"Categorizing the Categorizer":

The Management of Racial Common Sense in Interaction*

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Abstract

In this paper, I consider one mechanism by which racial categories, racial "common sense," and thus the social organization of race itself, are reproduced in interaction. I approach these issues by using an ethnomethodological, conversation analytic approach to analyze a range of practices employed by participants of a "race-training" workshop to manage the normative accountability involved in referring to the racial categories of others when describing their actions, and thus in using racial common sense in talk-in-interaction. This accountability arises in part because a speaker's use of a racial category to explain someone else's actions may provide a warranted basis for recipients to treat the speaker's own racial category as relevant for understanding and assessing the speaker's actions. I describe three main ways in which speakers can manage this accountability, namely generalizing race, localizing race, and alluding to race. My analysis shows that, even in attempting to resist racial common sense in accounting for their own actions and those of others, speakers orient to race as a normative framework according to which individuals will produce their own actions and interpret those of others, and thus reproduce it as relevant for understanding social action. This research contributes to advancing knowledge in the fields of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, racial studies, and categorical inequality.

Introduction

Social scientists have long recognized that categories of people are central to patterns of

social action, in large part because members use and orient to membership categories as a

basis for action, and for interpreting the actions of others (see Raymond and Heritage

2006 for a review of research in this regard). As a consequence, an understanding of the

pervasive and enduring nature of social categories (one particularly significant instance

of which is race) is central to accounting for the maintenance of social structures

associated with them.

In this paper, I show that understanding the ways in which racial categories, and

common sense knowledge about them, are deployed and oriented to in interaction can

provide insights into the mechanisms through which they are maintained and reproduced.

I begin by describing a mechanism whereby speakers' use of racial categories in

describing the actions of others may result in moral judgments of their own actions in

terms of their own racial identities. I then employ an ethnomethodological, conversation

analytic approach to explicate a range of interactional practices that provide evidence for

the operation of this mechanism, and that may be employed to minimize or mitigate its

operation. I conclude by examining the significance of these findings for understanding

the social organization of race, and its reproduction, at the level of individual episodes of

interaction. These findings contribute to three areas of sociology, namely the study of

racial discourse, "racial formations" (Omi and Winant 1994), and "durable inequality"

(Tilly 1998). I briefly discuss the relationship between my study and these areas in the

paragraphs that follow.

The recognition of the importance of studying racial discourse has resulted in the accumulation of a substantial and growing body of literature in this area in the past two decades (see, for example, Bonilla-Silva 2002; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, and Stevenson 2006; van den Berg, Wetherell, and Houtkoop-Steenstra 2004). This research has made important contributions to examining race talk in terms of its implications for understanding expressions of racial "attitudes" or prejudice, and for the ways in which such expressions relate to broader systems of racial inequality. While the research I report in this paper shares with much of the race talk literature an emphasis on fine-grained attention to empirical materials, the substantive focus and analytical aims are somewhat more basic than those of the abovementioned studies. Specifically, rather than examining race talk for its relation to prejudice or racism, I focus on the reproduction of the category system on which such social problems rest (cf. Whitehead and Lerner 2009). Since prejudice and inequality on the basis of race are underpinned by people's use of racial categories as a basis for social action and distribution of resources, it is important to investigate mechanisms through which the relevance of such categories, and hence the common sense knowledge associated with them, is reproduced in interaction.

Omi and Winant's influential theory of racial formations describes the "sociohistorical process through which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (1994:55). Omi and Winant argue that racial formation occurs through "racial projects," which occur both at the "macro-level" of social structural forces, and at the "micro-level" of everyday experience and interaction. While the reproduction of widespread notions of race through everyday interactions is thus an

important matter in terms of Omi and Winant's theory, they do not elaborate on the mechanisms through which such reproduction of the social organization of race takes place, focusing instead largely on racial projects at the level of the state and in social movements. In this paper I take up this question of the reproduction of race in interaction, identifying and explicating a set of practices that implicate a mechanism through which it occurs.

Tilly's (1998) study of durable inequality is concerned with accounting for the enduring nature of many forms of categorical inequality, i.e., inequality based on social categories such as gender, ethnicity and race (also see Massey 2007). Tilly argues that changes in prevailing attitudes towards members of "out-group" categories will have relatively little effect on durable inequality, while "the introduction of new organizational forms – for example, installing different categories or changing the relation between categories and rewards – will have great impact." (1998:15). As a consequence, accounting for the mechanisms through which category systems are reproduced is a central concern for Tilly, who identifies two mechanisms through which systems of categorical inequality are established (*exploitation* and *opportunity hoarding*), and two mechanisms that reinforce such arrangements (*emulation* and *adaptation*). Tilly's account of these mechanisms involves instances in which individuals and organizations, including oppressed groups, become invested in or "buy into" the category systems in question. He notes that the categories he examines "depend on extensive social organization, belief and enforcement," and that durable inequality "arises because people who control access to value producing resources solve pressing organizational problems by means of

categorical distinctions. Multiple parties – not all of them powerful, some of them even victims of exploitation – then acquire stakes in those solutions" (Tilly 1998:7-8). While I am similarly concerned in this paper with examining the reproduction of category systems, the mechanism I explicate accounts for how one such category system, race, can be reproduced even in the absence of any investment or stake in it on the part of those who use it. I turn now to a discussion of the basis of this mechanism in the organization of social categories, common sense knowledge, and social action.

Background: Categories, Common Sense Knowledge, and Social Action

In his pioneering work on social categories, Sacks (1972a; 1995) showed the way in which membership categories can serve as repositories for, and organize, bodies of common sense cultural knowledge. This common sense knowledge, in Garfinkel's terms, consists of "socially sanctioned grounds of inference and action that people use in everyday life, and which they assume that other members of the group use in the same way" (Garfinkel 1956:185). A consequence of this feature of membership categories is that a reference to a category can be treated by speakers and recipients as an account for (or explanation of) social action, as a result of the way it mobilizes common sense knowledge about that category. For example, Kitzinger (2005a; 2005b); has shown how callers to institutional lines (a suicide prevention center and an after-hours doctor's office) used references to kinship categories in order to provide unremarkable, non-accountable reasons for their actions (cf. Sacks 1972b; 1995; Whitehead and Lerner 2009). Thus, callers could account for seeking help on behalf of another simply by

displaying their relationship to that person through a reference to a kinship category

(Kitzinger 2005a).

        In the case of many categories, their use as accounts for social action is treated by

participants and analysts alike as an utterly mundane and unproblematic feature of social

organization. In fact, this ever-available use of categories can be understood as a social

resource that enables people to talk about and make sense of their everyday activities in

apparently smooth and seamless ways, since categories enable the recognizability and

sensibility of actions (Kitzinger 2005a; Sacks 1995). However, the use of some categories

to tacitly account for social action is potentially treatable as an objectionable attribution

of "stereotypical" characteristics to members of those categories (see, for example,

Stokoe and Edwards 2007). This is especially so for categories such as race, gender and

sexuality, as a result of additional normative constraints regarding their use that have

emerged from relatively recent political mobilizations.

        One way in which the operation and consequentiality of these normative

constraints can be observed is by examining speakers' practices for managing references

to race. Specifically, it appears that references to race in describing the actions of other

people (particularly when they are members of different racial categories than the

speaker) are recurrently treated as problematic, being produced through a set of practices

that contrast with Kim's smooth and unproblematic formulation of a racial self-reference

in Excerpt 1a:

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Excerpt 1a: [WG, A, 11:14:19-11:14:29]

1 →   KIM:   I don't feel guilty for being white but I feel very sad

2            (0.7) um (0.3) at what others lose.
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These practices for referring to race in describing the actions of others (which I describe in the sections that follow) provide evidence for the consequentiality of what I call, following Sacks, "categorizing the categorizer." Sacks (1995, vol. I:45) notes that it may be necessary to "categorize the categorizer" in order to understand the "perspective" they are taking in categorizing another, and thus what type of person the categorized one actually is. For example, if a ten-year-old child categorizes someone as being "old," then the categorized person may be considerably younger than a person who is categorized as "old" by an adult (Sacks, 1995, vol. I:45). This demonstrates one way in which references to social categories can reflexively implicate the speaker's status as a member of a category in the self-same collection of categories.

Sacks' observations about the reflexivity involved in categorization were restricted to categories that could be ordered on a scale relative to one another, including "categories like age and social class, in contrast to those like race and sex" (Sacks, 1995, vol. I:45). I demonstrate in what follows, however, that a distinct but parallel form of reflexivity appears to operate with respect to mentions of racial categories (and hence possibly a range of other social categories). I thus examine the way in which racially categorizing another can make relevant racial categorization of the speaker who did the initial categorizing (cf. Sacks 1995, vol. I:45-46). In other words (and in light of the above discussion about categories and common sense knowledge, or "stereotypes"), a

speaker's mobilization of common sense racial knowledge through the use of a racial category to tacitly explain another's actions can provide a warranted basis for recipients to use the speaker's own racial membership category in explaining the *speaker's* actions – thus reflexively mobilizing common sense racial knowledge about the speaker[1] (also cf. Stokoe and Edwards' discussion of the "speaker-indexical" nature of racial insults, and complaints about them – Stokoe and Edwards 2007:354).

A further significant feature of "categorizing the categorizer" is that it not only concerns recipients' need to recognize what sort of person is being referred to by the categorizer (as Sacks noted), but also implicates potential moral evaluations of the categorizer/speaker on the part of recipients (cf. Jayyusi's 1984 description of the links between categorization and the moral order). For example, a white speaker who simply identifies the race of a person of color in describing some action that person performed may be labeled "racist" specifically by virtue of being seen (and heard) *as a white person* attributing a person of color's actions to that person's racial identity (and thus as using common sense racial knowledge to explain those actions). In this way, a speaker's mention of a racial category in describing, telling, accounting, and so on, can result in what the speaker is saying being discounted as "biased" or "racially motivated" on the

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[1] This can thus be understood as an extension of what Sacks calls the "consistency rule" for "membership categorization devices" (a term Sacks uses to refer to a collections of categories, along with rules for how members use these categories – see Sacks 1995, vol. I:246). This rule holds that "if a category from some [membership categorization] device's collection has been used to categorize a first Member of the population, then that category or other categories from the same collection *may* be used to categorize further Members of the population" (Sacks 1995, vol. I:246; emphasis in original).

basis of the speaker's own racial identity (cf. Jayyusi 1984; also see Pollner's 1975 analysis of the way "reality disjunctures" can be sustained as a result of descriptions being discounted by reference to the very terms in which they are formulated).

In light of the systematic potential for difficulties resulting from referring to race, one might ask whether such difficulties could be avoided by simply not mentioning race at all. Indeed, this "color-blind" approach has become widely popular in recent decades, with many seeing it as the best way of dealing with matters of race (see, for example, Brown 2003; Cose 1997; Williams 1998 for discussions of "color-blindness"). However, a problem with adopting such an approach is that ceasing to attend to race, or to act on the basis of race, does not guarantee that others will do the same. As a result, individuals who act without considering the possible racial consequences of their actions still face the possibility that *others* might interpret their actions racially, even if they did not have any racial intent when they acted. In short, sometimes race *is* relevant, and speakers who fail to appropriately recognize its relevance as they act in interaction with others may face interactional difficulties.

The foregoing discussion implicates dual and competing normative constraints on formulations of racial categories in talk: On the one hand, mentioning race may result in difficulties if speakers are heard as endorsing the racial common sense associated with the categories they are mentioning. On the other hand, failing to acknowledge the role of race when it is relevant to do so may also result in difficulties. One way in which the consequentiality of these constraints for everyday actions can be observed is by examining practices speakers use for producing racial categorizations in their talk. How

can they introduce race in such a way as to demonstrate that they do not endorse the common sense knowledge associated with it? How can they manage the implications of their own racial category for what they are doing when introducing race into their talk? How can they display, and allow for, recognition of the relevance of race through their talk while showing that it was others, rather than themselves, who chose to make it relevant by using it as a basis for action?

The normative constraints around references to race that I have identified may be interpreted as providing for an over-arching motivation for speakers to exercise caution in referring to race, and thus to use the practices that I have referred to above (and describe in detail below) in doing so. However, while there is no doubt that individuals do have motives, the practices I examine do not depend on the motives of individuals for their production – instead, the consequentiality of the social organization of "categorizing the categorizer" is what allows for such motives, and what makes them visible in particular interactional moments. Thus, in the remaining sections, my analysis focuses on speakers' production of practices for managing references to race, and on the features of the social organization of race they implicate, rather than on the motives speakers may or may not have for producing them in particular cases. In this sense, my concern is with the normative accountability (cf. West and Fenstermaker 1995) involved in referring to race, and with the practices that speakers may use to manage this accountability, rather than with whether their use of such practices is conscious, intentional or calculated.

It is also important to note that this normative accountability need not operate in every conceivable interactional context. In some contexts – a meeting of the Ku Klux

Klan being an extreme example – the use of racial categories for pejorative inferences and discriminatory actions is treated as completely acceptable and appropriate. In such cases, speakers don't face the same kind of normative constraints regarding their use of race that speakers in more "liberal" or anti-racist environments would face. For this reason, the constraints around referring to race that I have identified could be seen as particular to contexts characterized by anti-racist norms. However, as I show in the following sections, examining how speakers manage references to race in those contexts in which speakers *are* oriented to the accountability of doing so offers insights into the way in which racial common sense can be reproduced even in contexts in which anti-racist norms operate.

The practices I describe below constitute ways in which speakers can introduce formulate racial categorizations of others, while managing the normative accountability (resulting from "categorizing the categorizer") involved in doing so. I argue that these practices are consequential for understanding the social organization of race in two ways. First, they reveal some linkages between individual agency and social structure, specifically concerning the ways in which people use or orient to (and thereby reproduce) racial common sense, while at the same time managing how their own actions will be understood in light of it. Second, they demonstrate the importance of the ordinary interactional resources that are deployed to perform this management, and thus the value of a close examination of interaction for understanding how people "do race" (West and Fenstermaker 1995), and perhaps more importantly, *use* race, in interaction.

Data and Method

Since the normative constraints I have described above are particularly relevant in

interactional contexts in which anti-racist norms are prevalent, such contexts are obvious

places to examine in order to investigate how speakers manage the resulting

accountability of referring to race. A prime example of such a context is what can broadly

be described as "diversity training," "racial sensitivity training" or simply "race-training."

Such training sessions are designed to engage individuals in discussions about the

problems of race and racism, with the ultimate aim of bringing about individual,

institutional, or societal change with respect to these problems. As such, they are contexts

that are characterized by strong anti-racist norms, with many such sessions actually being

referred to by those who run them as "anti-racist training." Although race has an

occasion-based omni-relevance in such settings, meaning that race could be heard as

topically relevant for virtually everything that participants say, speakers are still

accountable for how and when they introduce race into their talk. Participants must thus

balance the task of speaking openly about their experiences and views with respect to

race against the risk of being negatively evaluated or sanctioned should they be heard as

inappropriately using race to account for action. The race-training context thus represents

a natural "home" for practices speakers may use in managing their use of references to

race in anti-racist environments, making it a "perspicuous setting" (Garfinkel 2002) in

which to investigate such practices. In light of this, I use video data of a race-training

workshop in order to investigate these matters.

The workshop from which the data excerpts presented below were drawn, which was a full day in duration, was originally videotaped in 2001 with the intention of producing a documentary film. However, the film has as yet not been produced, and the organizers of the workshop gave approval for the tapes to be used for research purposes. A total of three different cameras were used in order to record the two groups that convened in the morning, and the larger group that met in the afternoon. During the morning session, the participants, all of whom were invited to take part in the workshop and did so voluntarily, were divided into a "White Group" (consisting of two facilitators and six participants), and a "People of Color Group" (consisting of two facilitators and five participants), which engaged in separate two-hour sessions. In the afternoon session the participants and facilitators from both groups formed one larger group that engaged in a two-hour "group dialogue" in which the participants from both of the previous sessions took part in an open-ended discussion of the issues that each group had dealt with separately in the earlier sessions. Throughout all the workshop sessions, the facilitators generally adhered to the aim, which they stated explicitly at the beginning of each session, of guiding a discussion on the issues of race and racism, rather than directing the participants towards pre-specified outcomes.

Analysis was conducted using an ethnomethodological, conversation analytic approach. Consistent with the analytic focus described above, this approach is centrally concerned with explicating actors' practices (i.e., *what* they do and *how* they do things), rather than with their motivations (i.e., *why* they do things). Moreover, this approach focuses on analyzing utterances as public actions (rather than, for example, treating them

as indicators of underlying psychological processes), and thus treats talk as a form of public social action, analyzing it primarily for its social and interactional import, rather than for what it reveals about any particular individual (Clayman and Gill 2004). The analysis was thus conducted by viewing the video data and collecting candidate instances of speakers' attempts to manage their explicit and tacit references to race, or to particular racial categories. These candidate instances were arranged into collections of what appeared to be discrete practices for performing such management. Emerging hypotheses were tested and refined in an iterative manner by applying them to the remaining portions of the data set, as well as repeatedly re-viewing and re-examining the already-viewed data in order to check and refine the descriptions of how these practices work. The data excerpts analyzed in detail below were chosen because they exemplify the range of practices for managing the normative accountability described above, while demonstrating as far as possible (within space constraints) the variations in the actions for which each practice could be used.

Each excerpt presented in the sections that follow[2] is preceded by information regarding the session in which it took place (WG = "White Group;" "PCG = "People of Color Group;" GD = "Group Dialogue"), the camera the interaction was recorded on and transcribed from (A, B or C) and the time segment from the camera's counter

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[2] A list of the conversation analytic conventions used in producing transcripts of the data can be found at http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/publications/journals/social_psychology_quarterly/transcript_conventions

corresponding to the excerpt. The facilitators are identified with the letter "F" followed by a number (1-4), and the participants' names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

Generalizing Race

A first way in which speakers can manage the normative accountability resulting from "categorizing the categorizer" is by generalizing race, which involves formulating *race in general* so as to show that no specific racial category has special explanatory properties. One practice through which speakers can generalize race is list construction (Jefferson 1990). Formulations of this sort consist of a list of racial categories, followed by what Jefferson (1990) calls a "generalized list completer," which is a word or phrase that shows that there are other relevant list items that need not be explicitly specified. Lerner (1994:29) suggests that "one might think of the generalized list completer as a *generalizing* list completer" (emphasis in original), since it serves to transform a list from one consisting of the list items themselves, to one referencing the general class of items to which those on the list belong. Hence, a list of racial categories followed by a generalized list completer is a method for referring to all possible racial categories. In this way, speakers can use race in general as an account while showing that their comments are not designed to single out any particular racial category or categories for criticism.

This practice is exemplified by Excerpt 1b, in which Sammy disagrees with the description of (white) "privilege" that Kim has produced in the previous stretch of talk. Just as Kim's experience as a white person constitutes the basis for her claims about privilege, Sammy's denial of white privilege implicates his experience as a white person.

As a consequence, his disagreement is potentially vulnerable to being treated as self-serving. The design of Sammy's disagreeing turn addresses this potential problem through the use of a list of racial categories in constructing the counter-claim that racial privilege is situational and variable.

Following a lengthy pause (line 3) after the end of Kim's description of the ways in which she is able to use her (white) "privilege," and hence her sadness "at what others lose" (lines 1-2), Sammy (who has previously mentioned that he lives in San Diego) begins to propose that "where you live" (line 5) can "cause you to look at things quite a bit differently" (lines 7-8). As evidence for this claim, he sets up a contrast between the location in which the workshop is taking place (a small city), and a "much more urban larger city area" (line 9). In characterizing the types of neighborhoods that might be found in such an area, Sammy lists three racial categories ("Hispanic," "African American" and "Asian", lines 11-12), followed by a generalized list completer ("whatever the case may be," lines 12-13), thereby producing an inclusive list of all possible racial categories of which he is not a member.

Excerpt 1b: [WG, A, 11:14:19–11:15:08]

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1    KIM:  I don't feel guilty for being white but I feel very sad

2          (0.7) um (0.3) at what others lose. .hh

3          (3.5)

4    SAM:  (Well) (.) I think oftentimes people are depending upon

5          (0.5) y'know, where you live, (.) (I been) driving

6          around here for you know, .hh for the last day and a
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7              half or so, .hh um: can (.) °eh eh eh° can cause you to

8              look at things quite a bit differently too. <I mean when

9              you live in a- in a- in a much more urban .hh larger

10             city area where you have .hh you know, pockets of:

11 →           either you know Hispanic neighborhoods or: .hh

12 →           predominantly African American or Asian or whatever the

13 →           case may be, there are places whe:re (1.2) where I-

14             where I don't have the privilege(h)s .h[h (.) that I

15  (?):                                             [Mm hm.

16  SAM:  would traditionally.
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By using a generalized list in this way, Sammy claims that the racial organization

of neighborhoods, regardless of the specific racial category involved, creates places in

which racial "out-groups" are unwelcome, and therefore lack privileges. Sammy thus

treats racial privilege as a situational property of whichever category is the "in-group" in

any given neighborhood, rather than being tied to whiteness in the way that Kim had

proposed. This logic serves as a basis for Sammy to complain about how he would likely

be treated in certain neighborhoods, but by formulating his complaint in this way he

conveys that his claims are based not on his status as a white person per se, but on his

status as a racial "out-group" member in such neighborhoods. Moreover, he shows that

his complaint arises from the racial organization of neighborhoods in general, rather than

from behavior associated with any specific racial category. In this way, he 1)

acknowledges the relevance of race in general for the allocation of privilege, 2) denies

that he, as a white person, is particularly privileged, and 3) avoids blaming members of any particular racial category for denying him privileges.

A second instance of this practice is shown in Excerpt 2, which is drawn from the "Group Dialogue" component of the workshop. In this case, Lupe (who identifies as a Latina) produces a list in the course of claiming that it is important to get to know people as individuals, as opposed to seeing them as members of a racial category. As she begins to refer to the importance of this "individualism" (line 1), she refers back to something one of her recipients (Sammy, who is white) has previously said about this matter, turning towards him and addressing him by name as she does so (lines 2-3). By doing this, she displays her engagement and agreement with what he has said previously, offering an agreeing elaboration of his remarks (lines 1-3). In offering this endorsement of Sammy's view, however, just what Lupe is agreeing with may be ambiguous: it is possible that she could be heard as aligning with his remarks as being especially relevant for him, as a white person, i.e., suggesting that white people in particular should view others as individuals. In this case, her status as "a person of color criticizing white people" would become relevant, and the alignment with Sammy that her agreement otherwise instantiates would be undercut. She avoids this possible implication, however, by formulating her agreement with his remarks as relevant for persons as such, independently of race. Specifically, in her point about the importance of "getting to know that person on one on one" (lines 3-4), she asserts that her point applies to members of all racial categories by producing a list of categories ("whether .hh you're black you're

white, or you're Asian=or (.) you're brown," lines 4-5),[3] followed by a generalized list

completer ("what<u>ev</u>er," line 5).

<u>Excerpt 2:</u> [GD, A, 2:42:31-2:42:41]

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1     LUP:  So indi<u>vi</u>dually, (0.5) that's where the individualism

2           ((turns towards Sammy)) comes from that you were talking

3           about Sammy is uh (.) getting to know that person on one

4  →        on one whether .hh you're black you're white, or you're

5  →        Asian=or (.) you're brown, what<u>ev</u>er um: (0.7) ((swallows))

6           it's- it's getting to <u>know</u> them an- and re<u>la</u>ting to them

7           in that way, ((continues))
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Two features of the positioning of the list she constructs are particularly

significant. First, she produces the list just after her attribution of an aspect of what she is

saying to what Sammy had previously said. This suggests that the list is designed to

display to Sammy (and the rest of her recipients) that in attributing this concept to him

she is not implying that it is especially relevant to him, or to other white people. Second,

she pauses briefly, inserting the list parenthetically (cf. Mazeland 2007), and thus treating

it as something important enough to say at the earliest possible moment, rather than

waiting until she completed her point before adding this component. She thus displays

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[3] It is noteworthy that the list of categories Lupe produces exactly coincides with the categories represented

in the "Group Dialogue" in which she is participating. This may reflect extra care taken on her part to

avoiding omitting any of the categories with which her recipients identify.

her orientation to the importance of showing as soon as possible that what she is saying about building relationships across racial boundaries is something that members of all racial categories should do.

By using a generalizing list in this way, Lupe discounts any possible implication that she is criticizing members of a particular racial category for failing to work at cross-racial friendships. Such an implication would diminish or undermine the alignment she is ostensibly offering by making relevant her status as a person of color criticizing white people. Her use of a generalizing list thus limits the degree to which race is likely to be treated as relevant for understanding her actions, even as she produces a list of racial categories. In producing a list in this way, she treats her own race as a potential barrier to displaying alignment with a co-participant of a different race, while working to overcome this barrier.

In both of the above cases, and indeed all cases of the list construction practice collected in the data, the speakers employing this practice in formulations of race did so in the course of making broad generalizations about the social organization of race.[4] This demonstrates the way in which this practice is best suited for use in making generalized

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[4] It is also worth noting that, in both Excerpt 1b and Excerpt 2, the speaker's use of the term "whatever" is consistent with the outcome achieved by the racial formulations in both of these cases. Specifically, it explicitly claims that the specific racial group in question is not relevant to the claims they are making, by proposing that "whatever" additional categories were included in the list, the speaker's claims would remain valid. In addition, "whatever" may carry a dismissive connotation that further serves to support the assertion that the specific racial category doesn't matter.

claims about race as a form of social organization per se, rather than describing specific racial categories or incidents. It is further notable that in the cases I have examined, the speakers' use of this resource displays their tacit orientation to their positions *within* a racial structure. That is, a white speaker disavowed the relevance of race in an utterance designed to deny racial privilege as specifically relevant for whites in Excerpt 1b, while a speaker of color used the practice in a situation where an utterance offered as an agreement was vulnerable to being heard as a complaint about white people in Excerpt 2. In the following section, I describe a set of practices through which speakers can formulate specific racial categories, while limiting their use of those formulations to specific circumstances or incidents – and I continue to attend to the ways in which the deployment of such practices is sensitive to speakers' orientations to their position within a racial structure.

Localizing Race

In the following sections I examine two practices for producing "localized" racial formulations, namely qualifying racial references, and producing race as an "afterthought." By using these practices, speakers can display a racial formulation to be contingently included as a result of its relevance for the local interactional context, rather than being produced gratuitously. In this way, they provide a way of showing the use of race as an account for action to be limited to the particular case or occasion being described.

Qualifying Race

The use of a qualifier prior to a reference to race is shown in Excerpt 3. In this case, Megan suspends her utterance to parenthetically insert a qualifier as a preface to a racial formulation (cf. Lerner 1996; Mazeland 2007). She does this in the course of a response to another participant's story about his father's experience of believing he had been discriminated against because he was white.[5] In her response, Megan (who identifies as white) describes the effects that being told by her family about her father's negative experiences with people of color had on her on her own racial attitudes as she was growing up.

Excerpt 3: [WG, A, 11:21:18-11:24:00]

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1      MEG:   I would say that I- I actually had a similar experience

2             in terms of growing up that my- my father had (0.6)

3  →          a: a difficult situation or experience with (.) ↑in this

4  →          case particularly an African American person. .hh And I

5  →          will say that one of the things that- that it impacted

6             me on is that I too I think was raised with sort of

7             this (.) in one breath, (0.3) everyone's treated equal,

8             .hh yet (.) at the s- by the same token, (0.2) the

9             examples that I was ever given about (0.2) when my white

10            father was impacted by someone it was by a person of

11            of color and I think that that very much played .hh for
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[5] See Whitehead and Lerner (2009) for an analysis of Megan's references to her father, particularly her reference in lines 9-10 to "my white father."

```
12          me growing up about what my (.) ideas are a- ideas are

13          and have been about .hh u:m (0.4) people of color: (.)

14          sort of victimizing my family.
```

By following her characterization of a particular "difficult situation or experience" (line 3), with the word "with," Megan initially projects that she is on course to formulate the actor(s) involved in the situation. However, she then suspends her utterance to insert the qualifier "in this case particularly" (lines 3-4), before going on to produce the initially projected formulation "an African American person" (line 4). In addition, the micro-pause prior to the production of this qualifier and the rise in the pitch of Megan's voice as she produces the word "in" (line 3) further mark it as a parenthetical departure from the formulation she was initially headed towards. In this way, the qualifier is marked as being arrived at as the result of an in-the-moment adaptation to the specifics of the circumstance she is reporting.

By prefacing the racial formulation in this way, Megan treats the specific racial category concerned as incidental to this particular case, and shows that she is not attempting to generalize beyond this case or treating the victimization of her father as a "category bound" behavior (Sacks 1995) for people of this racial category. Megan's orientation in this regard is further displayed as she goes on to speculate about the effect that her father's systematic mentions of the racial categories of people who mistreated him had on her views as she grew up: by suggesting that the mere disclosure of the racial categories of her father's "victimizers" may have influenced her views of people of those categories, she explicitly displays her understanding that a reference to a category may be

hearable as proposing that category to be an account for action. Thus, by using a qualifier in this way before referring to a racial category, Megan avoids producing a racial formulation similar those she is reporting her father as having (problematically) produced. In this way, she re-tells her father's story while resisting the same racialized inferences, including inferences about her own racial motivations as a white person referring to people of color, that were available to her as a recipient when her father told the story. This enables her to admit to her own racial prejudices, while simultaneously accounting (and thereby mitigating responsibility) for their development.

Racial "Afterthoughts"

Localized racial formulations can also be produced by re-doing an already-adequate reference to a person to include a more specific (racial) formulation, thus treating the inclusion of race as an "afterthought"[6] to the formulation. This is illustrated by Excerpt 4, in which Darlene (who has self-identified as black, and has disclosed that she was born in Jamaica and lived there until her teens) describes an incident that occurred while she was working at a customer service desk in a department store, and a customer made it clear to her that she was not welcome in the United States.

Excerpt 4: [PCG, B, 11:26:12-11:26:51]

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[6] It is important to emphasize that the term "afterthought" is used here to convey the way in which a speaker *displays* an utterance to have been changed in mid-course, rather than as a claim about the speaker's psychological processes or motivations for changing the utterance in any given case.

```
1      DAR:   And so (1.0) I remember one day I was there and dis

2  →          woman came, °this:° African American woman an .hhh she

3             was upset about somethi:ng, something that went wrong at

4             the register and

5      (?):   (Mm.)

6      DAR:   you know they sent her to the service desk and she

7             ca:me, .hhh and so in my (0.4) nice little accent, which

8             I see you notice (>hasn't gone away as yet<) but back

9             then (.) I had an accent. .hhh And so: in my nice little

10            accent tryna explain to he:r, you know, the policies and

11            everything and she said (0.5) .hh ya know she said "You:

12            damn (w-) West Indians," you know "why don't you go back

13            to whe:re the hell you come from and learn to speak and

14            everything," .hhh an:d (.) of- at that point it hit me

15            it's like it h:it me all of a sudden that I was .hhh I

16            was not even in my comfort zone you know ((continues))
```

In referring to the customer in this incident, Darlene first refers to her as "this woman" (line 1), before repairing (see Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977) to insert her race ("this: African American woman," line 2). By inserting a reference to race in this fashion, Darlene treats the racial formulation as a "second choice," thereby suggesting that its inclusion was contingent on its particular relevance for her story. In other words, she shows that, rather than gratuitously invoking the woman's race, she has done so in this case through an in-the-moment choice, or "afterthought," as a result of its particular relevance for her description of this incident. Darlene's production of race as an

"afterthought" in this way enables her to display that the woman's racial (and citizenship) category was a relevant feature of this incident and its impact on her,[7] while resisting potential inferences that she routinely (and gratuitously) racially identifies people, and therefore routinely treats race as relevant for understanding behavior.

By using the practices I have described in this section, speakers can display that their use of a racial formulation was locally occasioned and recently arrived-at. This serves to circumscribe the extent to which they could be heard (and responded to) as treating race as an account, by showing it to be either completely incidental, or limiting it to the particular case they are describing. Perhaps as a by-product, these practices suggest that speakers who use them do not routinely or gratuitously use race when it is not warranted or might be deemed inappropriate.

Having examined a range of practices through which speakers can refer explicitly to racial categories while managing the normative accountability of doing so I now turn to an explication of the use of tacit racial formulations, in the form of allusions to race, in order to manage this accountability (cf. Lerner 2003 on "explicit" versus "tacit" practices).

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[7] Prior to this excerpt, Darlene has discussed her own racial identity and affiliation with "black Americans" in recounting her experiences of working in the same department store. Her identification of the woman's race in this case may thus serve to convey the added impact that Darlene experienced as a result of being discriminated against by someone she would ordinarily have considered to share her racial identity.

Alluding to Race

Allusions to race provide a way by which speakers can imply or "plant" a racial meaning

in their talk to convey it indirectly and inexplicitly, without saying it "in so many words"

(cf. Schegloff 1996). Talking allusively, rather than saying something directly, requires

recipients to track not just what has been said, but also what has been conveyed

allusively, in order to make sense of an utterance. The resulting distribution of authorship

(Goffman 1981; Lerner 2001) may provide a means for managing the formulations of

others' racial categories. In the discussion that follows, I describe one practice that can be

employed to allude to race, namely posing puzzles about actions that require

explanations. That is, by describing actions in such a way that a puzzle is posed regarding

why an actor behaved in such a way, speakers can make relevant an explanation or

account for the behavior. If these puzzles are posed in sequential environments in which

race has already been referred to, while discounting other possible solutions to the puzzle,

race becomes available to recipients as the "obvious" solution for understanding the

conduct in question (cf. Sacks' account of "Job's Problem" - Sacks 1995, vol. I:412).

Thus, recipients can make sense of the actions, and solve the puzzle, only by using

common sense racial knowledge to infer the racial category, and hence motivations, of

the actor. This practice is exemplified by Excerpt 5, in which a facilitator tells a story

about his experience of trying to open a bank account. Just prior to telling this story, this

facilitator has reported that he is currently watching his daughter have to come to terms

with the implications of being "a black woman," and has noted how difficult it is for him

to watch, even though he himself grew up "a black man." By telling a story shortly after

self-categorizing in this way, the facilitator invites his recipients to hear the story as

exemplifying the implications of his status as "a black man," as thus to hear his racial

category as relevant in accounting for what happened in the story.

Excerpt 5: [PCG, B, 12:02:18-12:02:47]

```
1     F4:   U::m I- I used to tell a story abou:t ((sniffs)) goin

2           to the- (.) to the ba:nk, (0.4) u::h a::nd tryin tuh get

3           a:: corporate account for a ↑company >for the dialogue

4           consultants< gettin a corporate account, .hh and havin

5 →         problems with thee manager because he thought I was

6 →         tryin tuh open a fraudulent account. .hhh U:m (0.8) hh

7           a:nd (0.8) thinkin >you know< I have no idea why this

8           guy thinks that. But no:w, even (.) with that story I

9           mean (you all will find out) the older ya get the more

10          gray ya get ya think ya know peop[le gon' lea::ve you

11    LAU:                                   [Mm hmm.

12    F4:   alone.
```


In his story, the facilitator recounts that the bank manager accused him of trying

to open a fraudulent account (lines 5-6). Since such accusation are only relevant when

based on some kind of warrant or evidence of wrongdoing, this report establishes a

puzzle about what cause the bank manager may have had for making the accusation.

Moreover, the facilitator himself explicitly treats the bank manager's actions as puzzling

(lines 7-8), and claims a lack of knowledge about any explanation for them. In addition,

he has discounted any possible notion that the bank manager's accusation was in any way valid, by showing that he was at the bank for thoroughly legitimate reasons, to open an account for the same group that was responsible for organizing the workshop of which this interaction was a part (lines 2-4). Recipients can solve this puzzle, however, by applying common sense racial knowledge to it. Since the facilitator has already made his status as "a black man" relevant, and in accordance with Sacks' consistency rule, recipients could make sense of the bank manager's actions by inferring that he was a member of a different racial category than the facilitator, and that the accusation was racially motivated.[8]

By alluding to the relevance of race for understanding the bank manager's actions, rather than claiming it to be so more explicitly, the facilitator is able to make an understanding of racial discrimination available to his recipients without explicitly identifying the race of the bank manager. In this way, the facilitator can make inferences about the bank manager's racial motivations available, while attenuating potential inferences about his own racial motivations, which would become available to his recipients if he explicitly identified the bank manager's racial category or ascribed it as the cause of his actions. In addition, he displays in the course of his report that he did not

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[8] The recipients may well have been able to make this inference even if the facilitator had not referred to his status as "a black man" just prior to telling this story, since they already know (and have constant visual access to) his racial identity. The facilitator's mention of his race thus demonstrates the explicit way in which he makes race available as the solution to the puzzle, even when it might already have been the obvious solution had he not done so.

jump to any conclusions about the motivations (including possible racial motivations) of

the bank manager, but in fact was unable to find an account for his actions (see lines 7-8).

In this way, he displays to his recipients that he is not paranoid or over-sensitive when it

comes to matters of race (cf. Jefferson 2004; Sacks 1995), but instead is cautious about

making accusations of racism, allowing his recipients to reach that conclusion themselves

rather than directly claiming it to be the case. Alluding to race in this way thus enables

the facilitator to show that it was not him, but rather the bank manager, who was

attending to race and acting on the basis of it on this occasion.

     A second, more complex, instance of the use of a puzzle about an action requiring

explanation is shown in Excerpt 6. In this excerpt, Sammy responds to a facilitator's

prompt to provide an example to illustrate the claims about his lack of racial "privileges"

in certain situations (see Excerpt 1b) by telling a story about an apparently racially

motivated attack. As he begins his story, he refers to the location of the neighborhood in

which the events took place (line 5) and describes it as a "tough neighborhood" (lines 7

and 9), before explicitly (as an "afterthought") identifying his friend as "a white guy"

(lines 9-10). [9] He thus establishes a storytelling environment in which recipients can

inspect his friend's racial category for how it might explain the events he goes on to

describe in the story.

Excerpt 6: [WG, A, 11:17:13–11:18:20]

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[9] Further analysis of Sammy's racial identification of his friend is provided in Whitehead and Lerner

(2009).

```
1    SAM:    I'd been out here for about a year, (0.5) u:m (0.3) and

2            a guy I went to high school with came out here from

3            Wisconsin an' .hh a:n' u:m (0.4) pt .hh he was a: (.)

4            motorcycle mechanic an' got a jo:b down in oh jeez

5            where was it? (0.6) U::m way down off of Imperial.

6    F2:     Mm hm.

7    SAM:    .hh u:m (.) y- you know where that is [an: an that is a

8    F2:                                           [Mm hm.

9  → SAM:    tough neighborhood. .hh u::m, a::nd (.) I mean he was a

10 →         white guy, (0.3) and was told by: people that he worked

11           with, .hh to not get caught here after dark. (.) And he

12           did one night.

13           (.)

14   F2:     Mm.

15   SAM:    .h and he pulled in he was it was a Friday night he was

16           on his way to a game (.) .h u:h in uh >it was< one of

17           the indoor soccer games an' he stopped at a seven-eleven

18 →         to buy a six-pack of beer. (1.0) An:d wa:s: >put in the<

19 →         hospital. Stabbed. Beaten over the head with a pipe an'

20 →         this an' that. And was told .hh dheh! "What are you

21 →         doing here?" Uh heh. ["You shouldn't be here." An:d so:

22   F2:                          [Mm.

23   SAM:    y'know eh- en it- en it does exist. An:' you know, I e-

24           I- it didn't make it didn't make me hate? .hh or

25           anything like that? It reminded me tuh (.) not be there.
```

In his telling, Sammy shows that his friend's motives for being at the scene of the assault were legitimate, being close to his place of work, and that he was not seeking any kind of trouble, but was merely "buy[ing] a six-pack of beer" on the way to a soccer game (lines 16-18). He thus discounts any possible conception that his friend in any way instigated the incident that led to him being assaulted. He goes on to describe the assault, and in doing so he portrays the attackers as being oriented to their own actions as requiring an explanation. That is, he reports the attackers' speech in such a way that demonstrates their orientation to the need to account for their actions. This is seen in the way Sammy reports them as having accounted for the attack ("You shouldn't <u>be</u> here," line 21). There remains a puzzle, however, about what it was about the friend that made him the kind of "you" who should not have been at that place, such that the attackers were motivated to assault him for being there. As in the above instance, this puzzle can be solved through the racial common sense made relevant by Sammy's prior racial categorization of his friend, in accordance with Sacks' consistency rule. This common sense provides for the inference that the attackers were members of a different racial category than Sammy's friend, and the attack was racially motivated, even though Sammy has made no explicit reference to the race of the attackers.

By only alluding to the race of his friend's attackers in formulating his story in this way, Sammy is able to complain about their racially motivated actions, while attenuating the similar inferences his recipients might have made about his own racial motivations had he explicitly racially identified them. Thus, he is able to convey that his friend was attacked because of his racial category membership, while working to avoid

being heard as proposing the racial category of the attackers to be an account for their actions. His orientation in this regard is also shown by his subsequent claim that the incident "reminded [him] not to be there" (line 19). In making this claim, Sammy shows that it is not his choice to see the world through a racial lens, but that his safety may depend on doing so in some cases, because *other* people see the world in that way (cf. Wieder 1974). In this way, Sammy uses this story (and the allusions to race therein) to support his claims about not always having racial privilege, while resisting the inference that he blames people of a particular racial category for what happened to his friend, and denying that this incident resulted in any racial prejudice on his part.

The posing of puzzles such as those described here provide a practice for co-implicating recipients who employ the common sense knowledge about racial categories necessary to make the inferences a racial hearing requires. By not explicitly mentioning the race of the actors in their utterances,[10] while producing them in such a way that recipients will be left in no doubt about it, speakers can force their recipients to supply the common sense knowledge required to hear race as (obviously and apparently) relevant for understanding what happened, thus making them complicit in that racial common sense (cf. Smith 's 1978 analysis of the use of a puzzle to require recipients to collude in the interpretation of an individual's behavior as being indicative of mental

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[10] Excerpt 6 is particularly striking in this regard, since not only does Sammy not explicitly mention the race of the attackers, he avoids *all* references to them, even when he reports their speech and other actions, through his use of passive constructions. This serves to further "submerge" their racial identities as a concern to him.

illness). Speakers can thus show that actors were racially motivated in their actions, while minimizing possible inferences that they (the speakers) themselves were racially motivated in describing them (cf. Stokoe and Edwards 2007).

Concluding Remarks

The practices I have described in this paper point to the operation of a framework of normative accountability that shapes the use of racial categories in describing and interpreting the social actions of others, particularly in normatively anti-racist environments. In such contexts, as a result of the consequentiality of "categorizing the categorizer," speakers may be held accountable *as members of a particular racial category* for avoiding inappropriate references to race, while at the same time recognizing its potential relevance when it is appropriate to do so. This is apparent in the way speakers in my data visibly grappled with the problem of when and how race is relevant, and even whether their own actions were understandable as racially motivated (cf. Burkhalter 2006).

The emergence (and in many cases, familiarity) of the practices I have described, and their recurrent use in the production of racial references to others, suggests that common sense reasoning and knowledge about race is sustained (i.e., reproduced and managed) at least in part through a specific mechanism. That is, in managing the accountability associated with "categorizing the categorizer," speakers display an orientation to the relevance of their own racial identities, and the common sense knowledge associated with them, for how they report on and intervene in matters of race.

In this way, even as they work to manage the accountability of their conduct in terms of racial categories and common sense knowledge, speakers treat those categories and common sense knowledge as consequential, and thereby reproduce them as such (cf. Heritage's 1988 demonstration of the way in which accounts renew the salience of the accounted for norm or event). This demonstrates one way in which "racial projects" (Omi and Winant 1994) carried out at the level of everyday interactions contribute to the reproduction of the category system underpinning the durable (racial) inequality Tilly (1998) describes.

While there is no doubt that race can be reproduced as a result of strong commitments to maintaining its importance as a form of social organization (cf. Tilly 1998), the mechanism for the reproduction of race that I have demonstrated does not require such commitments in order to operate in the way that it does. That is, the consequentiality of "categorizing the categorizer" as (i.e., its status as a factor observably shaping people's conduct) may be the result of the systematic potential for being held accountable for failing to attend to and use race appropriately, independently of whether one personally believes in the importance of race. Thus, individuals *may* design their actions according to a racial interpretive framework solely as a consequence of the expectation that *others* may be using such a framework to interpret their actions, and that *others* may hold them accountable for those actions on the basis of that framework (cf. West and Fenstermaker 1995). In this way, the status of race as a social structure that shapes the experiences of individuals (cf. Omi and Winant 1994), and which individuals treat as a constraint on their actions, is reproduced independently of whether any

particular individual is invested in or has a stake in it (cf. Wieder's classic study of the operation of "the convict code" in a "halfway house" for drug offenders - Wieder 1974).

It is further apparent, particularly from the examination of allusions to race, that the foregoing points concerning the reproduction of race apply not only to speakers (or those producing actions), but also to recipients (or those observing or hearing actions). Regardless of their personal beliefs about the importance of race, if recipients don't apply racial common sense in interpreting the racial motivations of actors made relevant by speakers' allusions to race, they will not be able to make adequate sense of the actions the speakers are describing. This provides a strong warrant for observers attempting to make sense of others' actions to take account of their possible racial implications, even if those observers have no stake or investment in the relevance of race (cf. Wieder 1974).

It is also important to emphasize the way in which the actions speakers employ these practices in the service of further reproduce race, by reflecting their orientation to their position within a racial social structure and the contingencies associated with that position. In my data, white speakers used the practices in doing such things as denying racial privilege (Excerpts 1b and 6), admitting to and accounting for racial prejudice (Excerpt 3) and denying racial prejudice (Excerpt 6). In this way, these speakers' use of the practices displays their orientation to managing the implications of their whiteness for matters of privilege and prejudice. By contrast, people of color used the practices in the service of displaying alignment despite the barriers posed by race (Excerpt 2), avoiding singling white people out for criticism with respect to matters of race (Excerpt 2), describing the impacts of being subjected to prejudice and discrimination (Excerpts 4 and

5), and displaying caution in making accusations of discrimination (Excerpt 5). The use of these practices by speakers of color in the data thus demonstrates their management of the experiences associated with being in a stigmatized or subordinate position in a racial system. This constitutes another way in which durable inequalities of the sort that Tilly (1998) describes become consequential, and are reproduced, through "racial projects" (Omi and Winant 1994) undertaken in everyday interactions.

It should be emphasized that the generality of these findings may be limited by the particular interactional context in which they were generated, and that the range of actions for which these practices can be employed is most likely more extensive than those I have identified above. However, the mechanisms for the reproduction of race that they point to could be seen to be operating in any context in which practices such as the ones I have examined are employed. Further investigation in this regard could thus be directed at describing the use of these and other similar practices in other interactional environments, including those that are not as specialized or as strongly normatively "anti-racist" as the one I have examined.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the practices I have described, and the forms of social organization they rely on, are underwritten by basic and ubiquitous features of talk-in-interaction. Practices for list construction, repair, and storytelling in conversation, and actions such as disagreeing, agreeing, admitting, denying, accusing and complaining are not particular to talk concerning race, but were mobilized by speakers in these interactions to perform particular projects in terms of race. This is to be expected since, regardless of the topical particulars of what speakers were doing, they were doing

it through talk-in-interaction, and thus needed to draw on available practices for doing talking-in-interaction (cf. Raymond and Heritage 2006). This makes clear the importance of understanding interaction at the level of detail at which participants attend to it in order to understand what people are doing in interactions in which important issues, such as race, are being dealt with. As Sacks (1987:67) succinctly puts it, "You cannot find what [people are] trying to do until you find the kinds of things they work with." When applied to race, however, the ubiquitous interactional practices employed by speakers underwrite the consequentiality of race for the production of social action, contributing to the way in which race itself is organized and reproduced.

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