he-said-she-said: formal cultural procedures for the construction of a gossip dispute activity

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Researchers in the tradition of the ethnography of speaking have provided descriptions of appropriate situations of use for speech events as well as performance standards (Gumperz and Hymes 1964, 1972; Bauman and Sherzer 1974; Ben-Amos and Goldstein 1974; Abrahams 1970; Sanches and Blount 1975). In addition, they have shown how ways of speaking are related to social variables. As yet, however, few studies have described cultural practices for generating actual sequences of conversation which construct, rather than merely reflect, social organization.

The present study[1] is an attempt to analyze the cultural procedures used by black female children[2] to organize a multistage[3] speech event, a form of gossip[4] dispute which they call "he-said-she-said." In examining this activity,[5] I will specify how particular types of utterances generate the activity, providing a particular ordering of participants and their actions relative to one another in different time stages. This domain of action includes a relevant past and a set of identities[6] and actions for participants in both the past and the present.

The data to be used are conversations of a particular group of black, working-class children from west Philadelphia, ages 7 through 13, whom I recorded for a year and a half as they went about their natural play activities on the street. For purposes of reference, this group will be called the Maple Street group. These individuals form a group in the sense that they are all friends, living within a block of one another, who interact in focused activities such as playing games and talking on a regular basis (after school, on weekends, and daily during the summer months). Generally, the activity of he-said-she-said is carried out only among those girls who have regular dealings with one another.

Formal cultural procedures utilized by urban black female children to construct a type of gossip dispute they call "he-said-she-said" are analyzed. The procedures employed to construct opening accusations produce utterances with a characteristic syntactic structure as well as a field of activity constituted through particular types of events, actions, and identities for the participants and rules for sequencing these phenomena through time. These procedures thus generate not only linguistic structures but also social configurations and cultural events. [conversation analysis, social organization, ethnography of communication, legal anthropology, Black English Vernacular]

Among members of the Maple Street group, individuals divide themselves into different clusters. The major division is according to principles of age and sex: younger girls (ages 4 through 9), younger boys (ages 5 through 8), older girls (ages 10 through 13), and older boys (ages 9 through 13). There are maximally 44 children in the Maple Street group.[7]

In general, each cluster enjoys a different form of play activity consistent with the level of physical skill or cultural interests of the members. Older boys like activities such as flying kites, yoyos, walking on hands, coolie or dead blocks, football, basketball, pitching pennies, half-ball, making and riding homemade go-carts, flying model airplanes, shooting marbles, and playing musical instruments in a small group. Younger boys participate in a few organized games but prefer dramatic and rough-and-tumble play.

In contrast to boys, organized sports activities or games of any kind, with the exception of jump rope, are seldom played among girls. Older girls like to play school and house, practice original dance steps, organize club meetings, and make things such as crocheted and knitted scarfs and hats, glass rings from bottle rims, and food to sell. Younger girls participate in activities similar to those of older girls, although their activities are less elaborate.

The children of Maple Street live in the same geographical area, have parents with roughly the same income, are about the same age, and within each cluster there is no fixed hierarchy or division into specialized roles. Given such homogeneity, the process of comparison seems to function as one of the principal ways in which cluster members are differentiated from one another.

Within the older boys' group, ranking is done with relation to skill in games and contests. Overt bragging or self-complimenting is frequent.

example 1   Earl: I do it experience! I do it **be**tter than Poochie. Watch! I'll win again!

example 2   Chu: Poochie I'm a show you a **b**ad plane boy. **B**ad plane. It go- It glides anywhere. It's **b**etter than any airplane you know.

The boys' games, based on physical skill, permit ranking by a relatively objective scale, even though ranking is frequently disputed. Hierarchies, however, are not fixed, in that each boy has a chance to excel in a particular activity or sport at a different time of the year.

In contrast to boys' activities, girls' games are largely noncompetitive. Their most popular game, jumping rope, is enjoyed for the regular rotation of participants through positions. Winning a round of jump rope is not accompanied by boasts, though it does entitle the player to be the first participant in the next round. In general, overt assessments of someone's skill are infrequent among girls.

The kinds of concerns relative to which girls evaluate one another differ from those of boys. Girls talk about and concern themselves with their appearance and the forms of relationships they can be seen to maintain with others, especially boys and older females. When a girl is perceived as "thinking she better" than someone else, it is said that she "think she cute," is "showin off," or is "braggin." It is in terms of such perceptions that girls find grounds for criticizing one another.

Differences between girls and boys may be observed not only with reference to the types of criteria used to make comparisons, but also with reference to the timing and organizing

of complaints against others. Boys' critiques of the bragging of others generally occur in the presence of the braggart; boys insult, command, and threaten one another, as well as brag openly. Among members of the girls' group, however, such types of action are infrequent. [8] Criticisms of girls who "show off" or try to put themselves above others occur more frequently in the absence of the talked-about person. The airing of grievances occurs at the culmination of elaborated gossip in a he-said-she-said confrontation.

cultural procedures for the construction of he-said-she-said accusation/response sequences

The he-said-she-said event makes use of a form of public dispute process termed *negotiation* by Nader and Todd (1978:10). [9] This form of legal procedure can be distinguished from other possible procedural modes of law such as "lumping it," avoidance, adjudication, arbitration, or mediation (1978:8–11). In this procedural mode, two principal parties dispute the case without the aid of a third, mediating party.

The outcome of the he-said-she-said confrontation differs from most disputes in that neither compromise nor a clear form of settlement occurs. This is due in part to the unique shape of utterances which open the dispute and provide an operative realm of action for participants.

The following provides an example of a he-said-she-said confrontation.

example 3

		((Said from a distance.))
(1)	Sha:	Your **mo**ther wants you!
(2)	Flo:	Okay.
		(4.0)
(3)	Sha:	°You better- Go "I didn't do it" Pam.
(4)	Ria:	**WE** AIN'T **SAY** THAT **PA**:M.
(5)	Flo:	**Y**ou said that//I said-
(6)	Pam:	°Where. Where.
(7)	Ria:	⌜°Sh' said-
(8)	Pam:	⌞(°Lemme see.)
(9)	Ria:	Um-
(10)	Flo:	They//say y'all say I wrote **e**verything o//ver there. I ain't//wrote everythi:ng.
(11)	Ria:	**Th**ey say- (0.2) Y'**all** said that she (0.2) Wrote that um, They wrote//that bi:g
(12)	Ter:	You//said-
(13)	Flo:	Only thing//is the car.
(14)	Ter:	**Pam** tol://**me**-
(15)	Pam:	UHUH.=**THAT** WAS **V**INCENT SAID.
(16)	Ter:	But y//ou told **me** that
(17)	Flo:	I know it was Vincent cuz Vincent was the one that wrote that//on that **c**ar.
(18)	Sha:	((Falsetto)) **Uh**uh.=We started to tear that- ·h uh that out. We tol- we said that we- **all** said- ·h I said//all-
(19)	Ria:	((Falsetto)) **I** said, "Who wrote it on the car." Sharon say "Either Vincent, (0.2) or, **VIn**cent or um-//**Flor**ence.

(20)	Pam:	⌈**Flor**ence.
(21)	Sha:	⌊**Flor**ence. I put th//is
(22)	Flo:	**VIn**cent dl:d it. **VIn**cent had crayon more than **any**body.
		(0.7)
(23)	Sha:	·h An plus- an =
(24)	Flo:	= Oo this's **cold** out here//t'day.
(25)	Ter:	WELL WHY YOU TELL HER **I** said it.
(26)	Pam:	YEAH BUT **RIA**- YEAH BUT **RIA** WAS SAYIN **WE WRO**:TE
		ALL OVER THE STREET AND WE **DIDN'T**. =
(27)	Flo:	=⌈**We** ain't write over no street **noth**in.
(28)	Ter:	⌊(I'm-not-talkin-bout-) B'//t why did-
(29)	Ria:	Vincent say he wrote in the street. ((sigh)) =
(30)	Sha:	= Well **I** ain't write//in the street.
(31)	Flo:	Oh **you** fin' s'n in the st//r:eet then.
(32)	Pam:	**I** ain't **wrote nutt**in in no str:ee://t,
(33)	Ter:	Well how come **you told Flor**ence that I said that **she**
		wrote it.
		(0.6)
(34)	Sha:	I said that **who** wrote it. =
(35)	Ter:	= **Not** you. = **Pam**.
(36)	Pris:	°Well//who did.
(37)	Pam:	That **she** wrote it,
(38)	Pris:	⌈All they hadda do is// look in the street.
(39a)	Pam:	⌊°That- that you was-
(39b)	Sha:	Well come on out here. Let's see it.
		(1.2)

((Girls move to the site where pejorative things are written about Terry on a car and garage door.))

(40)	Flo:	I only said-//so that when I- when we were goin to the car.
(41)	Pam:	That **she** that **she** wrote it, I TOLD YOU THAT
		//FLORENCE WROTE,
(42)	Sha:	( )
(43)	Ria:	I'm gonna stay **out** from **now**on.
(44)	Ter:	Well cuz you- you said that she wrote it.
(45)	Flo:	**UH**UH. **UH**UH CUZ I ONLY WROTE **ONE** THING IN
		RED.
		(0.4)
(46)	Pam:	S:o did I. **I** only- ·h//Besides- I only di:d that where **AI**sha
		did cuz Aisha wrote on that **thIng**.
(47)	Flo:	Vincent did **that**. Aisha wrote where.
(48)	Pam:	Aisha wrote on that thing. = And//I only traced what- Aisha
		wrote on it, ·h cuz Aisha wro//te it **sm**:all.
(49)	Sha:	On the side?
(50)	Ter:	I know. = I'm not **talk**in bout **that**. = But how come you
		told her that **I** that **I** was **talk**in bout her.
(51)	(Pris):	°Yes you did. =
(52a)	Pam:	= YOU **WA**:S.
(52b)	Ter:	**WH**en.

((The division of the conversation at this point into two groups is indicated by separate columns. Simultaneous talk occurs on the same horizontal line.))

(53)   Pam: Remember when um- um- that's when um:
(0.8) Uh: uh: remember when you sai:d,

	Flo:	(°Well he started it) cuz he got
that um,		some of it off.
	Sha:	Yeap.
nuh-		
remember when you	Flo:	( )
jus- When you sai:d,		**Vin**cent did that.
When you		
sai:d,	Sha:	'N who did this.
"Fla-uh	Pris:	Fla:,
Florence don't	Flo:	All this the same
got nuttin to do		hand writin an it
with it." Remember		ain't **mi**:ne.
that? Y//ou said that?		

(54)   Ter: **Uh**uh, **Marla**   ( ):   How bout right
                   said that.   up there.

(55)   Pam: Oh **Marla** said that.   Flo: Mm. **hm.**

(56)   Ria: ((From a distance)) SAID WHAT.=

(57)   Flo: =Maria//said what.

(58)   Pam: said-//that you ain't

(59)   Ter: That Florence don't have nothin to **do** with it.=Member?//We was arguin?

(60)   Ria: YOU DON'T- She's not- (1.0) Cuz- She ain't mean nuttin t'do nuttin to you.
                 (1.4)

(61)   Flo: I was just writin for **fun** cuz I ain't do it till nuttin was happenin.

Before considering the organization of larger sequences within the activity he-said-she-said, particular types of utterances which occur during the argument[10] phase will be discussed. It is in relation to the identity relationships (Goodenough 1965:2) created by these utterances that most actions within the activity are built. The actions to be considered will be investigated in terms of the manner in which they both open and define the field of relevant actions for participants.

The confrontation presented above (example 3) begins with utterances from Maria and Florence directed to Pam.

example 4   Mar: **WE** AIN'T **SAY** THAT **PA**:M.
               Flo: You said that I said-

Then Florence states:

example 5   Flo: They say y'all say I wrote **e**verything over there.
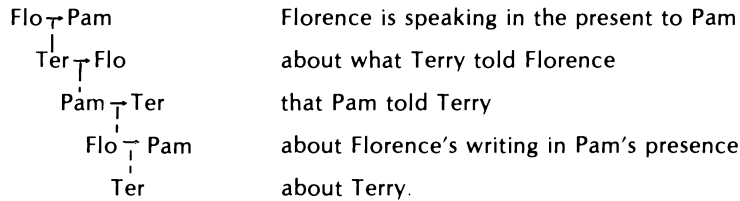
The structure of this utterance closely parallels the structure of other utterances used to initiate activities of this type.

example 6   Dar to
               Dis: And **Ste**phen said that **you** said that I was showin off just because I had that **bl**:ouse on.
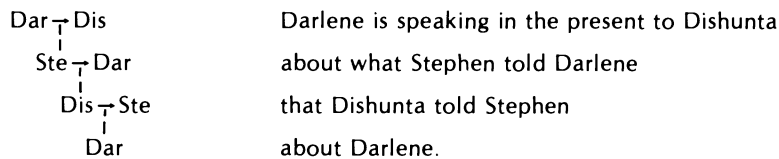
example 7   Pam to

               Dar: **T**erry said **y**ou said that (0.6) I wasn't gonna go around **Po**pular no more.

Each of these utterances provides an ordering of participants and events in the past leading to the present. The ordering is achieved through the use of the format "she/he-said-you-said-I-said." This pattern might be most easily seen through the use of a simple diagram.
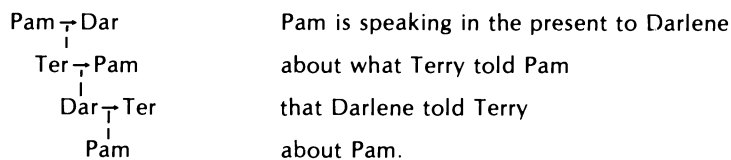
example 5   Flo to

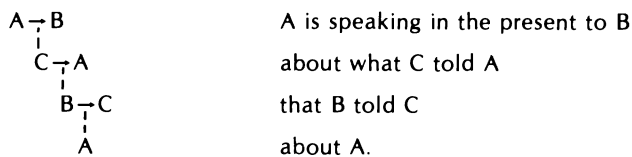   Pam: They say y'all say I wrote **e**verything over there.

Flo⊤Pam	Florence is speaking in the present to Pam
Ter⊤Flo	about what Terry told Florence
Pam⊤Ter	that Pam told Terry
Flo⊤Pam	about Florence's writing in Pam's presence
Ter	about Terry.

example 6   Dar to

               Dis: And **Ste**phen said that **you** said that **I** was showin off just because I had that **bl:ou**se on.

Dar⊤Dis	Darlene is speaking in the present to Dishunta
Ste⊤Dar	about what Stephen told Darlene
Dis⊤Ste	that Dishunta told Stephen
Dar	about Darlene.

example 7   Pam to

               Dar: **T**erry said **y**ou said that (0.6) I wasn't gonna go around **Po**pular no more.

Pam⊤Dar	Pam is speaking in the present to Darlene
Ter⊤Pam	about what Terry told Pam
Dar⊤Ter	that Darlene told Terry
Pam	about Pam.

Disregarding particular participants, we can let A stand for the speaker in the present, B for the hearer in the present, and C for the party talked about.

A⊤B	A is speaking in the present to B
C⊤A	about what C told A
B⊤C	that B told C
A	about A.

Within this pattern, events at any single moment in time are constructed in terms of a particular form of action. Two parties in the immediate presence of each other are located as speaker and hearer. A third party, neither speaker nor hearer, is located as having been talked about. The participants change positions within this basic triad at each stage in a regular way:[11]

T.1	Speaker	Hearer	Spoken about
T.2	Spoken about	Speaker	Hearer

Given the pattern for constructing events at each stage and the rules for sequencing the stages through a regular rotation of participants, a past with a particular structure as well as a particular selection of events is provided.

The relevance of this organization of events in the past will be investigated by examining the interaction during which it is produced. It will be argued that utterances of this type are constructed and interpreted as accusations of a particular type.

Statements of the form we are considering, when they occur in other than the initial position or when they take alternative forms, may be explicit "requests for information" to the hearer (Labov 1972b:57).

example 8   Net: I just wanna know did you say somp'm about me.

example 9   Net: Did you say it Naynay?

example 10   Ter: W- were **you** the girl at the party? that was talkin bout Nettie?

Both statements of the type discussed in examples 5 through 7, as well as questions of this shape, are first-pair parts of adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks 1973:295–296) regularly followed by denials.

example 11   Flo: They say y'all say I wrote **e**verything over there.
                Pam: →**UH** UH.=**THAT** WAS **VIN**CENT SAID.

example 12   Net: I just wanna know did you say som'm about me.
                Nay: →**Uh** uh. I ain't **s**ay anything.

example 13   Net: Did you say it Naynay?
                Nay: What you mean.
                Net: What Terry just got finished sayin she said about me.
                Nay: →I ain't say nothing to- I ain't say nothin **to** her.

example 14   Ter: W- were **you** the girl at the **par**ty?
                Pat: Huh::?
                Ter: That was talkin bout Nettie?
                         (0.8)
                Pat: →I ain't say nothing bout **her.**

Participants themselves label the act of responding to an utterance of the form he/she-said-you-said-I-said as "denying." The first-pair part is viewed as "asking about something" in order to "get something straight." There is not, however, a particular term for this action.

For the purpose of discussion, first-pair parts which are followed by denials will be called "accusations."[13]

The information states (Sacks 1973:139–141; 1974:343; Goffman 1974:133–134; Terasaki 1976:123; Chafe 1976:30–33) of characters in the encounter are ordered such that the accuser knows personally what was said in the immediately prior stages, but she is not knowledgeable in this way about the initial act, given her absence at the time it occurred. On the other hand, the defendant knows about the initial act in question, but she does not know what occurred in the intermediate stage. These information states have relevance for the form that the accuser's action takes. The accuser's action may be formulated in two different ways: as a request for information or as a declarative statement. The request for information references only the act of talking about the speaker, an activity known about by the hearer and not directly known about by the speaker. By way of contrast, the declarative statement *informs* the defendant of something he does not know—that at a prior stage an intermediate party told the speaker about an act committed against her.

The act of the hearer, about which the speaker is questioning the hearer, is a report by the hearer of something the speaker herself did (cf. examples 5, 6, and 7). The speaker, as author of her own actions, has a right to monitor the descriptions others make of her. The accusation is a challenge to the hearer about whether the hearer in fact made such a statement about the speaker. The structure of the utterance further locates the statement about the speaker as having been made in the speaker's absence.[14] The act of the hearer at issue thus constitutes what the participants describe as "talking behind my back"; this act is considered an offense.[15]

If the hearer were to agree to the description, the speaker would have grounds to seek redress. Although physical fights do not in fact occur, they are discussed as possible trajectories following an admission of guilt:

example 15   Dar: You gonna beat her up today?
               Net: If I find out that she said it.
               Dar: You are?
               Net: If she said- if she admit that she said it.

By denying the accusation the hearer avoids any possible reading that she participated in acts of wrongdoing against the accuser. In addition, she prevents the accuser from being viewed as someone who delivers empty threats. By way of example, consider the following in which, by answering rather than denying the charge, Michael frames Huey's action as nonthreatening:

example 16   Huey: Who was- who was throwin the rocks.
               Mich: Me and- and Tokay, and everybody else.

The act of denial, as contrasted with the act of acceptance, preserves the face of both parties and prevents a possible fight from occurring.

Not only the hearer, but also the speaker (in the selection of the form of her utterance), can be seen to be working towards avoiding possible conflict. The speaker, in that she has been affronted by having been talked about behind her back and because this is public knowledge, is obliged to construct the appearance of having taken action against the offender in order to maintain face. Failure to do so can itself be considered a form of offense or a demonstration of lack of character, which can be commented upon by onlookers to a dispute. A person who does not keep her commitment to confront another is said by onlookers to a dispute (those who are neither accuser nor defendant) to "mole out,"

"swag," or back down from a fight. Consequently, an accuser may argue that the sole reason she is having a dispute with another is so that others will not be in the position to argue that she is backing down from her obligations.

example 17   Ter: Deniethia? (1.4) **John**ny and them was goin around there tellin e'rybody that **I** swag, cuz **right**? Cuz didn't I say I was gonna fight you? You said you ain't say nothin? But I want you to get it straight. = Okay? Cuz I don't- cuz I- Lis'n. Y- if I **fight** you I **fight** you. = And if I **don't** I **don't**. = But- but see the only reason that I- cuz **they** told me, **they** were tellin me "Why don't cha go around there an kick Deniecey **butt**. = Because **she** tellin e'rybody ·h **she** can kick **your** butt."

In bringing an action against an offending party, the offended constructs an accusation in a form that differs from most accusations. Generally, accusations—actions typical of male speakers—are made baldly and directly, as in the following.

example 18   Mich: You took the hangers that I took off your bed.

example 19   Ray: Boy you broke my skate board!

example 20   Lee: Y'all just changed the whole **game** around!

example 21   Vinc: You messin up my **paper**.

Rather than stating the offense directly, thus making the hearer the sole actor implicated in the wrongdoing, the offense in the he-said-she-said accusation is phrased in terms of a report by some intermediate party (cf. examples 5, 6, and 7). Bringing the offense through the report of an intermediate party has major implications. First, because "reported speech" may be regarded as a "message belonging to someone else" (Vološinov 1971:149), the speaker is not the sole party responsible for the report.[16] This feature of the accusation has sequential import in that it constrains the choice of next moves for the defendant. Following many types of accusations in children's arguments, a defendant may counteraccuse his accuser.[17]

example 22   Lee: Y'all just changed the whole **game** around!
                   Poo: We didn't change **no**thing around. Y'**all** changed it around.

example 23   Chu: You messin up my **paper**.
                   Poo: Shut up. **You** the one messin it up.

example 24   Poo: Don't know what he **ta**lkin about.
                   Earl: Don't know what **you** talkin about.

With reference to the pattern of accusation/counteraccusation, Emerson (1969:167) has stated that "in making a denunciation a person automatically opens up his own motives and moral character to examination and evaluation, with the distinct possibility that they will be found wanting." Since this is the case, the denouncer must "establish a right to undertake such action" (Emerson 1969:166). By including in her accusation the statement of another party, the plaintiff in the present situation argues that her charge is warranted and supported by at least one other person.[18] She not only establishes a form of license to

bring the charge, but she also argues that an alignment of "two against one"[19] exists against the defendant. By way of illustration, consider the following speech Nettie makes to her adversary during a confrontation.

example 25   Net: Well I'm a get it straight with the people. What **Terry**, (1.4) it's between Terry, and you, (1.0) see **two** (0.5) two against one. (0.7) Who wins? The one is two. = Right? (0.5) And that's Joycie and Terry. (0.5) They both say that you said it. And you say that you didn't say it. Who you got the **proof** that say that you **didn't** say it.
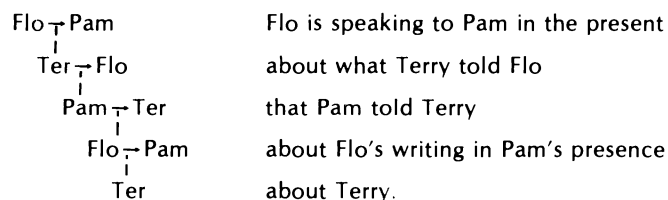
In that the intermediate party, rather than the current speaker, is credited with authorship of the report of the offense, the defendant cannot bring a counteraccusation to her accuser, claiming she is making up the offense, lying, or unjustly accusing her. The appropriate target of a counteraccusation is not the accuser but rather the absent intermediate party; therefore, the argument trajectory of accusation/counteraccusation, which permits both parties the opportunity to accuse one another, does not develop.

The statement opening the he-said-she-said might thus be viewed as an action of a particular type arguing for the relevance of a third party. Because information concerning the offense at issue is obtained and mediated through a third party, a situation is constructed in which characters possess differing information states. This provides for the possibility of an extended drama, a puzzle without any clear resolution.

the sequencing of accusation/response pairs in a particular confrontation

The larger conversational sequence introduced earlier (example 3) will now be examined to see how accusations and their responses provide a structured field for the ordering of the participants relative to one another and for the organization of their actions.[20] A variety of different phenomena are implicated in the organization of this fragment. Analysis, however, will be confined to the more salient features used to construct it — in particular, the adjacency pair accusation/response and the identities provided for participants. It should be noted that, though the accusations in this activity are unique to the he-said-she-said, the responses to the accusations to be considered are common "counters" in children's arguments.

The configuration begins as Pam, Sharon, Priscilla, and I meet Florence, who has been talking with Maria and Terry. Florence directs a he-said-she-said accusation statement to Pam: "You said that I said-." This is elaborated in Florence's next utterance (example 5): "They say y'all say I wrote **everything** over there." By again diagraming the accusation, the configuration of occasion-specific identities which the accusation constructs may be examined.

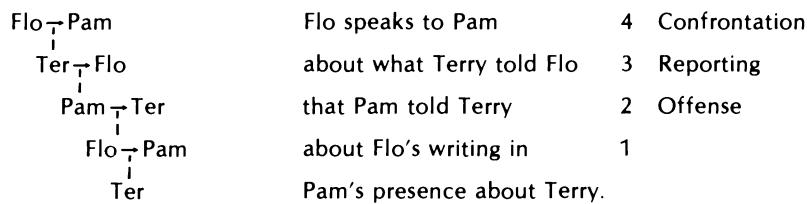|	
Flo ⊤ Pam	Flo is speaking to Pam in the present
Ter ⊤ Flo	about what Terry told Flo
Pam ⊤ Ter	that Pam told Terry
Flo ⊤ Pam	about Flo's writing in Pam's presence
Ter	about Terry.

Unlike the accusations examined earlier in examples 6 and 7, this accusation contains four

rather than three stages. Further, while the spoken-about party is generally absent, in this case, she (Terry) is present.

Four-stage accusations emerge systematically from three-stage accusations. First, the same procedures used to project a third stage from a second stage can be used to construct a fourth stage from a third stage. Second, there are systematic reasons why a three-stage he-said-she-said would be expanded to four stages. We saw earlier that accusations are framed in indirect speech in terms of the report of an intermediate party. This provides some immunity for the accuser against a counteraccusation by the defendant. However, by expanding the he-said-she-said to a fourth stage, a defendant can bring an action not against the accuser but against the party who informed on her to the accuser. The repeated application of the procedures used to construct these events thus generates subsequent stages.

Note that in a four-stage accusation the act at issue is no longer the bottom layer of the charge. Irrespective of the number of stages, the accusation refers to the third stage down from the present. For convenience I will label the three relative stages as follows: the stage occurring in the present is the *confrontation;* the stage occurring immediately prior is the *reporting;* and the third stage from the present is the *offense* stage. When the he-said-she-said reaches the fourth stage, participants become located in several fields of orientation simultaneously (refer to example 5 and to above diagram).

Flo→Pam	Flo speaks to Pam	4 Confrontation
Ter→Flo	about what Terry told Flo	3 Reporting
Pam→Ter	that Pam told Terry	2 Offense
Flo→Pam	about Flo's writing in	1
Ter	Pam's presence about Terry.	

In the present example, Florence is both accuser to Pam and defendant to Terry. Pam is defendant to Florence and the intermediary party who told Terry about what Florence did. Terry is the intermediary party and accuser of Florence.

To examine what happens as the structure is transformed beyond three stages, I will briefly describe the structure of occasion-specific identities created by this procedure. At each moment in time, the participants are located in a particular configuration relative to each other. However, participants change their position in this configuration in an orderly fashion through time. That is, not only does the application of the procedure provide a history of relevant events, it also provides a biography for each participant, a career of positions occupied in the unfolding course of located events. Further, the biography of each participant is unique. Specifically, the fact that the participants are located in separate positions at the first stage of the activity and, in addition, that there exist definite rules for the rotation of the participants from stage to stage provides that at any moment in time no two participants will have the same biography.

These biographies and the types of occasion-specific identities they construct have a dynamic character as the process unfolds through time. A party who was the offended party at one stage becomes the accuser two stages later, but she gains the latter position only by virtue of having previously occupied the former. Because the biographies of the participants accumulate in this fashion, the complexity of both the structure of actions and the occasion-specific identities created for the participants is progressively increased as the structure is applied repeatedly through time.

As transformations are extended beyond the third stage, the structure of occasion-specific identities ordering the immediate exchange remains the same. Consider, again, the

diagram of example 5. Speaker and hearer in the top stage relate to each other as accuser and defendant. However, the participants as well as the act at issue have changed. The defendant at the immediately previous stage, stage three, has become the accuser. Furthermore, in that the act at issue is the act committed by the party located as defendant, that act is located in the third stage back, irrespective of how far the stages extend beyond that point. Insofar as this is a next stage in the action, the new fourth-stage accusation also counts as part of the speaker's defense to the action of the previous speaker against her in the third stage. If the speaker in the fourth stage can obtain a denial or retraction from the defendant, the case brought against her by the previous speaker in the third stage collapses. Of course, if the present defendant issues a denial, she may then bring an accusation against the previous speaker, and yet another stage will be entered.

A party may thus be simultaneously situated in several fields of orientation, e.g., as defendant to one party and accuser to another. Furthermore, within this process the criteria for the various occasion-specific identities are being both achieved and negotiated such that a subset of these types of persons may be retrospectively restructured. A subsequent interaction may reveal that, though at one point in time a party was heard as an offender, for example, she did not in fact possess the necessary criteria to be heard as that occasion-specific identity; when that point in time is viewed from this later stage, she may be found to have held the position of a party wrongly accused and in fact to have been the offended party. The intersection of two features—a comparatively simple procedure for ordering events and the accumulation of separate biographies for participants (in the form of a history of the positions they are heard to have occupied in the events created by the procedure)—makes it possible, through repeated application of the procedure, for situations of increasing complexity to be generated.

The different fields of orientation are linked such that they are interdependent on each other. A single move can have consequences for the various identities of all participants. We see from example 5 that if Florence can get Pam to deny that she made the statement at issue to Terry, then: (1) the grounds for Terry's accusation in the immediately prior (reporting) stage are lost, so that Florence is no longer a defendant to an accusation from Terry; and (2) in stage four, Terry can by inference be located as an intermediary who did not tell the truth.

An accused has available several forms of next actions with which to construct a defense. In order to discuss these forms, however, it will first be useful to show that the accusation may be thought of as containing two major components which can be called into question or argued to be inaccurate.

> reporting stage   offense stage
> [X said]   +   [you said W]

These components are located in one of two prior stages. "X said" refers to what the reporter said at the second stage from the present, the reporting stage. "You said W" refers to what the author of the offense said at the third stage from the present, the offense stage.

Denials may be directed to either component of the accusation. Operating upon the offense stage, the accused may deny that she performed the act at issue with actions such as the following.

example 26   Nay: I ain't say that.

She might, in addition, propose an alternative addressee for the accusation (see also example 11).

example 27   Dis: **Damey** sai:d **that.** That's all I know.

Although this form of denial operates upon the third stage down from the present, it implies that the intermediary party who passed on the information misquoted the initial utterance. A form of denial explicitly arguing that the reporter lied operates directly upon the reporting stage.

example 28   Den: Well I know that **they** tellin a **lie** cuz I know I ain't **say** nothin about you.

example 29   Den: Well he **lie.** I ain't **say** that.

example 30   Nay: I don't know who said it but- now- I- now if I ain't say it, whoever told you musta said it.
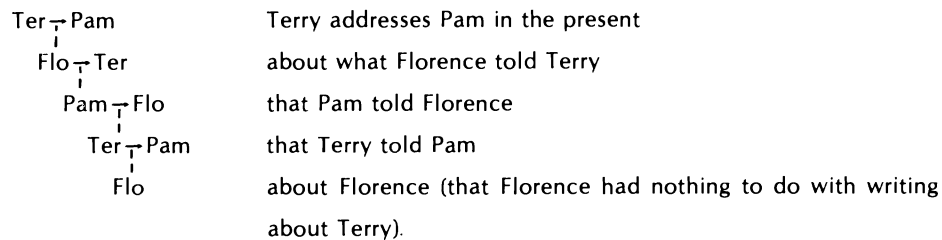
example 31   Nay: I know I ain't say it. (2.4) Cuz I ain't- I ain't even say nothin. I just said just what I just now told you. And I should know what I did. She must- they must- she put those two words in there herself.

Denials may be directed to either the offense stage or the reporting stage of the accusation. In some cases (see examples 11 and 28), the denial may contain a new accusation: either some other party is accused of the offense or the intermediary party is accused of having lied. With denials operating upon the third stage down from the present, there is always an implicit accusation that the intermediary party who passed on the information misquoted the initial utterance.

Returning to the specific accusation in example 3, Pam's denial charges a nonpresent party, Vincent, with having performed the offense (example 3.15). Through this denial Pam introduces a new party into the dispute. Because Vincent is not present, certain next moves cannot be performed. For example, Vincent cannot counter the charge against him, and Florence cannot question him. After Pam's denial, Florence's accusation is terminated. In fact, Florence agrees with Pam in her next utterance (example 3.17).

Pam's denial not only ends Florence's accusation to her, but it also reshapes the field of activity. Pam's utterance (example 3.15) implicitly accuses Terry of having lied. In response, Terry provides her defense, a counteraccusation or objection to Pam (example 3.16). Prior to its completion, Terry's utterance is interrupted by one of Pam's allies, Sharon, who counters Terry (example 3.18). But, Sharon's counter is not answered by Terry. Rather, it initiates an utterance interpreted by Florence as an accusation to her (example 3.22). Thus, Terry's objection to Pam is never answered in that talk shifts to an accusation directed at Florence.

The next major accusation is delivered by Terry to Pam (example 3.25). The accusation appears two more times (examples 3.33 and 3.50), and it may be diagramed as follows.

Ter⟶Pam	Terry addresses Pam in the present
Flo⟶Ter	about what Florence told Terry
Pam⟶Flo	that Pam told Florence
Ter⟶Pam	that Terry told Pam
Flo	about Florence (that Florence had nothing to do with writing about Terry).

Unlike many he-said-she-said accusations, these do not ask whether or not the act in question was committed; rather, they take for granted that it was and ask "Why?" and "How come?"

The accusation is recycled two times because Pam repeatedly avoids answering it. Before considering the answer that the accusation finally gets, the procedures Pam uses to avoid providing a second-pair part to the accusation will be considered.

Pam's first response is a countercharge, which is also an explanation for the offense (example 3.26). Instead of accusing Terry, Pam accuses one of Terry's allies, Maria, of having said something about her first. This action also constitutes a defense. Although it admits that the act at issue did in fact occur, the action argues that it was justified in that an offensive act of another preceded it.

Pam's utterance (example 3.26) reorganizes the relevant domain of talk. Conversation is no longer tied to Terry's accusation to Pam (example 3.25) but rather to Pam's action to Maria. A series of denials and a challenge to the reported accusation follow (examples 3.26-27; 3.30-32), after which Terry reintroduces her accusation to Pam (example 3.33). For the second time the response to her question is delayed. Although the "points of orientation" (Brecht 1974:491) of the pronouns "you" and "she" in Terry's utterance are clear, Sharon argues that they are ambiguous. Sharon, rather than Pam, answers the accusation and argues that the referent of "she" is uncertain. The misapprehension (Jefferson 1972:304-308) concerning who is the recipient of Terry's accusation is resolved immediately (examples 3.34-35). Several features of the interaction demonstrate that the referents of the pronouns are not unclear and that this is in fact recognized by the participants. First, a similar accusation had been previously answered by Pam (example 3.26). Second, Florence, through her repeated denials of the offensive act of having written something, has previously identified herself as the party implicated in the act of writing (examples 3.10, 3.17, and 3.22).

A series of side sequences (Jefferson 1972) and repairs (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977), which do not address Terry's accusations to Pam (example 3.33), follows in examples 3.34-49. The next time Terry recycles her accusation to Pam, she prefaces her action by signaling a "satisfactory termination of preceding talk" (Jefferson 1972:317) and categorizing the prior talk as having been off the topic (example 3.50). This time no counteraccusation or side sequences develop. Pam answers (in example 3.52a) "YOU **WA**:S," arguing that the statement Terry is calling her on was a true report of Terry's actions. After some debate following Terry's challenge (example 3.52b) and Pam's replaying of the scene when Terry reputedly said something about Florence (example 3.53), Terry states that it was Maria rather than herself who was talking about Florence (example 3.54). In that the party being accused of having given an inaccurate report agrees that it is inaccurate, debate on this issue is closed and focus shifts to the new charge against Maria (examples 3.56-60).

Unlike other forms of argument which occur within conversation (Goodwin 1978:187-334), the he-said-she-said is highly topicalized. Throughout the dispute, with the exception of Florence's statement (example 3.24), attention remains on accusation/response sequences, and a clear division between those who are principals and those who are spectators is maintained. The procedures I have been examining provide not only for utterances with a particular structure but also create a coherent domain of action, an entire drama for the participants implicated in these utterances. As the current accusation on the floor is switched, so the relevant configuration of identity relationships of participants in the event is rearranged.

consequences of the he-said-she-said confrontation

The he-said-she-said dispute described above is played out as a game in which participants create and reform alliances of two against one, a type of social structure typical of the nonhierarchical girls' group.[21] The confrontation may lead to different sorts of social consequences. Upon completion of a nonserious confrontation, children may continue the play that occurred prior to the event. In the case of the he-said-she-said presented above (example 3), Terry played with the other girls an hour later, after she had taken her younger sister to school and had eaten lunch. Other confrontations, however, end with one of the parties removing herself from the other's presence. Withdrawal from the scene of the confrontation indicates a certain level of seriousness in the encounter. Being absent from school by "turning in sick" is a strategy for terminating disputes quite similar to the practice of avoidance in other cultures. One very serious he-said-she-said led to the defendant's ostracism from her play group for a month and a half and to subsequent ridicule in song by her friends during that period. Indeed, talk about talk can lead to serious consequences: depriving someone of her basic rights to interact with others in her play group. Confrontations do not, however, lead to permanent rupture in social relationships or to more violent behavior, as in some societies.

Among a group of individuals for whom it is culturally inappropriate to insult, command, or accuse another person openly, the confrontation provides an event through which complaints about others may be aired and character may be generated. Although a primary reason for initiating a dispute might be the perception that someone considers herself above others of the social group,[22] such a concern does not become an official issue in an argument between two girls. The act of talking about someone behind her back can, however, provide a recognizable offense which can trigger formal confrontation proceedings. This forum allows for the accuser to discuss complaints which she has against the defendant. That which gets debated in a formal, legal case, therefore, might not be what generated the dispute; rather, it might be what anyone with some knowledge of the culture could see as an offense warranting verbal, retributive action.

conclusion

In most societies public disputes involve third parties as mediators and compromises are possible outcomes. According to Nader and Todd (1978), "conflict" phases are characteristically dyadic while "disputes" (events in which conflict becomes public) involve "a third party who intervenes either at the behest of one or both of the principals or their supporters" (1978:15). The he-said-she-said presents an exception to this generalization. Third parties in the he-said-she-said are important not in the confrontation, but rather in the reporting stage; they act as instigators in setting up a confrontation at a future stage.[23] Disputes in the confrontation stage are handled directly by those who are either defendant or plaintiff or parties acting in one of these roles; spectators to the dispute who attempt to intervene are sanctioned by the principals. Accusers, through participation in a public dispute, attempt to generate moral character and to demonstrate that they are capable of "fighting they own battles." Compromises do not occur in he-said-she-said confrontations.

Despite the fact that the social organization of the confrontation is dyadic, the structure of the utterances defining the field of action is triadic. Although third parties are not present as mediators, their relevance is involved in the opening accusation statements. In framing the offense as a report from an intermediary party, the accuser provides an out for the

defendant in her next move. In that the defendant has available to her a number of pro-
cedures for denying the charge, she need not admit the offense, thereby leaving the ac-
cuser exposed as someone who delivers empty accusations. Thus, both accuser and defen-
dant cooperate in maintaining each other's sense of face in the confrontation. The type of
legal proceeding being described occurs neither in a specifiable place nor at a specific
time. Although it occurs within what appears to be an unstructured setting, the event itself
has a highly formalized structure.

The he-said-she-said activity is constructed through an underlying set of cultural pro-
cedures that provides a particular ordered field of events, including such things as relevant
actions and identities for participants in both the past and present. Phenomena within this
field do not obtain their meaning in isolation, but rather from their position within the en-
tire structure. Thus, categories of person, the structure and interpretation of events, forms
of action, and the sequencing of these phenomena through time are interdependent
aspects of a single whole. Such analysis of a particular set of artifacts, in terms of the pro-
cedures utilized to construct the set, is consistent with traditional research in anthropology,
such as ethnosemantics.

The procedures employed to construct opening he-said-she-said accusations not only
produce sentences of a particular syntactic structure, but also create a social order through
the use of complex linguistic structures of embedding.[24] A next speaker will have to
analyze the structure of a preceding utterance and display his understanding of it in order
to tie appropriately to the previous speaker. Thus, as noted by Sacks and Moerman (1971),
the production of a next utterance requires the integrated use of both cultural and social
competence.

The ordering and negotiation of the field of action within the he-said-she-said event is
achieved through language. Indeed, it is the syntactic structure of the opening accusation
statement that makes manifest and displays to others the organization of the relevant field
of action. Radcliffe-Brown (1973:310) was of the opinion that while there may be "certain
indirect interactions between social structure and language . . . these would seem to be of
minor importance." I have here argued to the contrary that it is possible to analyze
language as a functionally integrated component of a group's social organization and
culture. Moreover, analyzing language, culture, and social organization from such an in-
tegrated perspective would seem to be quite consistent with the traditional, holistic goals
of anthropology.

It has frequently been assumed that the speech of working-class children, and black
children in particular,[25] is deficient and that the talk produced in actual situations of use is
too degenerate for systematic analysis (Chomsky 1965:3-4). The present analysis provides
some demonstration that, to the contrary, the speech of children at play, particularly talk
taken to be "aimless activity" (Malinowski 1959:315), constitutes a powerful manifestation
of not only linguistic competence, but also of social and cultural competence.

notes

[1] Data are transcribed according to a modified version of the system developed by Jefferson and
described in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974:731-733). See the Appendix.

[2] The scope of this study is limited to a specific group of people; in my interviews with black

southern women, however, these same procedures have been reported to be typical among black girls in both rural and urban settings of the South and North. In the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, this event is called "he-say-she-say" (William Stewart 1977: personal communication). Events similar in structure to the he-said-she-said occur among white girls' peer groups, as well as among adult coworkers in any number of situations (offices, clinics, church groups) of various ethnic groups. Therefore, although the phenomenon is described with reference to a specific group, it is in no way exclusive to this group.

[3] Complex and extensive storytelling events often precede the confrontation. The stories are carefully organized with reference to the projected dispute. The storyteller portrays the absent party as having talked about the present story recipient behind her back and elicits from the recipient a pledge to confront the nonpresent offending party with the charged offense during this stage (see Goodwin 1978:509–561).

[4] Gossip is generally defined in the literature as talk between two copresent parties concerning an absent third party. For example, Lancaster (1974:262) proposes the following description of a gossip situation: "The structure of the situation in which gossip takes place is that between two individuals or groups, A and B, about a third individual or group, C, who is not present."

The analysis of gossip has been an important concern in anthropology. Investigators have been primarily interested in explaining its social functions (Colson 1953; Epstein 1969; Frankenberg 1957; Gluckman 1963, 1968; Harris 1974), its information-management functions (Campbell 1964; Cox 1970; Hannerz 1967; Paine 1967), its "performance standards" (Abrahams 1970), and its individual, network, or interest group motivations (Campbell 1964; Cox 1970; Hannerz 1967; Paine 1967; Szwed 1966). Haviland (1977:5), in his study of gossip in Zinacantan, is concerned with "how native actors examine, use and manipulate cultural rules in natural contexts." The present study is, however, concerned with how a particular phase of gossip, the confrontation, is constructed through conversation. Generally, informants' reports about gossip, rather than actual sequences of talk, are used as the primary data for research (Colson 1953; Gluckman 1963; Harris 1974). The liabilities inherent in using this form of data in the analysis of gossip have been discussed by Wilson (1974) in his critique of Colson (1953). When sequences of events of gossip are analyzed, i.e., Epstein (1969), transcripts of the actual utterances spoken in gossip are generally not provided. Haviland (1977) provides transcripts of gossip which he elicited from informants.

[5] The focus upon cultural activities such as speech events as a point of departure for anthropological description has been of recent interest among anthropologists, particularly cognitive anthropologists. For example, Goodenough (1971) has expressed a concern for the study of activities rather than social groups as a starting point for the analysis of culture: "What does concern us is that, in practice, anthropologists have rarely considered simple clusters associated with only a few activities as the units with which to associate the phenomenon of culture" (1971:38).

[6] The term *identity* is used by Goodenough (1965:3) to refer to "an aspect of self that makes a difference in how one's rights and duties distribute to specific others." The term *occasion-specific identity*, suggested to me by Gail Jefferson (1973: personal communication) is used in the present analysis to refer to the sets of rights and duties that are expected of participants in speech events of the type being examined in this paper.

[7] There were 6 girls in the younger girls' group. These girls often played with the younger boys. There were 3 boys in the younger boys' group. In all, there were 15 girls in the older girls' group; at any one time, however, usually only 4 or 5 girls at most played together. There were 20 boys in the older boys' group. It was not uncommon for a group of 8 boys to play together at any one time. The older boys' group was generally larger than the older girls' group.

[8] For a comparison of the ways in which girls and boys organize task activities, making use of different forms of directives, see Goodwin (in press).

[9] According to Nader and Todd (1978:10): "In the next procedural mode, negotiation, the two principal parties are the decision makers, and the settlement of the matter is one to which both parties agree, without the aid of a third party." This description appears to only partially characterize the type of dispute being analyzed in this paper. The confrontation stage is dyadic; there is no mediating third party. However, settlement or agreement is not an outcome of this stage. Moreover, although the event is carried out between two principal disputants, it constitutes a public event.

[10] The term *argument phase* is used to distinguish the confrontation stage from previous stages in which stories are told for the purpose of aligning participants in a particular way. Children refer to the process of dispute within a he-said-she-said as "argument," "fuss," or "fight."

[11] A somewhat similar pattern was noted by Pike (1973:141–142), although the three parties were identified as speaker, addressee, and listener.

[12] This sequence, as well as example 14, might more appropriately be considered expanded forms of adjacency pairs. The turn between the accusations and denial constitutes a form of insertion sequence (Schegloff 1972).

[13] Hart (1951) discusses the function of utterances such as "You did it": he argues that they are primarily *ascriptive* rather than descriptive in that utterances of this shape "ascribe responsibility for actions" (1951:145). See also Austin (1961:1–2).

[14] An important feature of gossip is that it concerns absent parties. See note 3.

[15] In its simplest form, the offense may be described as "saying something about somebody else":

Ter:	She gonna fight Naynay.
Han:	Why.
Ter:	Cuz she said somp'm about her.

[16] See also Goffman (1974:529). In the course of denials in the he-said-she-said, blame is not attributed to the accuser, who could well have modified the message in order to be able to accuse the addressee; parties who relayed the message to the accuser are instead challenged. Thus, an additional form of deference may be seen to be paid to the accuser in the delivery of the defendant's response to an accusation.

[17] Emerson (1969:155–171) describes a form of counteraccusation he calls "counter-denunciation," a strategy used by accused parties to "undermine the discrediting implications of the accusation by attacking the actions, motives and/or character of one's accusers" (1969:156).

[18] In investigating the role-played arguments of first through fourth graders, Lein and Brenneis (1978:302) found the following:

In these role-played arguments, both black and white American children rarely employed statements of proof or documentation of their own preceding statement. . . . Although statements of validation are used occasionally, validity does not seem to be a significant arguing point.

Within naturally occurring arguments such as he-said-she-saids, speakers do provide a form of validation for their positions by including the report of a nonpresent party in the opening confrontation statements. It may well be that the role-playing situation is conducive to the delivery of "arguments of fantasy statements that neither participant expects to be validated" (Lein and Brenneis 1978:302).

[19] Caplow (1968) examines coalitions of "two against one" in social psychological experiments.

[20] In the black toast "The Lion and the Monkey" (Abrahams 1964:147–149), and its verse form "The Elephant, the Lion and the Monkey" (Dorson 1967:98–99), a similar patterning of events leading to a confrontation occurs; that is, a confrontation develops following someone having been told that he was talked about behind his back. In the toast form of the story the lion confronts the elephant after the monkey tells him that the elephant was talking about him. Accusations of the structure we have been examining do not occur; however, the actual sequence of events leading to the confrontation is similar to that reported in the he-said-she-said accusation.

lion →elephant	The lion confronts the elephant
monkey →lion	after the monkey tells the lion
elephant →X (monkey)	that the elephant was talking to some unspecified
lion	party (parties) (presumably including the monkey) about the lion.

The offense leading to the confrontation differs from that referred to in the he-said-she-said. A specific kind of talking about someone, called "playing the dozens" (Abrahams 1964:138), is dealt with in the toast.

[21] Although boys constantly rank one another in both the activity of making comparisons and organizing games, hierarchical structures are rare among the girls' group studied. Instead, the girls' group is characterized by alliances of girls against third parties. Eder and Halinan (1978) examine sex differences in the exclusiveness of children's dyadic friendships. They report that girls' dyadic friendships tend to be more exclusive than those of boys and also that "girls tend to resist intrusion on a mutal best friendship over time, while boys quickly expand a mutual best friend dyad to include a third person" (Eder and Halinan 1978:246).

[22] For example, with regard to example 3 (a he-said-she-said which involves Terry as a defendant in its third stage), girls were annoyed with Terry because she had skipped a grade in school, got straight A's on her report card, and frequently reminded others of her position relative to them by forecasting what experiences they could expect in junior high school. In the case of example 7, girls felt that Darlene tried to differentiate herself from others in the girls' group by wearing newer and more expensive clothes than other girls.

[23] In the toast "The Signifying Monkey" (referred to in note 20), the intermediary's participation in the event is referred to as "signifying." Features of the speech act "signifying" have been discussed by Mitchell-Kernan (1972:165–176) and Kochman (1970:156–157). With regard to this activity, Kochman (1970:157) has stated the following:

Interestingly, when the function of signifying is directive, the tactic employed is one of indirection — i.e., the signifier reports or repeats what someone else has said about the listener; the "report" is couched in plausible language designed to compel belief and arouse feelings of anger and hostility [emphasis in original].

Although I have heard the term signifying used by black adults to refer to an intermediary's role in

bringing about a he-said-she-said, I have not heard it used by children. Instead, they refer to the intermediary's activity as "instigating."

[24] Halliday and Hasan (1976:36) have argued that reference in children's speech is characteristically "exophoric," an exophoric item being one which "does not name anything — it signals that reference must be made to the context of situation" (Halliday and Hasan 1976:33). In the case of utterances opening the he-said-she-said confrontations, however, referents are explicitly described.

[25] For example, Bernstein (1964) has proposed that working-class children utilize a "restrictive code." Bereiter and Engelman (1966) have stated that the Black English Vernacular is "nonlogical." Although not specifically concerned with either black or working-class speech, but with how "texts" maintain their sense of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan (1976:36) have stated that, in the "neighborhood speech" of children in their peer groups, "the context of the situation is the material environment — the 'things' [which] are there in front of one." The present analysis argues against such findings and supports the position of Labov (1970, 1972a, 1972b, 1974) and Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis (1968) that the Black English Vernacular is capable of being used for highly abstract thought.

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The following is a simplified version of a system for transcribing utterances based on the system developed by Gail Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974:731–733). Only those symbols relevant to the present analysis are included.

I. Sequencing	Instance	Explanation
//	P: THAT LADY GONNA BEAT YO'JR//BUTT! S: I WANT-	The double obliques indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped with the talk of another.
[	C: And ⌜you had- H:　　⌞Where **who** who w'playin basketball at.	An alternative system is to place a left bracket at the point of overlapping talk directly beneath the talk it overlaps.
=	C: Not even waitin for em.= H: =WHAT?!	The equal signs, indicate "latching"; there is no interval between the end of a prior and start of a next piece of talk.
(0.0)	N: Vincent c'd **I** have that rubber band, (0.4) I **need** it.	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in tenths of seconds.

II. Sound Production		
? ! , .	T: Is Johnny's bike **o**range, S: **H**ow ya know they Portariccan.	Punctuation markers are not used as grammatical symbols, but for intonation. A period indicates falling intonation. A comma is used for falling/rising intonation. Question marks are used for rising intonation.
::	C: You was up there r:unnin, J: Hey::	Colons indicate that the prior syllable is prolonged. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged syllable.
bold face type	P: **They** ain't **Spa**nish,	Bold face type indicates various forms of stressing and may involve pitch and/or volume.
-	C: And we was- (0.6) and wh- wh- what was he **do**in,	The dash indicates a cut-off of the prior word or sound.
- -	C: Lemme-tell-ya,	Hyphens between words indicate slurred rapid speech.
(hh)	C: So you would spend twenny five cents fo(hh)r so(hh)me grits,	The [(h)] within parentheses and within a word indicates explosive aspiration, either laughter or breathlessness.
°	P: °Those Spanish people	The degree sign indicates that the talk it precedes is low in volume.
UC	P: They TALK PORtariccan.	Uppercase indicates increased volume.

III. Reader's Guides		
( )	(　　): How bout right up there. M: (　　　) P: (take my place)	Single parentheses indicate transcribers could not identify speaker or what was said, or are unsure about words contained therein.
(( ))	M: ((baby voice)) "**I ain**'t got no money."	Materials in double parentheses indicate features of the audio materials other than actual verbalizations.