The 'Interrogative Gaze': making video calling and messaging 'accountable'

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Abstract

This paper explores aspects everyday reasoning in which the terms *Skype* and *Skyping* are used to denote video calling, where the branded supplier of such technologies is only occasionally Skype, the company. Evidence for these enquiries derives from interviews with families and friends about their video communications. The goal of the paper is not to make generalizable claims about attitudes, uses, or what might be described as the 'gratifying features' of video communications, typical concerns of, for example, communications and media theory research, as it is to identify salient properties of how talk about Skype is organised interactionally, and how this interaction invokes an implied order of behaviour that is treated as 'typical' and 'accountably representative' of video communication. This invoked order we will call an 'interrogative gaze'. This is an implied orientation to action, one that is used as a jointly managed interpretative schema that allows video communication to be talked about and understood as rationally, purposively and collaboratively undertaken. This applies irrespective of whether the actions implied are prospective (are about to happen) or have been undertaken in the past and are being accounted for in the present or are 'generally the case' – in current talk. We show how this constitutive device also aids in sense making through such things as topic management in video-mediated interaction, and in elaborating the salience of the relationship between this and the patterned governance of social affairs – viz, mother-daughter, friend-friend - as normatively achieved outcomes. For we shall show how the interrogative gaze is variously appropriate and consequentially invoked not just in terms of what is done in a video call or making such calls accountable, but in helping articulate different orders of connection between persons, and how these orders have implications for sensible and appropriate behaviour in video calling. This, in turn, explains how a decision to avoid using video communication is made an accountably reasonable thing to do. The relevance of these findings for the sociology of everyday life and the philosophy of action are explored.

Keywords: Video calling; Video Mediated Communication; Skype; Family; Friendship; Participation frameworks; Reasoning; Conversation analysis; Ethnomethodology; Sociology of the Everyday; Philosophy of Action.

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1. Introduction

Some words seem to evoke an era, resonant not just of the argot of everyday chit-chat but also the fixations and practices of a cultural moment. 'Skyping' is one of those words. Already it is losing its sheen as alternative technologies muddle its role in vernacular language: *Facetime, Google Hangouts*, as well as nouns for other communications media - *WhatsApp, Instagram* - crowd into everyday parlance and, even as we write, Skyping is beginning to sound outmoded, past, echoing what is turning out of fashion. The world is constantly changing, after all, and much of this has to do with the evolving landscape of technology. But nevertheless, 'Skype' is in practice a denotation for all types of video communication, like 'Xerox' came to be for photocopying, and just as Xerox the company receded in importance, so too, perhaps, is Skype - but people still use that word to 'label' all kinds of video calling, whatever the brand or supplier.

That's as maybe. But one of the curiosities of language is that it allows people to label actions and describe behaviours in ways that implies that the words used are sufficient to comprehend what is being evoked and yet, as Wittgenstein noted in his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), to understand what is meant by some word or phrase necessitates knowing something already known about the life in question, about the doings labeled by the words. So it is with 'Skype'. To ask why someone makes a 'Skype call' is not to label an activity that is yet to be properly described or understood by the people posing the question. Someone does not make this query because they do not know what 'Skype' means. The question is asked because they are wanting to know why some individual would behave in some particular way given what 'Skype action' is known to be. They are enquiring into the fitting of individual purposes and actions into the technologically mediated circumstances at hand. To 'Skype' is part of a form of life that is already understood, conjointly engaged in as a normal feature of human affairs - in contemporary patterns of friendship and family, part of being 'in touch' when being in touch is the thing to do. To 'Skype' is to inhabit familiar territory, familiar because it has been learnt to the level of being taken for granted.

If the use of the word 'Skype' is anything to go by, then words have a complex relationship with the activities they are bound to and denote. Part of this complexity has to do with how their use foregrounds certain types of orientations to the activities in question where other things about those activities are kept as background features; such that they can be presupposed, assumed, to an extent ignored. As we say, to ask why someone Skypes may not be about Skype in the general, what is routinely presumed in the doing of it, but about the particularities being articulated in that specific Skype call. These may have something to do with what is relevant to the persons involved; as a case in point, that they may be friends say, something to do with family connection, or related to courting perhaps – seeing as a way of loving comes to mind.

In these respects, there are, one imagines, an almost infinite number of possible answers to the question, 'Why Skype?' It depends on the circumstances. And one would expect as well that these will be made up of the diverse and complex trajectories of human connection (Ingold, 2011) made manifest

in chosen courses of action in which 'mediated' communication has a role – and there are, one need hardly add, presumably very many of these.

To this extent, the deployment of a word like Skype is a gloss for all types of video connection. Using such a gloss is not, we are saying, a way of labeling an activity; it is to marshal stocks of knowledge about the doings of the world that enables the constituting of observed acts through the use of that word in common language and talk. One should not forget either that, in being used in talk, doing so also provides a mechanism for this stock of knowledge to be brought to bear collaboratively - through the turns talk in which the gloss is used. To talk about Skype is to make a constitutive scheme through which a world in common that has Skype as a feature is both produced and shared. To put it another way, to ask why someone Skypes is to formulate through language how to see the world such that understandings about certain types of behaviour and intentional stances 'typically' and 'ordinarily' deployed in activities related to that term can be used as a resource to make sense of particular actions at hand or in the offing. The ordinary world, so to speak, is in a word, even if that word may seem to be losing is general valence, its fashionability, as may be the case with *Skype*.

2. Approach to evidence

We present this preamble as a way of emphasising the analytical perspective we want to take in this paper. As should be already clear, we are less interested in technology 'in itself', in how something like Skype (or its proxies, Facetime, Google Hangouts and the rest, often rather charmlessly described through an acronym, VMC, Video Mediated Communication) works or in how such technologies might be described by, say, marketing and technology vendors; we are much more concerned with the reasoning and other practices that are constitutive of, and thus productive of, everyday life. More especially we are interested in the ways in which language use is part of the life in which technology is brought into play. In our view, it is in the organisation of language that technology gets to be made a socially relevant and shaped phenomenon.

In these respects, our concern echoes, in varying degrees and ways, ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) conversation(al) analysis and membership categorization analysis (Maynard, 1988; Fitzgerald and Housley, 2015). These approaches variously focus on how ordinary society is, in various ways, incarnate in talk. The move to a concern for language use has important implications for the kinds of evidence that can be brought to bear on investigation as well as in regard to the analytic statements and insights that can be generated from it. All this is worth bearing in mind if one wants to take this approach in one's own research, as we do in this paper.

To begin with, this approach opens up where data can be found. For, in this view, it can be found in any type of talk about Skype as well as in the talk one can observe when people are 'Skyping'; when talk is *in vivo* if you like. As we have noted, talk about Skype (and indeed other video mediated communications channels that the word labels) always and multifariously invokes a world known in common and a world in which 'know-how' about what Skype entails, what it implies, and why it is used,

is deployed as part of the sense-making procedures embedded in interaction. Through knowing about what Skype entails, people can come to some intersubjective agreement about what they are doing at any particular moment in time, planning a Skype call, for example, accounting for a Skype call that has happened, or talking about Skype to an interviewer. Ways of investigating 'Skype' are then quite open in this view: there is no need to fix observed behaviours to moments when Skype is 'on'; one simply needs to examine the utterances of everyday life in which Skype is brought up and, on occasion, used (or to use Sacks and Schegloff's (1979) phrase, becomes a 'mentionable', or what Adato (1980) terms an 'occasioned topic'). One needs ordinary life, in other words; ordinary talk. The data presented later on in this paper is of this order - though elicited in the constrained of interviews, our analysis is of how Skype and Skyping is brought to bear in ordinary ways in this fabricated social encounter.

Second, and as has been explained in the introduction of this special issue of *Pragmatics*, the tenor of sociological inquiry into video-mediated communication more generally focuses on explanations that point towards how that use satisfies some generalisable characteristic of society. As a case in point, Madianou and Miller argue in *Migration and New Media (*2012) that transnational economic migration needs technologies that enable the fabric of family structures to be sustained. Modern society needs migrator workers, workers need families, therefore workers need video connections to their families if they are to continue being functioning members of those families. Even if it is the whole 'nuclear' or semi-extended family that migrates or simply the parents, say, the remaining family can be connected, 'made real', via video connection, via *Skype*. Certainly this is what Madianou and Miller assume. Having taken this perspective, however, the reasoning of the human at the centre of this connection between the doings of economic action and the doings of family life is not the main subject of such inquiries. That people will reason in accord with these perceived 'social needs' and, for example, 'match' Skype 'to' migration is a given; that they become users, migrant users of Skype in Madianou and Miller's phraseology, is because '*they have to'.* Modern society makes it so. It 'causes' them to act thus (for a similar argument also see Miller, D. & Sininan, J. 2014)[1].

The approach we take here has a quite different view of the reasoning of people, though, not only making it much more the focus of concern but in wanting to explore how it is done as a practical matter for those doing it. And key to this perspective is taking mundane language use, talk most especially, as a site of key work, for this approach treats language as the vehicle for the reasoning of persons as a

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[1] Of course, there are problems attached to this analytic use of 'cause'. As the philosopher Hanson noted (1972), there have been numerous semantic and pragmatic changes in the way the term has been used and even the most systematic and thorough investigations end up acknowledging that such a term can be slippery. As Hume showed, cause often describes some event in explaining it ([1739-40] 1974), begging the value of the concept of cause as something unique and separate from understanding. For the kinds of relations that Madianou and Miller are after, such looseness is acceptable but see Harper, et al, 2016: 197-214.

collaborative practice, as something done together, in their particularly-situated interaction. In this view, spoken self-understandings, articulations about someone's social connections and patterned ways of communicating, come to be the material basis of intersubjective understanding for those involved, and sources the experiential shape of that world as constituted by an arrangement of intersecting, accountable human intentions. In this respect, talk and how it is part of action is, as Garfinkel memorably put it (1967), a 'members problem' insofar as talk and its intertwining with action is what ordinary people have to attend to in their daily affairs, in their chit-chat about, as in this case, 'being in touch' just as it is *in* those acts of being in touch (Harper, 2011).

Talk is part of the stuff of their reasoning in other words and, hence, in this case, it is very much part of their ordinary reasoning about Skype that is of interest to us. For us, then, what 'causes' people to use Skype on particular occasions is not primarily an analytic matter involving a specialist use of the term 'cause'. Instead, we address ourselves toward users' own ordinary employment of that term (viz, 'cause') in their accounting of, say, a particular instance of Skyping their family back in the home country. They may tell us, unprompted, about "what caused them to Skype" on "this occasion". We treat *their* causal imputation as a datum to be explicated and explored as a topic in its own right, where they management and deployment of terms like cause are tools in their sense making procedures. In this sense, we are not setting up the kind of analysis which naturalistic researchers of various stripes term 'methodological irony', that is, an analysis that seeks to compete with or contest with the reasons that people own and articulate. We do not want to downgrade or even supplant their 'reasons for Skyping' and replace them with our own. Instead we take ordinary people and their reasoning - in this case, ordinary 'Skypers' and their reasons - as our evidential starting point. We try to consider their reasons for using Skype as part and parcel of a weave of practices of mundane reason that constitute 'Doing Skyping' as part of their ordinary routines and practices. Like Papacharissi, though her topic is another form of mediated communication, social networks (2011), we think that how people choose to act in and through technology and indeed how they talk about it is their business; in our view it ought to be ours too.

That this is so has another and perhaps equally important consequence: though an individual may have little knowledge of how the technology of video communication (or indeed other related technologies) might work, their adroit use of interactional technique and know-how when they talk about and use that technology, makes their skills at doing so more salient to analytical inquiry about the nature of the technology as a social phenomenon than any expertise about the technology itself. Being skilled at acts of communication, being astute at choosing between different technologies of communication, and applying all this know-how effectively in what one might call the 'politics' of friendship and family (or anything else they might do with Skype), is not ordinarily labeled with educational certificates or professional affiliation - one does not need to be a communications engineer to use Skype 'properly'. One needs to be a competent member of society, one who knows what is 'meant' when someone says

'Let's Skype'. It's not the ability to switch on a computer and find the application that is at issue, for these are a given; it is a gloss for knowing why a Skype call is a reasonable thing to do[2].

And here is the rub of the matter for us, the target of our research. In our view, such a concern is central to, though not exclusively, sociological inquiries into social order and how this is manifest in everyday, mundane, ordinary action. Here we see how reasoning practices *in situ* are constitutive of that order. This is certainly not the only way one can inquire into social order, but is clearly crucial to such enquiries (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970). At the same time, a revival of interest in the 'philosophy of action' motivates us, since this interest has to do with what ordinary reasons might be and how they operate in and through human practices. For the past twenty or thirty years, the general consensus in philosophy has been that reasons are causes, albeit that the range of these reasons and their role as causal requires specification that is often disputed, and often as well conflating important distinctions (Sandis, 2012; for a background see Leist, 2007; for the perspective of sociology on these debates see Harper et al, 2016: 197-235). These difficulties are bound up in part to the polysemic character of the term itself and how it has evolved, though they are more importantly a reflection of the subtle and diverse ways that reasons are invoked in language use. Language praxis is untidy, diverse and at times ragged; complex too in ways that makes reasons articulated through language acts complex and subtle. That this is so has resulted in the consensus about reasons as causes being replaced by a more pluralistic perspective, where reasons can have many forms and roles, causal being only one. In this manner some of the many conflations that muddle arguments in the area can be avoided, some believe (see most especially Sandis, 2012). In our view, recognition of these difficulties, bound as many are to language, is a roundabout way of allowing some of Wittgenstein's (1953) insights into language to gain favour again (Harper et al, *op cit*). For these very complications where the central topic of his later enquiries[3].

That philosopher notwithstanding, and leaving aside the meaning of cause, our enquires here will provide evidence on what 'reasons' are in a particular way. As we say, our interest is not in reasons as objects of philosophical inquiry so much as reasons as lived phenomena, as felt practices, bound up, as we have already noted, in the accountabilities of everyday life and, in this regard, to be understood with respect to their role in that life. This evidential concern will, we hope, furnish data for asking just what their plural forms might be from a philosophical point of view – causal in some instances, having

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[2] Of course, this is a new version of an old phenomenon: one does not need to know about the chemical composition of the metal out of which of a knife and fork are fashioned in order to use them competently in eating one's dinner, say, in the co-presence of fellow diners, in the ways that Norbert Elias has depicted in his seminal, *The Civilizing Process* (1969).

[3] Whether this will ever lead to a full-blown revival of interest in his work is another question.

other relations to actions elsewhere. In short, our evidence will help open up some of the 'natural' richness and variety of reasons, as part of the skeins through which people account in their daily lives for what they do and how they understand that life. Reasons that we seek are the vernacular of making sense, and this includes how people make moral sense of themselves and others, of their actions and their shared doings. Reasons that we seek are the vernacular of making sense, and this includes how people make moral sense of themselves and others, of their actions and their shared doings. Though we might only want to explore 'reasons to Skype' we think our inquires will point towards how people understand the lives they lead in terms that makes sense to them, that are applicable to what they are about as they understand it and for which they use their own language to articulate. It is to explore the empirical and conceptual implications of this position that we now turn

3. Evidence in everyday reasoning about Skype

Our explorations are based on transcript data from two separate sets of interviews about Skype with families groups and friends. The first set were conducted in 2014 and were concerned specifically with traditional Skype video calling – with Skyping as a verb if you like. They were all concerned with how Skyping was described and accounted for in the interview talk, and sought to uncover the everyday reasons used to account for and reflexively organise doings with Skype. The second were conducted in 2014/2015 as part of 'at-launch' study of a new form of video connection that piggy-backed on some of the technical infrastructure of Skype. Here, too, the concern was with everyday language and its categorisations, and Skyping was certainly a very significant part of this linguistic landscape. But here the concern was with how language terms are used prospectively to organise what doings a new application might encourage or entail (see details in Rintel et al 2016). Crudely speaking, and bringing these two sources of data together, our task was not to investigate how people understood technology (or variants of some basic form) but in the systematic ways language about the world known in common could be seen to be a resource to both understand that world and to fold into it new features as they become engaged with - new features that could be related what the technology enabled or new ways in which people wanted to conduct themselves in their expressed practices.

With this evidence, we organise the remainder of the paper as follows. The next section presents the first transcript evidence, and relates the kind of category work that is undertaken when the term Skype is used. We show that its use orders understanding and topic and, in particular, helps describe a field of relevant behaviours and actors in such a fashion that this relevance becomes proxy for sanctioning those behaviours and actors – for treating them as the norm and for treating those who undertake those actions as normal too. As we shall show, the categorization ends up characterizing (though not determining) what is to be thought as 'right', 'normal' and 'typical' behaviour – or at last behaviour that is plausible and hence the basis for conversation about the subject, 'Skype' and who are the normal types of people who use (or choose not to) Skype. This also points towards the nature of our evidence, interviews about Skype, and the natural order of these as collaborative, interrogative events, as situations where the participants have a frame of reference about who asks and who answers, what the

topic might be and how, in talk about this, shared understandings come to unfold in a way which allows 'Skyping' to show the particularities of the one being interviewed. Thus we shall see how these formulations help scaffold a space in which the detailed nature of the communicative affairs of one or other of the interview subjects can be constructed; a creation that is only possible if the general nature of what Skype is for or entails is a given, a starting point, something to contrast; something that has already been 'achieved', so to speak, in prior turns at talk. This having been said, the distribution of rights and responsibilities in interviews allocates rights to the respondent to 'speak' (on the instructed topic)"on her/his own behalf" with first-person authority that may not straightforwardly be doubted by the interviewer. We shall see, in the last section, that these particularities are in turn elaborated through reference to other equally commonplace notions about social affairs, though not in this case to do with communications technologies. Rather, we shall see that these have to do with the kinds of relations that these communications articulate - between mothers and daughters say, or 'just' between friends. This allusion to participation status within participation frameworks (Goodwin, 1981; Woelfer et al, forthcoming) and the situated particularities of individual actors and actions will be important for we shall see how the mundane world as made up of known relationships is used as a resource to make sense of how that world is changing – or at least a world that people may seek to change even as they try and use (or turn away from) Skype.

4. Why Skype?

As we say, our data is taken from interviews the ostensive purpose of which was to 'talk about' Skyping. The subjects were fully apprised of this when they agreed to interview. Hence the interviews were characterised by a general structure – after introductions, the first question was posed, namely "Do you Skype and if so why?" This was followed by answers - as one would expect. Though these did not always end up in the affirmative, what is worth noting is that most began with assertions about what was self-evidently the kind of reason that any 'normal', 'everyday' person would have that would justify or explain Skype use. As we shall see later, these very reasons were sometimes deployed at a subsequent point in the interview to explain how for some particular case, of communication between persons, Skype was not used. For what we will see is that the self-evident reasons for using Skype provide a contrast set for reasons not to use Skype.

So, before we get to that, let us look at some of these ordinarily- attributed reasons and the way they are stated. Each of the following is taken from a different interview, and for the sake of length are merely snippets. In each case, the subject has been asked why they might Skype.

Segment 1
When my Mum is on she'll say "Oh I want to see your new room" or the "things you've put on your wall" and stuff like that.

Segment 2

[Skype] experiences are really precious to me because I love to see the kids and they can't use the phone by themselves but my sister can get them started on this.

It is important to note something that is so obvious that it might not otherwise be remarked upon: that these are economically expressed. By that we mean, first of all, that these answers are not long - only two lines. One could easily imagine considerably greater length - after all, and since we have already mentioned him, think of Wittgenstein's *Brown Book* (1964). This starts with a simple question: What is the meaning of a word? but it goes on for 74 pages. Hanson, meanwhile (*ibid*) expends a section of his book solely on the meanings of the word 'cause' and its agnates. Likewise one could imagine a whole litany of 'reasons' why someone would use Skype. To conject: these reasons might include cost, need, obligation, compulsion, desire, routine and so on. But we don't find such a list. Nor do we find any elaborate theory; one doesn't hear a kind of notion that one might read in, say, social psychology, that holds that seeing brings people some kind of intimacy and similar; nor by way of further example, do we hear any of the kind of philosophical theory to do with using the visual to enable simulation of the 'other's mind' (Goldman, 2006). This is not to say that such general reasons are never invoked by persons, but is only to warn against the analytical presumption that these reasons pertain for the users on each and every occasion of use.

The contrast we are drawing here is not between an expert doing an analysis versus a layman, one thus lengthy and the other therefore short; it is not Wittgenstein's intellect versus an everyday 'folk knowledge' that we are alluding to here, a point that Goldman makes (ibid). The shortness of the answers, we feel, shows intelligence, it shows élan at trying to structure the organisation of what is talked about in the interview even at this first step, the response to the opening question such that the answer looks like one that brings an orientation of a mundane world, one that is populated by ordinary folks - folks that don't 'do' lists nor theory. And they do this not because they are asserting that this is the right view, but rather, in their answers, they are making a move in furnishing what the prospective topic of the interviews might be - namely, an inquiry into the means and ways of normal life - their own, that is to say, at least as it is described and accounted for in ordinary talk. The strategy here would appear to be to portray themselves from the outset as not special, not odd, not listers or theorisers but people who are 'unremarkable' - if one can measure such by the reasons they offer for Skype usage, characterised as we say in a few phrases. We shall say some more about those reasons in a moment.

Before we do so there are a number of subtleties we need to note here. There is élan, we are saying, and this is in more than being economical with words, though economy was one normative orientation in the interviews. By eschewing 'undue' length, abstraction, theory, these answers are also seeking, we suggest, the possibility that what Harvey Sacks termed "doing being ordinary" or at least "not unusual", and that this was what the interviewer might be wanting from their interviewees, certainly at this stage - at the start. After all, at this point, the character of the interview was as yet uncertain beyond the basic labelling of the event as 'about Skyping'. Thus, the respondent's resorting to a common sense, everyday

view can be thought of as a reasonable starting place, one that might avoid misunderstanding later on in such an event, an interview. The facts here set up what facts might matter later on, in other words.

Part of the ways in which this is done is through recognition that some things are glosses, summaries that are offered because of where and when they are offered. As we have already alluded, the term 'Skype' works is one such, standing on behalf of a whole raft of practices; practices that competent users of Skype routinely know and take-for-granted. This knowledge is something they presume (and, indeed, require) that others have, too. The proper noun 'Skype' is therefore, and as we noted at the outset, known by users to stand for 'more' than it can 'say' as a single word[4].

Be that as it may, and returning to the interview data, it may be that the interviewee imagines that their interviewer will, at some later point in the interview, seek to propose a 'theory' about 'why people Skype', and unpack this gloss. But since the interviewee does not know whether this would happen at the outset, this is not something that seems likely; after all, it is more economic from their point of view to answer the initial questions without overly prejudging where the interview would go later on. By doing so they can avoid making that future work somehow tangled up with prior utterances - as in 'you said early', etc. What we mean by economy here is then offering answers that imply something about the persons in question that don't prejudge what is relevant to the interviewer about those persons or their doings; one might say it quietens down how their initial assertions might be treated, so as to make easier steps later on in the interview.

 Of course, one might want to present more such examples to make our case robust, but given constraints of length we hope the point can be accepted. Even so, if what we say is right, this is achieved through another subtlety that might seem at first paradoxical, given what we have just said but we also think important. This has to do with the fact that despite the economy of words, in these answers there is even so a set of practical reasons to be found; the answers were more than yes or no. And as we have been saying, this in turn implies something about next turns - and does so in ways which would appear to seek a kind of economy of exchange in turns of talk immediately thereafter, irrespective of where the interview might in practice end up much later on.

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[4] Additionally, glossing is itself done through a set of related glossing practices (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970) – Skyping being part of 'being in touch', 'being friendly', and so on. To 'un-gloss' the proper name 'Skype', in addition to its relations to these other glosses, might involve reference to, say, clicking on a contact's name, indicating whether one wants to use both audio and video aspects with that contact, waiting for the 'dial tone', directing the focus of the video if that has been selected ("Oh, I want to see your new room or the things you've put on your wall and stuff like that"), such that the gloss of the word is as it were 'unpacked' and made topical to the talk itself. The transformation of this proper name into a verb, 'to Skype' 'inherits' and trades upon then the proper noun gloss: which is itself a derivative that bears an 'agnatic' relation to the original one.

Let us say a little more about these reasons. If, as we note, we can see 'operations on a question' in these three segments (Sacks, 1992), these operations are achieved through volunteering reasons that have a special character. They are presented as if they are so ordinary and so obvious, so easily stated, that the one who holds those views is thus, like the reasons themselves, ordinary, not unusual, but one who knows how the world, and Skyping, are in a manner that no-one would dispute. Consequently it is not just reasons about Skyping that are presented as commonsensical, but thereby also the person who holds them. The interviewees are implying, in the way their construct their answers, that if a person didn't 'know these things about Skype', i.e., reasons to Skype, it would not be Skype that would need investigation, it would be the person and something about their nature that leads them to be so different. Just as the economy of initial answers allows later topics to arise, so at the same time the content of this economy constrain these topics so they don't end up asking about how odd or unusual the interviewee is. The interviewees make themselves out to be ordinary so as to allow questions about other matters, since their identity can be taken as a given, not a topic.

Of course being in an interview context might imply that the one doing the interview is just that sort of person to whom such inquires might apply - that they are 'odd' and that this is the reason why they are asking about Skype. But by presenting of reasons for Skype in this fashion, and typically at the outset of the interviews, an opportunity was presented for the interviewee to do what Schegloff called a 'membership analysis' on the interviewer find out if this was the case. Since the interviewers (us) typically did concur with what the interviewees stated, these individuals were able to see that we, like them, had a common notion of what Skype entailed and this was bound up with shared notions not only of what the technology could do but the ordinary reasons that ordinary, unremarkable people would have to use that technology. This we see in the third segment, below.

Segment 3
I: Okay. If someone came up to you and said "What are the benefits of [Skyping]" what would you answer?
S2: Hmm I would tell them that if you're in some kind of long distance relationship it's really the easiest way to have a real good meaningful conversation with someone you want to talk to and it it just it's above and beyond the phone like leaps and bounds I think, it's I really think it's a lot better than that so that would be my my argument that it's better than the phone (laughs).
I: And is that because you can see the other person?
S2: Yeah it well you know it's some of the audio quality I think too the sound on the headset is a lot better than um the uh the phone quality even that in and of itself I thought was pretty good but definitely the video was fantastic too.
I: Was there anything about the video in particular that just you know any moment or any time when you thought "Wow if I'd been on the phone I would have missed that, I wouldn't have seen this so this is what makes videoconferencing really excellent"?
S2: Yeah definitely like if she wanted to show me something she was working on Uni-wise or what she was wearing or anything like that you know there's a way to describe that over the phone but it's never

going to come close to actually just being able to see what she's talking about, and I definitely think that's the case.

What we see here is that understanding what Skyping means is a jointly achieved interactional accomplishment, one that we were fully party to and that is jointly built up. Of course, one can imagine lots of researchers with an alternative perspective complaining about this collaboration between ourselves and our subjects, but this would be to ignore what we have noted is a key feature of social action: that it is built on common understandings and know-how. Thus, for us to suggest in an interview that we did not understand Skype as our subjects did would have affected how the interview would unfold, and would have set up a competitive attitude of the kind we have termed 'methodological irony'. It would make us seem odd to our subjects, casting us not as people who wanted to explore the world as it is known to be, but as people who didn't have that shared experience. If we pretended this, it might have short-circuited the interview; stopped it there and then. But the interviews did not come to a seizure precisely because we acknowledged our shared world. The normative preference for an agreement that one finds in speech exchange systems of many kinds are, then, a resource for interviewers, for us in this case.

In having made this agreement, having noted that we participated in a life in which Skyping was a 'known', the interview talk could move on. And moving on is what nearly all the interviewees did - in collaboration with us of course. Both they and we wanted to get to other matters - nuances in the doings of Skyping that would merit the interview, whatever they might be. In the bigger transcripts part of the motive for moving on in becomes clearer - in a very crude sense. For the bulk of the interviews were about these nuances, to do with reasons not to Skype given reasons to Skype.

Before we can turn to those, we need to note that part of the way these 'reasons to talk about' have the shape they do is that they too are foreshadowed in the initial responses to the question, "Why Skype?" Take the first segment, above; here the interviewee says that, with Skype, their interlocutor ('Mum'), can demand to see something, and demand that can be satisfied given that Skype is being used. They don't say that they use Skype because it affords, say, an analogue to the face to face encounter, nor do they offer the explanation that it is free; one could add other possible reasons, just as the reader might too. In this respect, the sense or meaning of 'Skype' is being given by a set of what one might say are uniquely-referring identifying statements (Searle 1963; Watson 1981) – that Skyping is, for example, about seeing. The gloss, the noun, goes hand in hand with a referral point such as this.

In this manner one can hear these statements about seeing as intentional, as a method, given in the way of the telling, that articulates the notion that 'seeing' is the thing that is salient if you want to understand Skype. And in offering this in an utterance at the start of the interview the interviewees are not offering this as a contributory fact that might be added with others to make some kind of arithmetic; on the contrary, these remarks, and importantly, their placement, are designed to assert a way of understanding what the value of Skype is, namely an orientation to action that one can assume is the

normal manner with it. Seeing is key, seeing is the first thing one might say about Skype; and this is indeed the first thing that this respondent does say in segment 1.

Without spending too much on this point, the interviewee does the same in segment 2, as does the subject in the third but with some elisions. As should be clear, though, and the third highlights this, while seeing is presented as somehow the primary reason, other reasons are also invoked - ease of use in the second for example, good sound in the third. But all segments show that the type of relationship between the users of Skype is also a source of 'reasons to' do a Skype call. In the first, the mother-child relation is given as a causal grounds, in the second, an aunt-niece relation (or so it would appear), and the third, a relationship that is, as the saying has it, a 'relationship'. Something about relationships is normatively linked to seeing, in other words, and thus is fodder for 'reasons to Skype'.

One can put this more formally. References to reasons to Skype involve treating selected reasons in terms of categorisation devices (Maynard, 1988; Sacks, 1974; Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015), ones that invoke courses of action and relevances, ways of doing something in and through Skype. One uses Skype so as to see. And of course, this seems obvious - as it should do, given what we have said about Skype being familiar to all. But we are also learning that Skype is to be used given the relationship between the parties involved. One doesn't Skype a stranger – or one could, but in these accounts that's not the normal pattern, not what everyone knows as the kind of normal thing one does; one Skype's people one has a relationship to, and seeing within the call articulates that relationship.

So on any specific occasion of Skyping we see a particular nesting of categories, one having to do with ways of looking and the other bound up with orthogonal categories of human affairs, the senses of the body (sight) being married to legal and moral connections (marriage, courtship). If they are family relations, say, there is a notion that visual solicitation may be entailed, with parents asking, for example, how their offspring are doing and getting satisfaction to that request by seeing that this is so: "He looks fine" is the kind of thing one can imagine being said. In other words, their rights are manifest through an act of seeing. For another example, if it is a partner that one Skype's, then 'meaning' is foregrounded in such a fashion that it is implied to be delivered through sight: 'meaning' presumably pointing towards the sensuous caress of a partner's expression, and so on.
One might say that this seeing in the general sense and leaving these instances aside, the feel of *gaze*, a lingering, intentional looking that can only be done with propriety and not offence through a willingness on both parties. The point is that the categorial organisation the relationship defines the order of practice that one seeks in any given Skype connection; and given the categorisation this is, this in turn is wed to the other category of action, to see. And beyond this, these connections are ones that anyone would know, anyone that is familiar with 'doing Skype'; gaze, n this sense is normal – though endowed with social consequence.

It is important to note here that seeing, being subject to the gaze of another, is thus being described not as manifest in what the eyes behold but in what the eyes *allow* the parties involved to 'see-and-

speak-about', given the categorial cast to the relationship in question. It is, in this respect, a way of looking that embodies rights to look purposefully, with intention; we might say *interrogatively*, to put it strongly. These purposes articulate the relationship between the persons, highlighting what is to be looked for, what is accountable, what is irrelevant in that relationship. These categories are mutually explicative of each other, at least in this context. Thus to see is to see something with a set of rights to see given the relationship; this is why we use the words 'gaze' and 'interrogative'. Conversely, a relationship between persons can be used to explicate what might be looked at as part of that relationship. What is to be seen in Skype (or in talk about what can be seen in Skype) is potentiated by the order of the relations that already pertains between those involved. Consequently, those socially-categorized as 'mothers' may be allocated rights to see things about the offspring's life that, say, those categorized as 'acquaintances' may not – and of course vice versa. The interrogative gaze is a set of rights not available to all.

In our evidence, this seems key to how Skyping is made accountable in talk. It is through a structured and situated combination of mutually-related, mutually-elaborating categorisations - 'membership categorisations', in ethnomethodological or conversation analytic parlance - that the experience of using Skype on particular occasions is accounted for and comes to have its 'interrogative' feel; it is through the inter-operation of these categories, seeing and relating, that action in Skype is constituted and reflexively organized[5].

Additional membership categorisations can, of course, be added to these in ways we shall discuss shortly, but for now we can that, to summarise, it is via routinely seen-and-spoken membership categorisations that an occasion of Skype usage presents itself as a having normal, typical, and routine manner, as having the form it does. This is very important in terms of demarcating the ways that one can explain action and the reasons that might or might not 'motivate' it. For it turns out that, in the ways it is accounted for, Skyping is not chosen as a function of, let us say, psychological preferences or desires, but through the purposeful and adroit management of, putting it simply, choice; choice about an intentional framing that comes to be shared and understood. Interlocuters might not agree on whether such intentions are well chosen with regard to Skype, but see those intentions in its use, and certainly talk about those intentions as grounds to turn to Skype on, just as they use them as grounds to turn Skype off. It is also the case that these ways of reasoning can lead people to avoid Skype altogether. It is to the topic of why one would not Skype or would seek to avoid Skype that we now turn.

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[5] One should add that any given membership categorization can also be part of what in other contexts has been called 'visibility arrangements' (Watson 2005). Membership categories are for seeing as well as for talking and therefore are particularly felicitous implements for a seeing-and-talking situation such as that fabricated when 'doing Skype'. One can speak, then, of the visual availability of membership categories, and this visible dimension includes 'category-bound predications' such as those that, say, identify 'mother' as having the right to ask to look at things that persons identified through other membership categories might well not be able to ask to see.

5. Accountable reasons for not Skyping

Our evidence is suggesting that, while there might be a set of known-in-common normative preferences around Skype usage, these norms are best thought of as accountably applied, ways of describing and hence organizing how to talk about Skype. That this is so implies that there few if any absolute constraints on what people do when they Skype. Norms as we see described in the accountability of Skyping suggest that people can use Skype for other reasons, for reasons which are not 'normal' – but if they do so (i.e., act in un-normal ways) they might very well need to account explicitly for it. What we are noting is the nature of reasons here: they are not determinants of conduct, but are ways of describing and directing activity at the same time. This allows those reasons to be seen as guiding as well as excusing; inviting what is right and allowing what is unusual by providing a framework for their explanation.

Moreover, we are seeing that these reasons are furnished with an additional property: that they assert that those who hold these reasons are normal, usual, typical, unexceptional. They act according to them or invoke them to explain contrastive or exceptional conduct (e.g., 'I didn't use Skype normally'), as persons whose nature itself should not be brought into doubt by dint of them acting on those reasons. In short, reasons here are shared, reasons that normal people would have and which are negotiated, acknowledged and recognised anew each time Skype is talked about or engaged in by members of that community. This is an everyday accountability we are talking about; reasons are part of what is talked about even as they make the world have the shape it does. Reasons are of the world just as much as they describe the world.

It is important to note that we are not saying that certain types of people have these (everyday, accountable) reasons and others don't. We are emphatically not drawing a line between those who are within a community and those who are without, members and non-members. Invoking these reasons and implying the kind of persons who holds them makes the persons thus invoked members of a shared world and this is done for the practical purposes of creating shared understanding for the particular activities at hand – in this case interview talk. Such characterisations allow that talk to unfold in an effective manner, without distracting discussion about, for example, who knows what and who does not.

Furthermore, these reasons are also to be understood in reference to the placement, at certain moments within that context. The reasons mentioned above were presented at the commencement of these interviews, as we noted. These reason are factual in the sense that they are substantive grounds for action, but are to be understood in their manner, in the scope or scale of their detail and in the way they are evoked and rendered relevant at a particular juncture in interaction; they are above all praxiological products bound to the time and place in which they are made to 'work'. Reasons are in this sense a kind of doing done at a certain time; facts about Skype are temporally located statements to put it another way. What we are saying is that the reasons one finds in an interview are to be

understood as such, as artefacts of that social practice, with a time and a place constitutive of them; they are not transcendental entities, Kantian Universals. The reasons we are looking at are properly understood as features of social organization internal to the events in which they are deployed and which they help organise. This does not deny their facticity, their concrete nature, but shapes their valence: how these reasons can be cast as and understood through their role in matters of social arrangements. Consequently, and to point towards current philosophy, these kinds of reasons are not examples of, for instance, Volleman's relativistic 'social mores', reasons and facts that are little better than localised agreements (2013). Our reasons matter and are real, even though the sense of them, their applicability, is interactionally demonstrated and achieved.

Be that as it may, and as should be becoming clear, then a concomitant feature of 'reasons to Skype' is that their shape outlines what might be 'reasons not to Skype' or to avoid it. The shape also helps outline the ways in which such reasons themselves might be articulated. Here we are thinking of the arrangements of categories and descriptors that provide for normal reasons not to do something. One should not think of reasons to do something and reasons not to do something are like an equation. Both are orders of articulated reasoning, presented in sequences of action that variously entail invoking properties of each other whilst also marshaling and depending upon where and when they are deployed – on local contingency and accordingly, other facts or reasons that can be seen to pertain. To present reasons for some action is itself dependent upon when it is the right time to bring those reasons to account just as it means knowing when those reasons can be used to explain why they don't apply in some case – for when one chooses not to Skype, there may be some particular arrangement that makes all the normal givens inapplicable, or which creates an amalgam of concerns that alters the reasoned interpretation of 'what is appropriate'.

For example, and given what we have said above, one could 'reasonably claim' that a person might want to communicate about their intentions with regards their adult life. If so, 'seeing things' at the remote end of a call or showing things off at one's own end might not be salient to such matters. So one might well therefore not choose to make such a communication via Skype. Instead, one might offer that reason, i.e., not wanting to see given one's desired topic, to one's interlocutors for preferring, say, email, voice, or whatever. The move here is not strictly about things that can be seen and those things which cannot be, so much as orders of appropriate attention where seeing is only a constituent, and probably only a minor one if relevant at all. Things which can be seen might not be so salient to communication one's intentions if those are related to what career choice one wants to make, for example; hence this is an accountable reason not to Skype. Of course, it may be that the career depends upon some physical attribute, muscle size say, and so it might be that showing such is something that would aid in the talk. But again, selecting Skype for such talk implies what might be the topic, even if the talk is already identified as about intentions. For even these we are suggesting might mply see-ables, things to gaze at and wonder on – the size of muscles say, the rippling of well honed stomachs; all this is bound to the purposes (often given via memberhip categories) at hand. So if a Skype call is made then the referencing of the seeable doesn't have to negate attempts to focus on

one's 'adult intentions', but it means that raising such matters can be treated as an accountable matter – as in 'Why are you referring to that (whatever it might be) if you want to talk about your intentions – why are you showing me your biceps?'

The long and short of it is that reasons for doing something that are commonly understood are also mechanisms for, or vehicles for, elaborating the space in which those reasons operate; a context or gestalt that can be explored to account for the unusual or especially constrained nature of the reasons at hand, the topics that interlocutors want to focus on. This broader context of reasons can help explain too, or provide a resource for, 'reasons to act' which are beyond the bounds of that 'normal space'.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the kinds of reasons our interviewees offered for not Skyping took all sorts of forms. Consider Segment 5.

Segment 5
SD: We can't Skype with Jon's parents cause his mum is very glamorous, and um she hates it, she hates, yep.
I: Because she thinks she doesn't look good on camera?
SD: Yes. And my mum feels like she doesn't look good on camera but she still does it, because she wants to see the children. But Jon's mum won't do it. Once we were here and her best friend, Jon's mum was visiting, and her best friend called up on Skype, and as soon as she started the call she went upstairs to do her hair, and she was really cross afterwards.

Looking good, being glamorous, being seen when one did not expect to be, all these are accountable reasons to 'resisting' Skype. As we see they are also reasons for telling people off, for 'being cross afterwards'.

Accounts that allude to the moral or other consequences of the visual, and relatedly to what is often described as matters of self-consciousness, are commonplace in research in video-mediated communication; most often, though, such research treats these reasons as indices of something other, invasions of privacy, say, or matters to do with self-esteem that could be measured through survey. But the reasons we see here are intrinsic to the lived experience of Skyping and of talking about Skype. These are the reasons of the everyday, felt life. These are reasons people can act on; they are accountable and don't need measuring or external elaboration. That's not relevant to their nature. This does not mean these reasons are somehow impoverished, lacking in colour or depth, complexity. Because they are used in the everyday doesn't mean they are shallow.

For example, in segment 5, above, we should notice that set of reasons for someone not wanting Skype are ascribed in the third person. They are not reported first-person, as avowed by that person herself. That is to say, 'looking glamorous' is not a motive that this mother is avowing; it is a motive others impute to her. This is an important distinction for it shows how wide the landscape of reasons might be

and the diverse relationships between instances of action and the reasons for those actions. We might recall Sandis's (2012) argument that the philosophy of action must allow plurality of reasons. Here we find proof that plurality of reason is part of the stuff of everyday life, and the delicate and nuanced relation between reasons and action. After all, to say of another that she looks glamorous is not just to impute intentions to her, it also guides the eyes of the beholder: one looks for observable proof of that glamour, it becomes a target of our interrogative gaze from the outset of a Skype call, for example. And besides this, the speaker who uses the term glamorous may have his own category—related reasons for, perhaps, presenting his mother as glamorous to his friends: the situation is, as it were, motive-rich.

These nuances are important to note, for it draws a distinction between reasons in everyday life and the character of reasons as being plural, a goal we noted Sandis wants in current philosophy of action. For while it might be that in the philosophical discourse and indeed in the sociology of reasons, (where reason is often cast as motive. See Sharrock and Watson, 1984), reasons are singular, essential often, our examples are suggestive of how reasons are often equally tidy in that they are 'accountably sufficient' to let action continue without too much enquiry. But this is not bound solely to nature of these reasons nor does it imply that reasons are typically singular. The nature of reasons is bound equally if not more so to the manner of their deployment in action and not solely to their nature, and this has to do with such matters as their placement in action, the economy of their invocation of the circumstances that govern their applicability, and so on. All this we have discussed.

This does not mean that reasons can never get out of hand, so to speak. On specific occasions they do, and this is also tied up with the kinds of reasons they might be as well as their praxiological placement. One might find glamour a puzzling reason for example and, having heard it, one might perhaps raise reasons for a dissenting view. This might entail pointing to multiple motives, say, the conflict between the facts of a person's glamour and the desire of another to see it being considered, as we have already mentioned.

Having said that one should forget either that whether reasons are singular or multiple, in important respects they are   "seen but unnoticed", as Garfinkel puts it, treated as grounds for common understanding such that the activities in hand can get done. As we saw in the opening accounts on the interview data, facts about the persons being interviewed are treated in a *quietest* way not because they are right or wrong; the reasons that these people have, or which can be used to understand their motives, are treated thus so as to allow the interview to move along. Reasons might or might not exist, but some reasons have to be taken for granted, ignored if you like, if reasoned, purposeful action is to be achieved. In this sense, reasons are an outcome, an accomplishment of their endogenous role in interaction.

6. Reasons beyond sight

We are saying that reasons are intrinsic to accountable action, but we are also saying that reasons do not constrain action; they help organise it and they do so by allowing the management of relevance.

If we have said that the 'interrogative gaze' is the assumed motive for Skyping, and that this can be used as a foil to bring to bear other reasons, then some of these other reasons have to do with the unseeable.

In some interviews, reasons were offered that pointed to the 'self' rather than to the seen other, or objects that both and all could see. Much of what is seen and assumed to be seen when Skyping is described in these accounts as somehow stopping access to a much more richly imagined felt life, a world that cannot be seen by the visual torch-like affect of the interrogative gaze.

Segment 6

IL: I have a couple of best friends that I use Skype with but I hate to [Skype]. I don't need to see the face of who I'm talking with. I love the phone but I prefer I don't see their face because it feels, I dunno, quite impersonal, I don't like it-

I: Impersonal?

IL: Yeah it's not real. You know if I use the phone I can have an image of my friends, so I don't need - I feel quite violated, violating, like invading some space that doesn't belong to me. If you and I meet, have a coffee, walk and talk, that's fine. If we have a Skype, I feel somehow I don't belong with you [if I see video]. So I prefer just [using it as a] phone […] I don't like- like you are in your room, I know you have a picture of Star Wars there I don't care, I don't feel comfortable in a videoconference at all.

Segment 7

IJ. And it's also kind of awkward if- you look at them in the video and you kind of look at each other, it's kind of, emotional for me, like it's very, I don't know like it, [sigh], I feel like if we look at each other we might- we might not know what to say, but if we don't look at each other we might have a larger freedom to talk about things.

Things that can be seen are, we see here, set up as a contrast pair over those things that cannot be seen, and this is used to explain and account for what is implied to be a loss of control over topic. This is also explained as likely to affect the purposes of a communication - the reasons for it.

It would appear from these segments that these reasons can be difficult to shape or convey, even though, and as we say, normal reasons to Skype provide a resource for such elaboration. One of our interviewees expanded on reasons why she did not always Skype by using some accounts of activities in which Skype was not used. She drew analogues as we see in Segment 8. These devices help her explain and give credit to her reasoning about how to understand the intersection of visual matters as topics with the framework of interaction and relevant things to talk about implied in a family relationship. As we put it earlier, these two concerns, the visual and the relational, mutually explicate each other in situations of choice. Below, the interviewee explains that having something to see jointly with a mother can sometimes contain or trap potential topics to those see-ables. This comes at a price, she instructs us to understand.

Segment 8.

IJ. So, I've had- sometimes when I- when I'm home and I'll be driving a car and my mom's sit by me, and we can talk about, um, you know, very meaningful conversations. So, it's very hard to talk to her face to face about some serious topic, about what I'm thinking, about my philosophy for life, or, for love, you know, just sounds like so stupid, so artificial, but when we don't look at each other, it's sort of, it's something like we can actually treat each other as an adult, or, or individual, right, it's kind of like, you know, I'm not your, I'm not your daughter, or you're not my mom, you're not superior than me, or something, that we can actually have a conversation as we are two equal adults, or, or individuals, it's, it's easier that way, to don't look at each other and be reminded that, oh, you're just a kid, you're my daughter. But when I look at her, as I said, um, I think my imagination will be limited to talk about surroundings, talk about what I see, talk about, you know, mundane stuff.

Though the phraseology here might seem tentative, evidently more improvised than she might prefer, what is brought to bear nonetheless is an elaborate set of notions about how the world is organised in and through talk, and how this talk is the crucible for negotiating what the world as a shared phenomena will come to be. This world, the one she wants, includes mental landscapes. Skype is a technology that is described as somehow inhibiting access to this field; the mental landscape is beyond the interrogative gaze.

Of course, there is no philosophy about the inner life or the life that can be seen behind Skype; rather the ordinary manner with Skype produces this sense and gives credit to this account. In this last segment we see how key features of how Skype is ordinarily understood and accounted for are combined with other matters to make sense of unique actions and circumstances. The limited field of visual seeing is married with the moral field of a person's inner life. That might seem a long way from our explorations of initial reasons why Skype is said to be used – where the visual was linked to the relationship in question. But this example recapitulates those initial premises, those gambits at a start of an interview, so as to allow more depth and colour about particularities, how this person deploys Skype in her life given what one might say are her needs. We see, crucially, that the problem of Skype has to do with the problem of relationships.

For here we see that the relationship in question is one where one party, the daughter, seems intent on trying to assert some control over the other, her mother, or rather is wanting to achieve this but finds it hard to do. Thus she is telling us that being able to control topic is crucial in the enactment of herself, but this is constrained by the apparent control over topic allowed to her mother by dint of her status as mother. The account explains how one can negotiate the management of topics, and articulates that this is easier when one type of person, a daughter, is not subject to the gaze of another, a mother of that daughter. Somehow that gaze allows the one to have control over what the other might say.

One can explore this point so as to show how the general is used to frame the particular, and how this is echoed in the ways in which reasons to do something are presented and sequenced in such a fashion

as to allow elaboration through time, given subsequent concerns or junctures in the interaction in question. Here, in segment 8, we might suggest that parent/offspring relations are being characterised as being as governed by a rule that holds that, whatever their age (*mutatis mutandis*), offspring are 'answerable' to their parents: daughters to Mums; offspring to parents. Kids should respond to parents, be accountable to them, act on their directives (see for example Aronsson & Cekaite, 2011). That this is so might be brought into the foreground of communications when one of these parties has chosen to be physically separated from the other, and hence might choose 'to Skype' when they want to be in touch. In segment 8, we see that the choice making activities of this person, the daughter, her ways of explaining why she would not use Skype, are meant to reflect her attempts – her desire - to re-balance her relations with her mother. This is readable by us as normal behaviour, as reasoned behavior, when the reasons at hand are being resisted – as in, 'I wish she wasn't my mother'. Her problem though is that wishing, though a kind of reason, cannot make some things happen – here indeed a reason cannot become a cause if that labels only things that really occur (See Leist 2007, particularly his review of Davidson's 'Action, Reasons, and Causes' of 1963).

7. Reasons and action

In attempting to move toward a more analytic understanding of (in the present study) of such 'choice making procedures' we are pointing to some salient elements of those practices whilst also noting that their meaning, their functional significance, is related to a broader pattern which, following Garfinkel's interpretation of Gurwitsch's notion, one might call a 'gestalt contexture'. Such contextures are 'autochthonous'; that is to say naturally occurring, organised and situated. As Liberman (2013, p.43) puts it, these are phenomenal fields, patterned arrays of details where the salience of the arrangement and hence their pertinence is achieved though participants' methodical work; this is how the dwelling spaces of existence come to have the form they do (Ingold, 2102). These dwelling places are characterized in large part by the parties involved and their relational 'framework' that is itself manifest in their language management (Goodwin, 1981). As we have noted, many of our interviewees methodically brought to bear their relationships with others, parents especially, as constitutive of their strategic and practical orientation to Skyping. Their articulations about how to manage topic were central to this and was bound inextricably to what we have called the interrogative gaze that Skype enables. This notion of gaze, and likewise various frameworks of social connection – mother/daughter, relationship persons and so on - should not be thought of as constituting a structure through which people act or account for their actions. Nor do they frame what people can and cannot do. It is rather that these features, the power of gaze, the salience of family connection, all come out of the work that our subjects undertake when they talk about Skype, and doubtless come into play when they do in fact Skype.

That this is so may be contrasted with the original formulation of the concept 'participant framework', found in Duranti and Goodwin (1992), where frameworks such as the ones we describe were viewed as like a social structure that "align[s] speakers to hearers and actualize a state of discourse". As our samples show, our respondents make the participation framework, the structure of their relation with

their relations, come to be an achieved feature of their interactions: the daughter's complaint about her mother in Segment 8, like the other examples we present, are the mechanisms whereby the behaviours of those involved come to be seen as properly a parent's and a child's and properly too the kind of conduct we would recognize as being typically, normatively done with Skype between people in those relations.

Nevertheless, a concern with frameworks as tools for enacting joint activities should not distract us from recognising that these tools get their vitality by how they allow particularities to be shown. In segment 8 we see that while there is considerable astuteness in the way that the issues are formulated, there is also an astuteness in their ambiguity. This interviewee does not assert that questions of topic are dictated by family structure, nor that seeing things is certain to crowd out other topics. On the contrary, she is trying to explain, in the interview, that being what she wants to be, and articulate that as she sees fit, is a hard thing to do: she has to negotiate her way through a shared currency of techniques and systems of propriety that are based on knowledge she knows is shared both by us, the interviewers, and her mother; knowledge about the arrangements of the world and what doings in the world afford – such as when one Skypes. She is stating that one cannot deny that mothers have rights over daughters, that one cannot deny either that when one's mother looks you in the eye it can make one still like a rabbit in car headlamps. She uses her knowledge of a world in common to explain her unique problem in this regard. In this she seems to be stretching the ways that language can be used to convey a sense of herself; she evokes the ordinary to point towards the aching of her human spirit as it drowns in the details of daily interaction with parents, in circumstances that inhibit breaking out of those patterns. As the philosopher Laugier puts it (alluding to Emerson), this is a person who is a 'victim' of the way expressive arrangements unfold, but she uses words to try and talk her way out of this (2000: 117). Skype might be an everyday matter, and the world through which it is understood and acted upon, shared and collaboratively produced, but being herself is still something she yearns to do.

As we say, there is intelligence in the way that reasons for Skype are talked about, and often these are as profound as anything one will find in everyday life even if these reasons seem, at times, almost ineffable, as the struggle for clarity in Segment 8 seems to suggest. Difficulties such as this notwithstanding, empirical inquiries into how reasons are talked about and embedded in real worldly action, show that reasons are not treated as theoretical entities, nor as triagable lists, nor yet as simply sets of causes. What we find are reasons that are presented delicately, appropriately, in terms of time and location, and when the how and where shapes the extent and form and role of those reasons. We see also, that these very reasons can come to be used as measures of individuals; their motives, their competence, their social grace, as well as their looks, their capacities to see, their willingness to notice and to perform, to be gazed at and to gaze in return, to ask and answer in the rhythms of twenty first century, technologically mediated communications.

8. Conclusions

Our purpose in this paper has been to examine some of the key features of 'adeptness at talk about Skype'. Our task has not been to show whether people can say wrong or right things about Skype but rather to examine how people invoke Skype as a categorizing device in their utterances that results in that category, 'Skype', coming to be a relevant organizing matter in their affairs. Or, to put this another way, we have examined how invoking Skype or Skyping is a sense making device that can be relevantly brought up in spoken efforts to accomplish a world known in common with fellow interlocutors - friends, family, even interviewers. Skyping brings people together in more ways that just the visual, its use as a term in language makes the world one in common, fabricated through that word – along with many others of course. Our paper shows how Skyping is to be seen through the prism of language and language praxis, and it is through language that one can see how Skype comes to matter.

We might draw on analogy here with the subjects of an article by Garfinkel *et al* on the activities of professional astrophysicists (1981: 131-58). These astrophysicists have reached the pinnacle of their educational and professional careers, but it is not that status that matters to Garfinkel and his colleagues. The work that Garfinkel et al are interested in is how these professionals need to do linguistic category work. This work entails fitting empirical evidence to appropriate categorisations and descriptions; evidence to words and through words back to evidence that does the trick it needs to - persuades all involved in that setting that what they think they are talking about is indeed real, a thing worth talking about. The methodical work that Garfinkel et al describe relates to how prospective descriptions of a 'to be found object' (an optical pulsar), are tied, step by step, in a retrospective and prospective accounting, in utterances of professional talk, to emerging evidence.

This is a much more dramatic setting than everyday Skyping but the lesson is that here too, in this everyday practice, people cannot describe some aspect of a Skype call without plausible reason to do so, and similarly, cannot summon another to participate in such a call without using ordinary everyday utterances and topic management procedures to make those activities sensible and accountable, as ordinary things to do where the reasons for them are thus agreed to and understood by those involved. Using Skype, talking about Skype is then like the discovery of some astrophysical entity: it as to be done through the in-situ application of particular 'consequential' categories in turns at talk - consequential in terms of 'reasons for a Skype call' or 'reasons for why it is to be avoided'. What we are saying is that while Garfinkel and his colleagues showed that through talk science comes to be done, so it is that through talk that Skyping comes to be a relevant matter for everyday life, understood and undertaken in particular ways to achieve particular ends - everyday ends to be sure, but ones whose nuance and manner is various and always unique: the work of friendship, for example, in the daily doings of family life, even in the more constrained and patterned manouvers of mother and daughter connections.

Hence, while 'scientific discovery' might be the business of the highly regarded, the work entailed in it is thus equal in technique to the work of those who talk about and use communication technologies, Skype, Face Time, Google Hangouts. There are skills to be found, we are saying, in how terms about

the 'facts of everyday life' (in this case technological ones but they could be any 'facts about' or 'features of' the world) get used in demonstrably competent ways to make those facts part of the performativity of human collaboration (see Lynch 1993 for an exploration of the diverse forms of this). Using the word Skype isn't just a matter of word-smithing, then, we are saying it is always purposive, intentional, a practical but serious matter done with reasons in mind - even if those reasons are not stated clearly or in summary form. Getting this performativity wrong will result in weakened ties, in friends drifting away, in hurt families, in life's loves being lost in the unstructured routines of communications without thought, communications that as a result are misunderstood and misappropriated by others, those one communicates with. It has been to explore just how the thoughtless is countered by the thoughtful, and how acts of communication come to be the scaffold of intersubjectivity, of shared emotions like friendship and common status - to be in a family say, to be the daughter of a mother - that this paper has been written.

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