instead, they are known as matters that can happen to whomsoever and are, in any event, not excludable by some history one has had that may be formulated in terms of, e.g., one's categorical memberships.

Given the foregoing extension of "everyone," it now becomes unnecessary to find that some situation can be found for each categorizable population or each nameable person in which the organization of conversation, the rules of information regulation, and their personal circumstances converge to lead them to feel that they "have to lie." What is instead involved is that the statement is true if the organization of conversation is such that any next conversation can formally produce the problem of having to deal with some such sequentially implicative question as *How are you?* where the question is asked by one with whom the respondent, by reference to other rules, e.g., of information transmissal, is placed in a situation that he sees involves either getting into a sequence in this conversation that he should not get into or lying so as to avoid that sequence. The organization of conversation being such, the statement is *true*.

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