

Intertextuality in interaction: Reframing family arguments in public and private*

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Abstract

Building on Becker's notion of prior text and Bakhtin's of dialogicality, I explore intertextuality in family discourse by tracing how three couples' conflicts about domestic responsibilities are recycled, reframed, and rekeyed over time, both between each other and in conversation with others: in one case with a friend, and in another with the couple's child. I use the term 'recycling' for situations where a topic is closed then arises again later in the same or a different conversation; 'reframing' for a change in what the conversation is about; and 'rekeying' for a change in the tone or tenor of an interaction. I trace a conflict in each of three families—the first two briefly, the third at length—in order to examine how speakers negotiate conflicts about the division of household responsibilities. In the third example, analysis helps explain why the issue of household responsibilities carries so much weight. In all three examples, restoring harmony was accomplished in part by reframing in a humorous key, and in ways that reinforced the speakers' shared family identities. The paper thus demonstrates how the abstract concept, intertextuality, actually works in everyday interaction.

Keywords: intertextuality; family discourse; framing; conflict talk; interactional sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

Recent research on intertextuality (Agha and Wortham 2005; Bauman 2004, 2005; Hamilton 1996; Tannen forthcoming [1989]) draws and expands on concepts that Bakhtin (1981) calls dialogicality and Becker (1995) calls 'prior text' or *jarwa dhosok* (pushing old language into new contexts). In the present paper, I explore intertextuality in family discourse by tracing how three couples' conflicts about domestic responsibilities

ities are reframed and rekeyed in different contexts, both within the family and in conversation with friends. Tovaes (2005) has addressed intertextuality at the intersection of public and private by examining how speakers incorporate media texts into their conversation, how they discuss a current media event (see also Tovaes in this issue), and how public sources of expert advice influence parents' child-rearing practices. This last she calls 'intertextuality in action' because the parents act, in their private lives, on the advice they glean from public sources. I use a related phrase to explore a different aspect of the dovetailing of public and private discourse. By 'intertextuality in interaction' I refer to the repetition of words and topics (hence 'intertextuality') as a conflict is recycled, reframed, and rekeyed. I thus demonstrate how speakers use intertextuality as they talk to each other in everyday life (hence 'in interaction'). I see the dovetailing of public and private discourse in the way that the reframing and rekeying of an argument that began in private is sometimes accomplished in a public setting or with the participation of a third party. Moreover, whereas much prior work refers to intertextuality as a theoretical concept, much like Bakhtin's dialogicality, I attempt here to show how intertextuality actually works in naturally occurring discourse.

As part of a study of middle-class dual-career families with children, four couples carried or wore tape recorders for a week or more and recorded nearly everything they said during that time. This research design provides the unique opportunity to trace discourse—words, phrases, topics, and, as is my focus in the current analysis, conflicts—across time. In the present analysis, I trace the evolution of a conflict in each of three families—the first two briefly, the third at length—in order to examine how intertextuality is used to negotiate relationships through discourse. All three conflicts concern the division of household responsibilities, an issue that has tremendous force in families in which both parents work outside the home, as Hochschild (1989, 1997) and others have documented, and as was evident in our own study. Indeed, the third example goes a long way toward explaining why this issue carries such weight, as the couple's conversation dramatizes that the question of who does what chores has implications for the most fundamental aspects of a life partnership: how much do you care? Can I rely on you for support as I face challenges in my life?

2. Intertextuality in interaction

Tracing the recycling, reframing, and rekeying of a conflict across contexts makes manifest 'the natural history of an argument' in family discourse. Moreover, and more fundamentally, tracing the evolution of a

conflict in a couple's conversation allows us to understand more deeply how language works for people in their daily lives. For many years, I have examined patterns of repetition in conversation, investigating their role in creating, conveying, and interpreting meaning, as well as in creating and reflecting interpersonal involvement (Tannen forthcoming [1989]). Examining patterns of repetition is another way of talking about intertextuality—the term introduced by Julia Kristeva (1980) to extend Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogicality to written texts, or, as Bauman (2005) suggests we call it, interdiscursivity. A brief review of these theoretical threads will set the stage for the ensuing analysis.

In Becker's (1995) holistic and deeply humanistic view, 'linguaging' (the term he prefers to the more static 'language') 'is context shaping.'

A *language*, then, is a system of rules and structures, which, in the Saussurian view, relates meanings and sounds, both of which are outside it. A language is essentially a dictionary and a grammar.

Linguaging, on the other hand, is context shaping. . . . Linguaging can be understood as taking old texts from memory and reshaping them into present contexts. (1995: 9, italics in original)

For Becker, 'All linguaging is what in Java is called *jarwa dhosok*, taking old language (*jarwa*) and pushing (*dhosok*) it into new contexts' (1995: 185)—or, as he now (personal communication in 1995) prefers to call it—present contexts. In other words, in speaking, individuals recall language they have heard in the past and adapt it to the present interaction, thus creating the context in which they are speaking.¹

Much work in the past two decades has explored Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality, or, as it is alternatively called, polyvocality. Bakhtin's writing is replete with eloquent statements of this concept. I will cite only two: 'Every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people's words' (1981: 338), and 'When we select words in the process of constructing an utterance, we by no means always take them from the system of language in their neutral, *dictionary* form. We usually take them from *other utterances* . . .' (1986: 87, italics in original). Bakhtin's claim, like Becker's, is that a speaker, in formulating an utterance, finds words that have garnered meaning from their prior use, meanings that the current speaker can elaborate on but echoes of which no speaker can erase. Such previous uses of words, and the meanings associated with them, constitute Bakhtin's 'dialogicality' and Becker's 'prior text'.

In earlier work (Tannen forthcoming [1989]) I examined repetition as one of several linguistic strategies that, I demonstrate, constitute ordinary conversation but which are generally regarded as quintessentially literary. (The two others that I examine closely are what I call constructed

dialogue—often called reported speech—and details or imagery). These strategies, which are shaped and elaborated in literary discourse, are pervasive, spontaneous, and functional in ordinary conversation. Repetition creates sound patterns—the musical level of language, including rhythm, intonation, and prosody—that involve the audience with the speaker or writer and the discourse by sweeping them along, much as music sweeps listeners along, luring them to move in its rhythm. Repetition also creates involvement through listener participation in sense-making, at the same time that it creates meaning: based on associations with prior experiences of the instances of language that are repeated (Bakhtin's dialogicality and Becker's prior text), hearers do much of the work of making meaning. (In that earlier work, I also posit and illustrate numerous forms and functions of repetition in conversational discourse.) Conversation, then, is not a passive endeavor of listening to others speak, nor a matter of serial passivity in which a person actively speaks then remains passive while another speaks. Engaging in conversation is always active, thanks to these two types of involvement.

In addition to this analysis of intertextuality in the form of repetition in discourse, in earlier work I have examined forms and functions of framing in conversational interaction (for example, Tannen 1996; Tannen and Wallat 1993 [1987]). In these and other works, I have built on Bateson's (1972 [1955]) and Goffman's (1974) notions of framing as (roughly—very roughly—paraphrased) interactants' sense of what is going on when they speak to each other. Framing in interaction has been further elaborated by Gordon (2002, 2003) based on analysis of the family discourse that provides the examples I present in the present paper. In my analysis I employ grosser notions of framing and the related concept, rekeying, to account for how a conflict evolves in family discourse.

Building on this earlier work on repetition and framing in conversational discourse, I seek here to explore how intertextuality works in discourse by tracing how words, topics, and themes reappear and are re-framed and rekeyed. Although the examples I analyze are of conflict talk, my interest is not in conflict discourse per se but rather in framing as intertextuality in interaction.² My goal is, first, to elucidate how family members use languaging to negotiate the sharing of family work, which includes the negotiation of conflicts, and, second, to understand more deeply how languaging works.

3. Recycling, reframing, and rekeying

In the examples of family discourse that I analyze below, conflicts were recycled, reframed, and rekeyed across time.

I use the term ‘recycling’ to refer to situations where a topic that arose in one conversation is discussed again in a later conversation. ‘Later’ could be later the same day, the next day, or several days later. This term says nothing about the way in which the topic is discussed; it refers only to the appearance of a topic that had appeared before. Reframing and rekeying, in contrast, are terms that describe the relationship between initial and subsequent iterations of a topic. By ‘reframing’ I refer to a change in what the discussion is about. For example, in the third case that I examine below, the topic at issue is whether or not Neil will promise to take a cardboard box to the post office for Clara while she is away on a business trip, in the event that the letter carrier does not take it. Later, however, the discussion focuses on whether or not Clara can depend on Neil for support if she encounters difficulties at work. The later exchange is a continuation (in my terms, a recycling) of ‘the same’ argument, because Clara’s reasoning is: if I can’t depend on you for something small like taking a box to the post office, I fear I will not be able to depend on you when I need your support for something big. Thus the argument is still about the box, but it has been reframed as an argument about emotional support.

Rekeying, on the other hand, refers to a change in the tone or tenor of an interaction. In proposing the term ‘key’, Goffman (1974: 43–44) notes that the analogy to music is intended; he defines ‘key’ as ‘the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else.’ Among the examples of rekeyings that Goffman presents is the rehearsal of a play. In another example, he suggests that when a speaker complains of another making a joke out of something that should have been taken seriously, ‘what the speaker has in mind is that the activity ... was improperly cast by this other into a playful key’ (1974: 82). A rekeying occurs when the speakers’ tone of voice, amplitude, lexical emphasis, rhythm, intonational contours, or other qualities of speech indicate a change of emotional stance. For example, in the box-to-the-post office interaction, the simple request for a favor is recycled with overtones of anger; it is rekeyed again when the same topic is treated with laughter and yet again when it is discussed with philosophical equanimity.

In what follows, I first present two brief examples of reframing and rekeying of a conflict over two contexts on separate days. Then I explore in more detail a third example in which there are multiple reframings and rekeyings over the course of a day.

4. Example (1): Denying and admitting fault: Who burned the popcorn?

The first example took place between a couple we call Kathy and Sam. It pivots on a topic that is almost comical in its mundane and trivial (but commonplace) nature—making popcorn. Underlying this topic, however, is a more fundamental point of contention: the division of household and child-care labor. When the topic first arises, Kathy is preparing popcorn and Sam is watching their daughter, Kira, who is just over two years old. Sam calls out to Kathy, suggesting that they switch places: ‘Kathy! Kathy! Let’s switch. You take care of her. I’ll do whatever you’re doing.’ Kathy responds, ‘I’m making popcorn’, and declines to switch places because, she claims, ‘You always burn it.’ There then follows an extended exchange during which Sam maintains that he never burns popcorn; instead, he says, ‘I make it perfect.’ Indeed, he goes on to claim that it is Kathy who habitually burns popcorn, to which Kathy replies, ‘I DO NOT! What are you, crazy?’ Throughout the original altercation, Sam steadfastly refuses to admit fault. He does take over preparing the popcorn and maintains control over the process despite several attempts on Kathy’s part to regain control. (For example, at one point she proposes including Kira in the popcorn preparation: ‘You wanna help Mommy make popcorn?’; at another she suggests that Sam take out the garbage while she watches the popcorn). In the end, the popcorn burns. Sam then claims that the fault lay not with him but with Kathy for having chosen the wrong pot.³

In this conversation, which I have telescoped here,⁴ the topic of popcorn making was reframed from its initial guise as a proposal that Kathy and Sam exchange tasks, to an argument about who is better equipped to make popcorn, to an argument about who bears responsibility for burning the popcorn. Yet another reframing as well as rekeying occurs three days later, when Kathy asks Sam to watch the popcorn she has been making because she has to leave the room temporarily. Sam responds, ‘Are you gonna let me burn your popcorn?’ The issue of preparing popcorn, and of burning it, is thus reframed in this new context as Sam proposes making popcorn as an offer over which Kathy holds veto power. It is also rekeyed as humorous. Perhaps most significant, in this humorous reframing and rekeying lies an indirect apology and admission of fault: in this playful key, Sam accepts responsibility for having previously burned the popcorn. This second reference illustrates intertextuality in interaction: Sam uses the previous argument as a resource for humor at the same time that he admits fault in having previously burned the popcorn.

5. Example (2): Did she or didn't she write in the pregnancy journal?

A second brief example of intertextuality in interaction illustrates how a private altercation is recycled, reframed, and rekeyed in a public context, with the participation of a third party. The topic first arises when Janet, who is seven months pregnant, accuses Steve of not preparing for the arrival of their second child with the same enthusiasm and diligence with which he anticipated the first. Specifically, she chastises Steve for not reading books that provide expert advice on parenting, and for not writing in the pregnancy journal, a notebook in which parents record their thoughts about a coming birth. As they lie in bed at the end of a day, Janet tells Steve, 'You don't read your books, you don't do your entries. You did a lot of entries last time.' In this as in many other instances throughout the week of taping, Steve readily admits fault. Two days later he recycles the topic, reframing it by promising reform ('I'll definitely need to write in the book tonight').

A day after that, Steve moves the argument from the private domain of conversation with Janet to the public domain of a conversation with a friend. He reframes and rekeys the conflict by using it as material in a three-way conversation with a fellow actor named Nina. It is Saturday, and the three have come together to participate in a children's theater production. In the context of a conversation with Janet and Nina about how second children never get as much attention as first-borns, Steve says, 'I'm getting grief from her because I haven't been writing in the pregnancy journal, I haven't been reading my books until the wee hours of the morning.' Note that the phrase 'the wee hours of the morning' contains justification for his lapse: he is so busy that were he to do what Janet asks, he would have to do it at a time of day that everyone knows he should be sleeping. Janet then says, 'Yeah but I haven't either really.' (These lines are part of a longer exchange that Gordon [2003: 112–122] analyzes for the layering and laminating of frames.)

We cannot know whether or not Janet has been writing in the pregnancy journal; it is possible that she falsely claims not to have done so in order to establish solidarity with Nina and Steve. (I have described elsewhere [Tannen 2001] that girls and women often create rapport by claiming sameness, even when this entails compromising literal truth to achieve emotional truth in the demonstration of goodwill). In any case, Janet and Steve rekey their conflict as good-natured and rancor-free by reframing it in public performance. Although the interchange begins with Steve registering a complaint against Janet, the very act of talking publicly about a dispute that arose in private displays and reinforces their identity as a married couple. In other words, the conversation with Nina becomes a

stage on which they perform as a team. Indeed, this conversation takes place in a context—the children’s theater—in which Steve and Janet literally perform as a team, as co-actors in a play. Just as the audience in a theater provides the stage on which actors perform together, so Nina’s participation in the conversation provides an audience for which Steve and Janet perform as a conversational team. Furthermore, this stage provides them the opportunity to reframe the dispute about writing in the pregnancy journal and reading parenting books as a minor point of contention. Insofar as such small arguments are common among couples, it becomes a resource for establishing connection between each other as well as with Nina.

6. Example (3): ‘You don’t notice the times I do’: The natural history of an argument

I turn now to the major focus of this paper, the third example, the most serious and extended argument of the three I consider here, which I examine in more detail and at greater length. This conflict begins at home, continues in the car as the couple drives with their son to a children’s party held in a public entertainment center, is referred to as they watch the children play, and resurfaces in the car on the way home. Finally, in the evening at home, the couple engage in what we might call, following Bateson (1972 [1955]), metacommunication: they talk about the way they previously argued. As the conflict spans these contexts, it is reframed as being about increasingly significant issues. In the end it becomes the basis for the couple’s realignment as a harmonious parenting team. The argument is also rekeyed as the tone evolves from less to more angry, then to humorous, and finally as a thoughtful, almost contemplative discussion of philosophies of parenting.

The argument began as talk about a minor issue, as did the ones in the previous two examples, but it quickly escalated to being about one of the most fundamental issues in a couple’s home life: first, the division of labor with regard to household chores, and then the question of whether a partner can be depended on for emotional support when the going gets tough. The development of the argument illustrates why the issue of who does what chores can have such force; it shows how an argument gets reframed and rekeyed throughout the day; and it illustrates how the argument is resolved through the participation of a third party—the couple’s son Jason, who is nearly five years old.

The series of conversations takes place on a Sunday. As Neil and Clara prepare to take Jason to a children’s party, Neil spots a cardboard box

sitting by the door and asks about it. Clara explains that it is a package she is returning to a department store, Nordstrom's, and that she will leave it by the mailbox for the letter carrier to pick up. Neil says he doubts the carrier will take a box of that size: it must be delivered to the post office. Since Clara is about to embark on a week-long business trip the following day, she asks Neil if he can take the box to the post office in the event the letter carrier does not pick it up. He responds in a way other than she expected.⁵

(3) a.

Clara: If I put that box out tomorrow and then the guy doesn't pick it up . . .

Neil: I'll bring it back in the house.

Clara: And, can you take it to the post office?

Neil: <louder> I'll try, but I don't know if I'll have time to take it there.>

With Neil's last line (and observable from the increase in loudness with which he spoke), the unmarked question-answer sequence is rekeyed as oppositional: Neil declines to accede unequivocally to Clara's request. He suggests rectifying the situation in a less time-consuming way: taking the box back into the house.

Clara then reframes her request for Neil's help: rather than addressing the issue of the box, she challenges his response to her request. Her high pitch, together with her emphatic enunciation of individual words, indicates the rekeying of the exchange as oppositional and emotionally weighted, as does the increased amplitude with which Neil emphasizes words in his reply.

(3) b.

Clara: <high> But I don't know why you can't just say,> 'Yes, I'll take it.' It's like, you- you can't COMMIT to MAILING a BOX for me?

Neil: I SAID, I'd try to TAKE it, but I don't know what HE'S going to be like all week!

Clara: Well, it doesn't matter what he's like, you dump him in the car and you drop [(?)]

Neil: [Well then,] I- I'll take it, just leave it in the house.
I'll take your box for ya . . . Hey- let's go, Jason.

At this point the dispute seems to have been resolved and contained: Neil has agreed to deliver Clara's box to the post office. But it soon resurfaces in expanded form, reframed as being not about taking a box to the post office but about the division of household labor. Now it is Neil who registers a complaint:

(3) c.

Neil: You know, I- I feel like you always ask me to go out and do these errands for you, and I'm like, 'Okay,' but, you know, I've got all this stuff to do too, I've still got lea:ves to rake in the yard, you know, I've got a BACK yard to rake. You know, it just seems like it- I don't know [why] it's so

Clara: <high> [Well-]

Neil: hard for you to do these things.

Clara: Because I I- I do a LOT of things!

Again, Clara's high pitch, along with the voice quality and lexical emphasis that characterize both their comments, makes clear that the interchange is getting rekeyed as an argument. It is also being reframed as a referendum on whether Clara does her share of domestic chores.

Neil supports his claim that Clara asks him to do chores that she should do herself by offering specific examples of requests she makes of him:

(3) d.

Neil: You know, I'll- I'll say I'm going to the cleaners, and you're like, 'Oh, can you take my stuff?' And you have this pile of stuff, and, I TAKE your stuff to the cleaners, but, you know, it either doesn't get picked up, or, you know, I mean I don't know why: [you-

Clara: [Well wait a minute!> <high>

Neil: (pile your stuff up), and then it's like I just don't understand sometimes why YOU can't do some of these things.

Neil goes on to complain that Clara leaves dishes in the sink rather than putting them in the dishwasher and allows the trash to overflow rather than taking it out. At this point, the exchange has been reframed from Clara's complaint that Neil should say he will take her box to the post office if necessary, to Neil's complaint that Clara expects him to do chores that she should do herself. Thus the argument has shifted in several ways: the complainant is now Neil rather than Clara, and the source of complaint is generalized rather than confined to a single request.

In the next reframing, the complainant shifts again as the argument continues to focus on the division of household labor. Clara maintains that Neil is unaware of many chores she does perform ('You don't notice the times I do'). She also articulates their different positions, thus reframing the interchange from expressing and defending against complaints to problem-solving:

(3) e.

Clara: I think that you think, that somehow I'm not pulling my weight. I think that I'm doing MORE than that. You think you're doing more than your share. So with the TWO of us think- thinking

that we're doing more than our share of the housework, let's sit down and do a schedule.

Thus Clara reframes the argument by suggesting action: they should write down who does what chores, to resolve their competing claims. She then verbally lists chores that she does regularly and Neil never does, such as assembling photo albums, shopping for Jason's clothes, and undertaking preparations for parties and holidays like Christmas. Neil responds by mentioning chores he does, such as laundry. The argument has thus been reframed as dueling chore lists.

In the next reframing, the universe of complaint is expanded to a wider domain and an issue even more fundamental to the couple's relationship: whether Neil can be counted on for emotional support. At the time of taping, the 2000 presidential election had taken place but the result was still undecided. The eventual outcome would have a significant impact on Clara's professional life: she held a high-level civil service position in a federal agency where she worked directly under the agency's head who was a political appointee as well as Clara's good friend. If George W. Bush were to take office, Clara's boss would be replaced by a Republican appointee who, presumably, would be hostile to the agency's mission and to employees who had been closely associated with his predecessor, as Clara was. Clara refers to these circumstances in explaining that Neil's resistance to helping her out with the box makes her fear that he will not be emotionally supportive if this worrisome circumstance becomes reality:

(3) f.

Clara: and- and- you know THAT'S one of the things that's bothering me about this, is THAT'S going to get worse. Becau:se, because, I'M going to need your support, when I- what I'm going through, what I think is in front of me. A:nd, with the- with the transition. I'm I'm a little u- more uptight than normal, because, I don't know who my next boss is going to be, and if they're going to have it in for me. I KNOW that I've heard THREE bad stories about the last time the Republicans came in. And what happened to people on MY hallway.

Neil: Yeah.

Clara: . . . And, and- and I- what- and I kind of FREAK OUT, when, when I think, 'Okay, I ask him to take the box, he doesn't want to do that, Oh my GO:D, what's gonna happen when-

Neil: Well-

Clara: he really DOES have to support me on something that matters more than returning a Nordstrom's package?" And- and- and it- and it SCARES me!

The magnitude of this reframing is greater than any we've seen before. Just as Neil interpreted Clara's request regarding the box in terms of the larger question of whether Clara does her share of chores, now Clara interprets Neil's response regarding the box in terms of an even larger question: his dependability as a life partner.

Neil's response to this reframing is yet another reframing, one that calls into question the very foundation of Clara's work identity—from her point of view. (I am convinced this was not his intention, as I will explain). Neil says that if her work causes Clara such anxiety, perhaps she should quit. Clara's response evinces a higher level of distress as she protests, 'I LIKE what I do and I want you to support what I do.' Neil protests in turn, 'I DO support what you do.' This phase of the argument, in these lines as well as many that follow, pivots on their contrasting definitions of 'support': whereas Clara uses the term to describe emotional steadfastness at home when she is under pressure at work, Neil makes clear that to him, suggesting that Clara quit her job is a practical suggestion to solve a problem that is causing her stress:

(3) g.

Neil: Clara, that's how I'm trying to give you support, if it's going to be such a nerve-racking thing for you then I don't know why you'd want to stay in that job anyway.

Clara and Neil exchange turns in this vein until Clara specifies,

(3) h.

Clara: ALL I'm worried about is NOT that transition, it's getting support from YOU when I need it! through the transition. <louder> I'm not worried about the pre- president, I'm worried about US. And- you giving me the kind of- support I need, that when it's a tough time you say 'Okay,' and you GIVE me a hug, and 'I'll HELP you.'

The impasse is articulated as both speak loudly and simultaneously. The increased amplitude and overlapping provide evidence that the exchange has been rekeyed to a higher level of emotional intensity. (In the excerpt that follows, the first two lines overlapped each other, as did the third and fourth lines.)

(3) i.

Neil: [<loud> I mean, I don't know

Clara: [<loud> That's-

Neil: [I don't know what to say about your job.>]

Clara: [That's, that is not support!>]

The source of this conflict is a common gender difference, one that I discuss at length elsewhere (Tannen 1990).⁶ The type of support that Clara has described is one that many women take for granted: a hug, a sympathetic demeanor, a reassuring 'I know how you feel'. Neil, like many men, offers support by proposing action to address the source of her emotional distress. Ironically, the action which he proposes—that she quit her job—becomes to her further evidence of lack of support in her sense: not only does she fear he will not be 'supportive' if she runs into trouble at work, but, even worse, it now seems that he so devalues the work she does that he would have her give it up.

Neil and Clara have reached an impasse; their succeeding exchanges recycle these divergent positions. The resolution to the conflict comes in the form of a major reframing and rekeying initiated by a third party: their four-and-a-half-year-old son Jason. By taking the role of mediator, Jason inadvertently introduces a note of humor, as both Clara and Neil are amused to see their young child take this adult role. It also triggers a major reframing: Neil and Clara realign with each other as a parenting team to Jason, and then realign yet again, including Jason in the larger family unit by invoking a family formula: reference to George W. Bush having been arrested for drunk driving. (Gordon [2004] examines numerous references to George W. Bush's drunk-driving conviction over the course of this family's taped discourse.)

(3) j.

Jason: Mom,

Clara: What, Jason?

Jason: How about you guys pick, u:m, um, um, see what, you guys want, um, um, like i:f Daddy wants YOU to do something, and you want HIM to do something you can both do it, okay?

Clara: <sing-song> [That's a GREAT idea,] Jason!>

Neil: <serious> [That's a good idea, Jason.]>

Clara: <chuckles>

Neil: <serious> Hey Jason?>

Clara: <sing-song> Jason has the PERFECT idea!>

Neil: Hey Jason?

Jason: Mm?

Neil: I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll try to support your mo:mmy, okay?

Clara: <high> Yea:h!>

Neil: Even if that- alcoholic [car driving man becomes the President,]

Clara: [<laughs>]

Neil: <laughing> okay?

Jason: Okay, <laughs>

Neil: If W becomes the President, okay?

All: <laugh>

Neil: If it's AL GORE we'll just have one big party, okay?

Clara: [<laugh>]

Jason: [<laugh>]

The reframing and rekeying could not be more stark. Before this segment occurred, Clara and Neil were expressing mutually opaque and divergent assumptions about the meaning of 'support' in a crescendo of frustration expressed in loud overlapping talk. Now they are laughing together. Jason's entry into the conversation occasioned a reframing of the exchange as a mediation and a rekeying to shared amusement.

Thus far, the argument has taken place at home. The next context in which it arises is a public one: the family is at the children's party, with Clara and Neil watching Jason and the other children playing. They occasionally call out to him and talk to other parents, but they also talk privately in this public context. Here they recycle the argument in an entirely different key: good-humored mutual amusement.

(3) k.

Clara: I'm sorry, I just don't think you can do the <chuckling> (kind of shopping I can do)>

Neil: <chuckling> I'd like to see you rake lea:ves and mow the lawn.>

Clara: <chuckling> That's why I'd like to keep it you doing that stuff and me doing my stuff.> You don't like the (boring old) dishes. That's just one thing. (?) What else- what else [(??)]

Neil: [No, it's not that it's boring,] it's- it's- it's when you throw yours, like, in a wet pa:n or something <louder> Wo:w! ((responding to kids))

Clara: And the dry cleaning (I would) only go every two or three months anyway, (?). ((children's shouts)) <louder> I usually only have, like,> even when you take my stuff [(a few pieces)]

Neil: [You have your stuff] there no:w, by the way. I gave you a receipt.

Clara: [Oh, you did?]

Neil: [Took some stuff] in there about two weeks ago? <louder> Jason, what are you doing?>

Here Clara and Neil raise the same points of contention—dish washing, leaf raking, and Neil taking Clara's clothes to the dry cleaners—but the exchange is reframed and rekeyed. The frame now seems to be chatting rather than arguing, because neither contests the other's claims.

Furthermore, the key is now calm, reflective, and slightly humorous, and their voices are not raised. They use the gender-specific character of some of the chores as a source of humor: she chuckles as she mentions the unlikely prospect of Neil doing ‘the kind of shopping’ she does, and he chuckles as he refers to the equally unlikely prospect of her doing yard work. Whereas previously they cited the chores they did as accusations against the other for not doing them, here the fact that each does different chores is noted with satisfaction (‘I’d like to keep it you doing that stuff and me doing my stuff’). Most dramatically, the exchange ends with Neil informing Clara that he left some of her clothes at the dry cleaners, with no trace of anger or annoyance. The matter-of-fact, business-as-usual key in which he conveys this information signals that the couple is reframing their division of labor as a source of harmony rather than discord.

Clara and Neil exchange several other, similarly rekeyed references to the argument as they watch Jason play and later as they drive home. For example, at one point Clara asks ‘(You gonna help me) with those dishes?’, Neil replies, ‘Nope’, and Clara laughs. Whereas earlier his resistance to agreeing to do a chore that Clara requested was spoken with apparent resentment, here his resistance is marked by humor—indeed, it seems uttered for the purpose of humor, as if he is mocking (in Goffman’s terms, ‘guying’) his own refusal. On the way home from the children’s party, they consider stopping by a Starbucks to get coffee. Neil says, ‘You can run in there’, and Clara responds, ‘You’re always asking me to do things though.’ Then they both laugh. Again, Clara seems to be repeating a complaint Neil had made (in earnest) by making a (nonserious) parallel complaint against him. It’s funny not only because of this repetition, but also because getting coffee at Starbucks while Neil and Jason wait in the car is a noticeably less onerous task than those they had been arguing about earlier.

Not all the references to the argument are thus rekeyed as humorous, however, as they drive home. Neil continues to talk about the points of contention: why Clara asks him to take her dry cleaning when he takes his own, and why she does not want to consider solving the problem of her stressful job by quitting. During these exchanges, the key is still contentious, but the emotional intensity is far less than it was before, as the pitch, amplitude, and intonational contours that characterize their speech are closer to what is observed in unmarked everyday conversation.

The argument is recycled one last time later that day. In a major reframing and rekeying, the disagreement becomes the basis for re-establishing family harmony. At the end of the day, the couple align with each other as they discuss Jason’s reaction to their argument and their reaction to him:

(3) 1.

Clara: Jason was pretty upset at our argument earlier.

Neil: Yeah I think so. Although [I think]

Clara: [when I] looked at him he was
stunned.

Neil: yeah

Clara: and he looked like he was going to cry when he said when he
came up with our solution

Neil: yeah

Clara: ah that was

Neil: that was neat.

Clara: (humorous)

Neil: Gee maybe he'll be a therapist someday.

Clara: It's funny cause I-, I know that high conflict is like really bad for
kids [but]

Neil: [yeah]

Clara: this was in a way- but this was a- in his mind this might have
been conflict to (??), he'd never you know saw this before,

Neil: yeah

Clara: but at the same time he needs to see that that's how people work
things out,

Neil: yeah

Clara: cause if he doesn't see it then it's like he grows up clueless and he
doesn't know how to do it in his own relationship?

Neil: yeah

Clara: So as long as we're able to do it in a productive way I guess

Neil: yeah

Clara: I feel like it's okay.

Neil: yeah

Although Clara does most of the talking in this interchange, the harmonious key is evident in Neil's repeated expressions of agreement ('yeah') and in their matching expressions of concern for Jason's distress (Clara: 'Jason was pretty upset'; Neil: 'Yeah I think so') and approval of his mediation (Clara: 'he came up with our solution'; Neil: 'that was neat,' 'Gee maybe he'll be a therapist someday'). Both parents assure themselves and each other that it did not harm Jason to witness his parents' argument. By using technical terms from psychology ('high conflict'), Clara distances herself and Neil from the argument, as if they were observing it from the outside. She also reframes it as a positive element of a good relationship ('productive', 'okay', 'how people work things out') and an admirable modeling for Jason of skills he will need when he becomes an adult ('he

needs to see that' because 'if he doesn't see it then it's like he grows up clueless and he doesn't know how to do it in his own relationship?').

To recap, then: The conversation about the box was initially framed around the question, Will Neil promise to take Clara's box to the post office if the letter carrier does not pick it up? It was then reframed around the topic of chores, specifically asking who does what chores, and who does more. Along with this reframing came a rekeying, as Clara and Neil both spoke with evident annoyance, indicating that an argument was brewing. The interchange was again reframed, this time focused on the questions: What does it mean for their relationship that Neil does not say he will definitely take the box to the post office if necessary? Will Clara be able to depend on him if her work situation becomes difficult? This leads to yet another reframing, as the topic shifts to the pros and cons of Clara's job. At this point, the pitch, amplitude, rhythm, and other aspects of voice quality make clear that the interchange has been rekeyed to reflect a high level of exasperation, that is, an argument. As the argument continues, it is reframed around the question: What constitutes support of a spouse? Yet another reframing is triggered by their son Jason's proposal that each parent do what the other asks. His proposal also triggers a rekeying, as Neil and Clara laugh together about 'that alcoholic car-driving man'. As the locus changes to the children's party, the key also changes again, this time to casual banter. A final reframing occurs as the couple assure each other, in effect, 'It's OK if Jason hears us argue; we're good parents'. Finally, their talk is reframed as a philosophical discussion of parenting and rekeyed as harmonious.

Thus, thanks to the research design by which Neil and Clara taped their conversations over the course of a week (it is not by chance, I suspect, that this argument was captured on tape on Sunday—that is, after they had been taping themselves for a week and therefore had become accustomed to managing the recorders and having them on), it has been possible to trace a single topic as it was recycled, reframed, and rekeyed throughout the course of a day.

Although my analysis has focused on how this argument was reframed and rekeyed on this day, it is of interest to know how it was ultimately resolved. In reply to a query I put to her in an e-mail message three years later, Clara explained that she had indeed drawn up a list of the chores she regularly did, and Neil, on seeing how long the list was, did not bring up the issue of chores again. She also printed out a spreadsheet of their income and expenses, which made clear that Clara's higher income enabled their lifestyle. This closed the issue of whether she should consider quitting her job. In answer to my query about what happened to the box, Clara said that, to the best of her recollection, the letter carrier picked it up after all.

7. Conclusion

I have traced three conflicts—one in each of three families—across public and private contexts, in order to examine intertextuality in interaction. I have suggested that the ways of languaging that I call recycling (the resurfacing of a topic), reframing (a change in what the discourse is about), and rekeying (a change in the tone or tenor of an interaction) help describe and explicate how intertextuality works in interaction. I illustrated this claim by demonstrating how conflicts are recycled, reframed, and rekeyed in family discourse. In each of three cases, a conflict that originated in private between a couple was reframed and rekeyed as the conflict evolved within an interaction, and as it resurfaced in later interactions. In one case (the popcorn fight), reframing and rekeying took place on a later day between the couple themselves. In the other two cases, reframing and rekeying took place first between the couple and then with the participation of a third party (in one case the third party was a friend; in the other it was the couple's child).

Reframing and rekeying played roles both in escalating the conflicts and in resolving them and restoring family harmony. Two elements were present in all three examples: first, resolving the conflicts and restoring harmony was done in part by reframing in a humorous key, and, second, it was done in ways that reinforced the speakers' shared family identities.

This tracing of intertextuality in action contributes to our understanding of family discourse. All three conflicts were about division of household labor: who does what in the domestic sphere? The last example, moreover, sheds light on why the topic of division of labor carries such weight, and on how small issues can spark arguments about larger ones. What began as a mundane request about taking a box to the post office turned into an argument about ever more weighty aspects of the couple's (indeed, any couple's) relationship: resentment that a partner seems not to be doing an equal share, then concern that refusal to do a small task might presage insufficient dependability in the face of a big life challenge, then discord sparked by contrasting conceptions of what constitutes 'support', and finally the reestablishment of harmony as the couple aligns as a successful parenting team. In this progression, analysis of reframing and rekeying adds to our understanding of how family members experience and integrate conflict in their daily lives.

My analysis also supports Becker's view of languaging as context shaping. The discourse evolved as topics took on new meanings, and as the speakers' alignments toward each other and toward the emerging meanings also evolved. Their languaging shaped context in several senses. One sense in which languaging shaped the context of talk is that 'the

same' topic took on new meanings as the conversation progressed. A second sense was seen as 'the same' topics resurfaced in later conversations, at later times, with new participants, and in different physical settings, each time providing resources for reframing the interactions. Thus, understanding intertextuality in interaction yields insight into how language works to create, convey, and interpret meaning and to express and negotiate interpersonal relationships.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

((words))	Double parentheses with italics enclose transcriber's comments
(words)	Single parentheses enclose uncertain transcription
-	A hyphen indicates a truncated word
?	A question mark indicates relatively strong rising intonation
.	A period indicates falling, final intonation
,	A comma indicates continuing intonation
..	Unspaced dots indicate silence
...	Spaced dots indicate ellipsis: words left out
:	A colon indicates an elongated vowel
CAPS	Capitals indicate emphatic stress
<laughs>	Angle brackets enclose descriptions of vocal noises, e.g., <i>laughs</i> , <i>coughs</i>
<manner>words>	Angle brackets enclose descriptions of the manner in which an utterance is spoken, e.g., <i>high-pitched</i> , <i>laughing</i> , <i>incredulous</i> ; the manner continues until the second right angle bracket
words [words]	Square brackets enclose simultaneous talk
[words]	

Notes

- * Shari Kendall was my co-PI on this project. She also served as project manager. I am grateful to her for both these roles; without her participation, I would never have undertaken the project. The examples I analyze were identified and transcribed by the research assistants who worked on the project: Alexandra Johnston for the first example, Cynthia Gordon for the second, and Aliza Sacknovitz and Shanna Gonzales for the third. Cynthia Gordon, furthermore, called my attention to the recycling of themes in all the examples; helped identify the sections of transcript in which they occurred; and offered helpful comments on an earlier draft. I am also grateful to A. L. Becker for commenting

on an earlier draft, and for reminding me that language shapes context, rather than the other way around. Finally, I can never adequately express my appreciation to the brave and generous families who allowed us into their lives and allowed me to use their words in this analysis, which they have seen and approved before publication. For a fuller description of the project, see the introduction to this issue of *Text & Talk* as well as the introduction to Tannen et al. (forthcoming).

1. Becker (personal communication in 1995) traces to Bateson (1979) his understanding of language as context shaping. Similarly, in an interview in which he discusses the origins of his concept of contextualization, John Gumperz notes, 'Gregory Bateson had long talked about communication being both context-creating and context-dependent' (Eerdmans et al. 2003: 9).
2. This is the reason that I do not survey the literature on conflict talk. For an excellent such survey, see Kakava (2001).
3. I analyze the 'popcorn fight' in more detail elsewhere (Tannen 2001).
4. By 'telescoped', I mean that I have extracted lines from the transcript that are key to my analysis, while summarizing the content of the many lines that space limitations preclude presenting. I have done the same with the third conflict that I analyze as well. The 'popcorn fight' spans four pages of transcript; the box-to-the-post-office argument spans 48 pages. Although many lines of transcript are thus omitted, those that I include are always presented in the order in which they occurred.
5. Because my analysis focuses on the content of turns, I will break with my standard practice and present lines of dialogue in paragraph form rather than the tone units we normally use in transcription.
6. An example I give there (1990: 49) is an almost exact analogue: a woman has had a lump removed from her breast and is upset because the surgery has altered the contour of her breast. She expresses her distress to a friend who says, 'I know, it's like your body has been violated.' She also tells her sister, who says, 'I know, when I had my operation I felt the same way.' But when she tells her husband, he says, 'You can have plastic surgery to fix it.' This upsets her even more, as her husband seems to be saying that the disfigurement is so terrible that he wants her to have more surgery. He protests that he isn't concerned at all; he is suggesting plastic surgery as a way to comfort her because *she* was concerned. In this example, as in the case of Clara and Neil, the man is proposing action as a way to address the woman's concern, but the woman hears his suggestion as both a failure to offer the kind of 'support' she seeks and also as an independent indication of his own priorities.

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