

12 When Someone Walks Apart

Instructed Action and Its Fragilities

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Introduction

I'm up against by getting it done before the company comes, what does completeness, followability, sequence, correct sequence, local historicity (and the rest) come to look like.

(Garfinkel 2002: 202)

Now it's a curious feature of the adequacy of local collections of people – and that means whoever just happens to be together on some occasion – that even when one is doing things like talking about something else, an initial issue is: What is it that's being done about the current collection of people?

(Sacks 1992, Winter 1971: 296)

At the family home, Harold Garfinkel is on the living room floor assembling a chair. He has pulled out the instruction sheet, then tipped out the contents of the box, and, from the side, the voice of his wife warns him that he should complete the chair before their guests arrive. This scene, wryly established by Garfinkel, not so far from a husband's misadventure plot in a sitcom, is instructive in its own way – that you should not try to assemble flatpack furniture when you are expecting guests. For me, it captures a particular scene of inquiry into instructions. The ethnomethodologist is inquiring alone, re-specifying a theoretical problem that besets the social sciences, from a practical problem, such as assembling furniture, doing origami, or wayfinding with a map. It's a scene of apartness; Garfinkel's wife is not there to inspect the diagrams and parts. Even though the guests establish the no time-out character of instruction-following by their impending arrival, they are absent. My ambition in this chapter is to bring us to a different scene of instructed action and actions with instructions, where each and several are acting for, with, and apart from others. A scene where instructed actions do not stand apart from those actions as instructive for the understanding and standing of each to the other.

It is common in ethnomethodological studies of instructed actions to examine the local crew, staff, or gang, their worksite, and their technical expertise in giving and following instructions. An utterly familiar publicly organized, private

institution is the couple, and Garfinkel was following furniture instructions as part of a couple. Be it officially married, or married in marriages of duration, cohabitation, children, parents, and so on, the couple is an arrangement of intimacies. Couples accomplish, and fail to accomplish, everyday activities which produce, constitute, and transform them as couples. The everyday thing I will inquire into in this chapter is having a day out together. One of the other things that couples expectably do is spend time with other couples, and days out are one of the occasions for couples to be company for, and with, one another. Couples are intimates within each couple and, between each couple, there are friendships in the particular ways that couples are friends with other couples. Their friendships are complicated on occasion by the reluctances and enthusiasms of one and/or both parts of the couple to be with that other couple and vice versa. They are complicated by the uneven intimacies between the couples, where one or two from each couple are close friends, and one or two are not. As I begin to sketch out these aspects of couples and their relationships, even though it is only four persons, two couples, the unit (the couple), and its relationships, when they are brought together in events, it makes for a potentially unstable imbroglio of desires.

Each couple is a unit yet also has two pair parts (to recycle a term from the organization of talk), and each part is drawn upon in making sense of who does what to whom as a couple, or as part of a couple, or inside a couple, and what that does to the others as a couple or a part of a couple. Sacks (1992, Winter 1971: 291–317) analyzes couples' talk among other group situations, such as friends, generations of families, therapy groups, and more. One of his interests is in the two-way street between the group in the organization of the turn and the turn in the organization of the group. Sacks has a further interest in the fragilities of talk in situations where there are multiple recipients and multiple relationships:

... an interesting aspect of how that fragility doesn't get burst is that they're able to find people who will have a same circumstance to present and who, in accepting the one, set up a way of getting a second also passed. So that it seems that "we both suffer the same troubles," "we both understand our circumstances."

(Sacks 1992, Winter 171: 312–313)

Building on that fragility, Sacks examines what happens, in particular, when one part of a couple is apart from the group and they are talked about by others, as either the other part of their couple or their friend. Stanley Cavell, in his reflections on the comedies of remarriage, understands the value of friends and intimates through the slightly arcane term "helpmeet": "someone to whom one can say, or from whom one can derive, words that express oneself, words in which to become intelligible" (Cavell 2005a: 50). What we learned from Garfinkel's breaching of intimacies was that friends and intimates treat the breacher as up to something and up to something that likely threatens their mutual standing. As Cavell continues "you had better have some standing with me from which you confront my life, from which my life matters to you, and matters to me that it matters to you" (2005a: 50).

Before we inquire into the difference that couples make for instructed actions, I will briefly re-establish how instructed action re-specifies the concept of instructions and their relationship to action. They are part of the push from ethnomethodology to get away from trying to understand “the phenomenal field details of phenomena of order” (Garfinkel 2002: 185) through *descriptions*, toward trying to understand phenomena through treating them as *instructions*. In taking instructions a step further, Garfinkel pursued orders found in trying to instruct others and in trying to follow instructions. He came upon other criteria than those for description, criteria that are distinct because their cogency, reasonableness, logic, and so on are praxeological. To ground the difference between instructions versus instructed actions, one of Garfinkel’s cases (which fits well for us here) is the difference between reading a map from the comfort of the sofa and reading a map in the midst of walking through the boggy swamp that the map is a map of. The map has a “different and lively sense” (Garfinkel 2002: 200) when we are following it as instructions to find our way through the boggy swamp compared to the familiar, docile sense it has when we read a map on the sofa. The power of this shift is to open up our studies to the massively available, usually overlooked, and distinctly messy, if not perplexing, worlds of following maps as the local work of orienteers running (Pehkonen, Smith & Smith 2022), ship’s crew avoiding reefs (Hutchins 1995), armies on the move, tourists finding somewhere for lunch (Brown & Laurier 2005), etc. Instructed action is a domain of order that is missed and missing from social scientific, scientific, cognitive, and many other studies of the formal properties of instructions (Sormani 2010). There is a tension between instructed action locating a subset of practices that do involve more or less explicit instructions and ethnomethodology’s alternate approach to revealing the quiddities of action. One of the problems with instructed actions is, then, that the imprint of instruction-following and instruction-giving falls across how we understand what people are doing. Even as it opens up orders missed by the social sciences’ conventional descriptions of actions, it locks us into the pairing of instructions and actions in the way that situated-action also does (not that Garfinkel created that term as a compound noun).

Although Garfinkel’s studies of instructed actions might lead us to think that they are restricted to domains of action that involve giving or following instructions, both Macbeth (2014) and Bjelić (2019) develop a wider sense of instructed action, freeing it both from Garfinkel’s focus on textual instructions and from settings where forms of instruction are given or followed. By the germane example of one acquaintance greeting another, “we hear how a first greeting instructs, and does so in its production, without time out, to be heard as, for example, ‘I haven’t forgotten my grievance’, or ‘Where have you been?’, etc.” (Macbeth 2014: 304). Although he mentions greetings, Macbeth is primarily reflecting on workplaces and expertise where “the exchange is leveraged not from what recipients don’t know, but from what they do. Instructed action is premised upon, relies upon, our competence to produce, find, and make use of it. Both parties are engaged in its achievement” (ibid.). Even as he is responding to studies of workplaces and expertise, Macbeth is gently lifting inquiries into instructed action one remove away from Garfinkel’s emphasis on learning. Macbeth has brought us into the domain

of grievances and greetings indexing the standing of one person with the other. Instructed actions become instructive as to what more a greeting might be doing to the other, between just these parties, in terms of their recent and recollectable history of intimacies and estrangements, quarrels and reconciliations, recognitions and evasions (McHugh et al. 1974).

Macbeth's first greeting is exemplary as an instructed action that "presume[s] the competence of the other to find in their production a cogent, apt greeting in return" (2014: 304). In doing so an exchange is accomplished, and we do think of greetings as being things that we exchange, and their hearability as warnings, reminders, civility, interest in buying, etc. is found in the other as enemy, friend, stranger, neighbor, street-seller, etc. There are, of course, as Macbeth is hinting, many other things that friends do, other than exchange greetings; things that rely upon their competence to produce, find, and make use of them. Sacks's studies of couples, friends, and other groups of persons follow this same strand on what each one is hearable as doing to each other when they are, and are not, direct recipients of the action. Sacks's concerns with couples delve into the quiddities of compliments and insults, ranging beyond the sequential organization of talk (Carlin 2020; Smith et al. 2020). He shows that when parties in a group produce compliments and also insults, there is another kind of fragility to their actions because the first party, in complimenting or insulting a second party, can so easily do something to a third party. The giving, receiving, and being party to compliments and insults, rather than instructions, are favorite objects for Sacks to examine in the quiddities of their use, because of the obvious manner in which they leave in question, for those present, what each party does to the standing of not just the direct recipient, but also to those other recipients as members of couples, families, therapy groups, and more (see also Bergmann 1993, on gossip).

Turning to couples, on a day out, following a digital map and audio guide. It would seem that, in consulting a digital map and audio guide, there is, as the instructed action underlines, something to learn. Yet, whether there is a thing to learn on a day out with friends and (their) partners is easily a bone of contention. And the contention around learning from a guide or an app remains connected to the standing among those involved. The contention, or absence of it, is also part of coming to know couples, friends, and others, more or less intimately, where that knowing is not collapsible into epistemic matters. Members' rights to know and evaluate the actions of other persons is bound up with whether they are related as acquaintances, intimates, distant aunts, or close friends and, then, further to how that relationship compares to further persons that they are speaking with (Raymond and Heritage 2006). In short, members are analyzing who they are talking to, about whom, and their relation to the person they are talking about compared to the others.

Couples not walking together

One of the things the "day out" as an event for a family allows is for the family to show, check on, question, and transform how things are with one another (Laurier et al. 2021; Tolmie and Crabtree 2013). In the event that I will examine, a pair of

older couples are on a day out, walking in the hills, initially on a vehicle track, then on moorland. They are following the directions provided by a map and guide app, using them to find and learn about the barely discernible remains of a Roman fort. At different points during the walk, the two couples walk apart, then close together again. One half of one couple (Sean) walks off and continues to walk alone ahead of the group, and he does it several times, each time as its own singular accomplishment. In its recurrence, each has its own instructed action for the other(s) departed from and walked apart from. By their recurrence, they become a thing that is seeable in a different way from Sean's departure happening just once, not least in finding it as someone doing this again for a next time, just as the repeated absence of a greeting becomes a thing distinct from it happening once.

Doing walking apart is not the same as doing a walk-out from the set of a TV show (Llewellyn & Butler 2011), nor a unilateral departure from a car in the midst of an argument (Dersley & Wootton 2002). Each of those actions shows the potential drama of departing from a conversation on foot. Nor does Sean's walking apart have the unremarkable character that departing does in group transitions from places and topics described by Broth and Mondada (2013). As we shall see, Sean does, nevertheless, accomplish his departures in the orderly and accountable fashion, that Broth and Mondada describe, as the topic closes each time and, by stepping onward, he attempts to close an activity. From my own studies of walking in the countryside with friends and family, and from the video collection assembled as part of studying following a map app, walking far ahead or apart in the countryside is not an unusual arrangement of the walking group (see Laurier et al. 2021). It's one of the freedoms and pleasures of walking with others in the open countryside rather than on pavements in the city. As a routine thing, walking groups bunch-up, disperse, or walk in single file; these mobile formations are themselves reflexively tied to, and made sense in terms of, relations to the openings and closings of conversational topics and shared terrains such as fields, moors, forests, riversides, cliff paths, etc. (Keisanen, Rauniomaa & Siitonen 2017).

The walk provides an occasion, and it is known in common as a convivial one (like dinner parties, dances etc.), where couples can meet other couples and where the couples can, through its practices, split and rejoin to talk with one another. Splitting and rejoining is part of the walk's value as a resource for the conviviality of couples on a day out: who talks to whom can be easily switched, and to be convivial, it ought to be switched. Otherwise, should the couples keep to themselves, as two walking pairs, it diminishes the very conviviality of the occasion (see Raffel 2007 on the dinner party). As I've noted, there is more to this walk because the day out is around following the map and audio guide to find and visit an obscure Roman fort. There are two digital tablets, with GPS, that have the visitor app on them. Each couple has one tablet. Consulting the app is another practice that, in itself, is accomplished together, as a convivial thing, or to provide reasons, such as reconnaissance, for walking apart, which, themselves, emerge from and show the expectation of walking together as a group.

In the varied arrangements of a walk, as a day out for friends, one member of the group may turn out to be the guide; one who is, thereby, in particular ways,

responsible for organizing the interest and enjoyment of the walk for the others. For this walk, the app is the guide, and there is no host. No members of the research team are present, and one member of each couple is wearing a bodycam. Relatedly, the route does not belong to one or another of the walkers as it would if one couple were showing the other around their moorland. Yet, as we shall see, finding a route and taking a route does allow for acquiring and/or sharing ownership of that route, or the assessment (e.g., via a compliment) of it (Laurier & Lorimer 2012). The day out, as an organizational device, brings them together, as a party, under the auspices of spending time with one another, doing being friends, and yet frees them from the division of responsibilities that go with, for example, being hosts and guests at dinner parties.

Walking apart 1

When we join the walk in its course, the two couples are on the vehicle track and are apart. One couple, Peter and Jenny, are ahead, and Sean and Tina are behind. Both couples have stopped to listen to the guide app. Tina holds one tablet and Jenny has the other. I am interested in this first event on the walk not just because Sean will walk away from Tina but also because what happens here will be explained later in the walk.

At a transition-relevant point, Sean starts walking. The guide app has provided an audible instruction, delivered as a suggestion, “walk a little further along the track until we get to stop five” (on transition relevance, see Broth & Mondada 2013). Sean glances back at Tina and that glance is available to, but not produced to be exchangeable with, Tina (Figure 12.1, panel 2). It is a glance that would find her to be moving off not far behind him. Yet Sean does not slow his pace to help Tina catch up. As his walking continues, the gap widens. Sean is adequately following

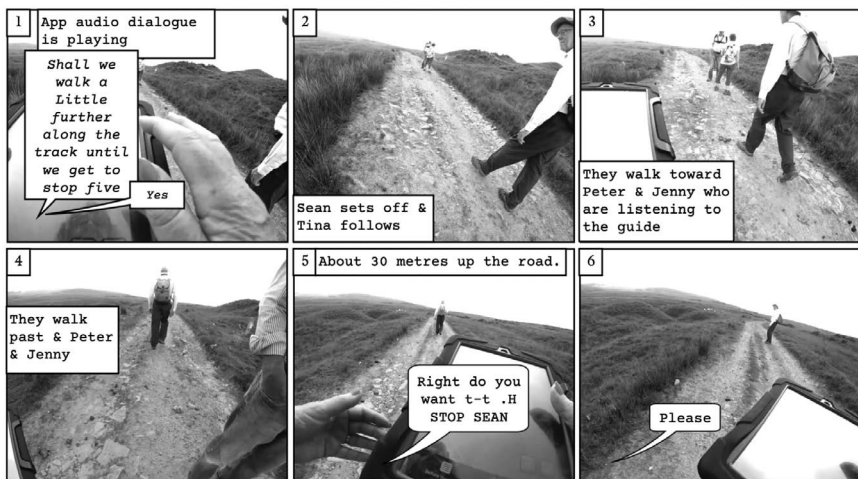


Figure 12.1 Part 1 – Sean walking apart from or ahead of Tina.

the guide's instructions, yet his following, in its details, can then also be found to be doing something to Tina. There is a witnessable thing, which is witnessable in its orderliness, yet it provides for witnessing as more than merely orderly.

Of course, Tina is not the only party to witness Sean walking ahead of them. He walks past Peter and Jenny and without pausing or saying a word. Tina says a few words when she passes Peter and Jenny. Sean's walking ahead in silence is brought to a close when Jenny begins to talk to him. The talk could also serve to mark a transition to another activity which he will need to stop for (De Stefani & Mondada 2014). For whatever reason – and he may not even hear Tina's pursuit of a transition – Sean continues to walk until Tina shifts to an explicit directive. Then he stops (Figure 12.1, panel 5). What might or might not be there to be heard in that “please” that succeeds the explicit directive and softens it, is a sense of how Tina and Sean are with one another. In the recording, I hear a hint, perhaps not of despair, but possibly disheartenment. Yet I am not intimate with this couple, so I am uncertain what Sean's hearing is of Tina's directive. Without further account from an intimate or becoming their friends, what their intimacy as a couple precludes is what I am entitled to say that an intimate could hear in Tina's directive. An event like this is not only for Sean and Tina to find out, and check on, how they are as a couple, they are splitting apart and rejoining in the presence of others (Mandelbaum 2003). Moreover, those others as friends have the occasion to consider what was done to them by Sean walking past and then ahead of them. In the next part of the walk, Tina will return to what happened here to deal with Sean having potentially done something to the friends left apart for a next time, and this will be particularly fragile because it is seeable and hearable by them, as about Sean's relationship to Tina, and to them.

Walking off

After walking along two different tracks up a small hill, the group has gathered together to consult the guide app, this time by trying to establish where they are on, and via, the map interface. Sean will depart again and we will examine how he accomplishes departing and walking ahead of the group. It is neither unintelligible nor unaccountable, yet just what he is doing and what it might show about his desire to be with the group poses that problem for the group.

Sean, on the basis of a consultation of the map with the other members, takes on the task of looking at the landscape to search for paths marked on the map (Laurier & Brown 2008). On, “so we want to walk” (Figure 12.2, panel 1), he pursues it as a transition away from consulting the map to commencing walking, even though Tina, Jenny, and Peter are not finished with the map. Taking a few steps in the direction of their destination, Sean provides a suggestion, “we'll go down the hill then” (Figure 12.2, panel 3) which could serve to commence the walking. At this point, the others do not follow in his footsteps.

Having failed to move the others from their discussion around the map, Sean continues inspecting the landscape. As a moorland without obvious landmarks, it requires scrutiny to discern potential features relevant to wayfinding. He times

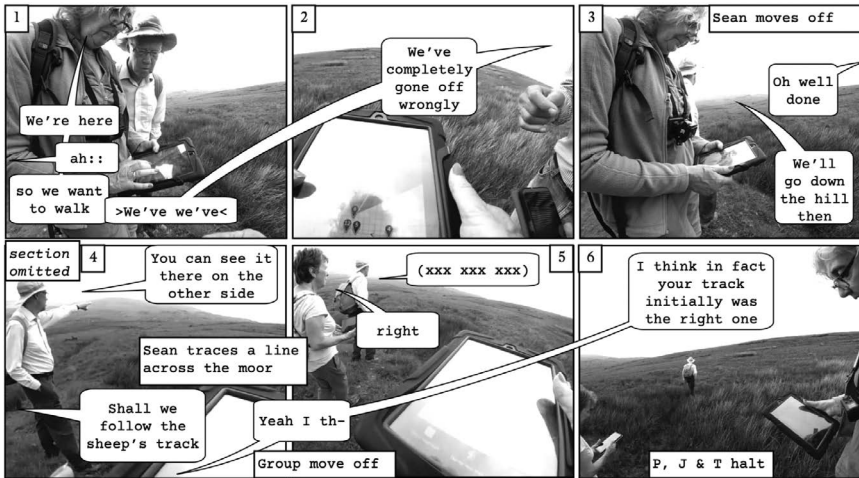


Figure 12.2 Part 2 – Sean departing and walking ahead.

his next pursuit of departure to Jenny's transition relevant, "Shall we follow the sheep's track" (Figure 12.2, panels 4 and 5), so that he is involved in not only setting off with them but also leading them. In their details, his actions are instructed by the map, they are instructed actions for the others to take, while the movements onward also show his desire to progress. The other three, by their very gathering as a three, produce a unit that is no longer divide-able in, and by, couples. Sean is departing from the three rather than Tina as his other part of their couple. By using his location within the group as nearest their next destination, he generates the "reasonableness" of his departure as leading off the group rather than leaving them behind. In that spatial categorizing of the walking group as a group, rather than as two couples, it is Jenny who next adjusts her location, in its details, not only to be beside Sean but also to form a second in a file following him (Smith 2021).

While Sean briefly succeeds in initiating the resumption of the walk as a collective, the other walkers are not finished with their earlier topic after all. Peter extends the topic of diagnosing their map-following troubles, and they come to a halt (Broth & Mondada 2019). Sean's walking onward becomes a clear departure from the group. It need not have been; absent is a glance back to check on whether he is being followed, or a pause to let them catch up. Sean's departure without a glance is (or could become) an instructed action, on the condition that the others find, in the absence of a specific directive or other account, just what kind of departure it is. Sean's recommencement of walking is adequate for practical purposes, and is found to be adequate by the group, for a few steps onward. One of the adequacies of walking as friends, as couples that are friends, turns upon the checking and mutual monitoring. Sean's walking away is an emerging problem for the rest of the party when they see him continue to walk ahead. In its details, in the absence of him checking on whether he has left them behind, his walking further and further apart could then be understood by them as doing something to them. The sense

of the action as instructive action, as in the midst of following these instructions, opens up considering what they can competently make of it. It could be judging them to be too slow in progressing the walk, or to be inadequate navigators, and it could be showing a wish not to be with them. It is, at least, ambiguous. It could even be accidental and excusable, yet we have already seen a pattern in Sean regularly walking ahead and apart, and so it is susceptible to what Edwards (1995) calls a “script formulation.” At this stage, no one has provided a script formulation. One part of that absence of dealing with his apartness being that the group has differentiated entitlements to the judgment as to what is being done to them by Sean walking apart.

Avoiding injury – Who can make Sean’s walking apart intelligible

We have in the short series of events which I have presented so far, Sean walking ahead twice. In the second occurrence, the rest of the group members, one couple and one of half of Sean’s couple, remain gathered over the map to make sense of *why* they had previously taken two different routes. Although they could have followed Sean in a collective recommencement, they remain to examine the apartness of the previous part of their walk. Apartness and divided navigation are being treated by them as significant enough to require a halt and an account. There is, in this accounting of apartness, an occasion for sensitivity to the walk as sociable and requiring being together. They build the account in the instructed action of following the app and the GPS of different devices. The digital map was illegible in its cluttered audio guide markers and GPS was out of sync. In [Figure 12.3](#), panel 2, Jenny, for one couple, explains having a separate route: “that’s why we came up where we did.” Tina, for the other couple, identifies the problems of “lots of dots all in one space” which leads to difficulties and problems with which Peter affiliates in

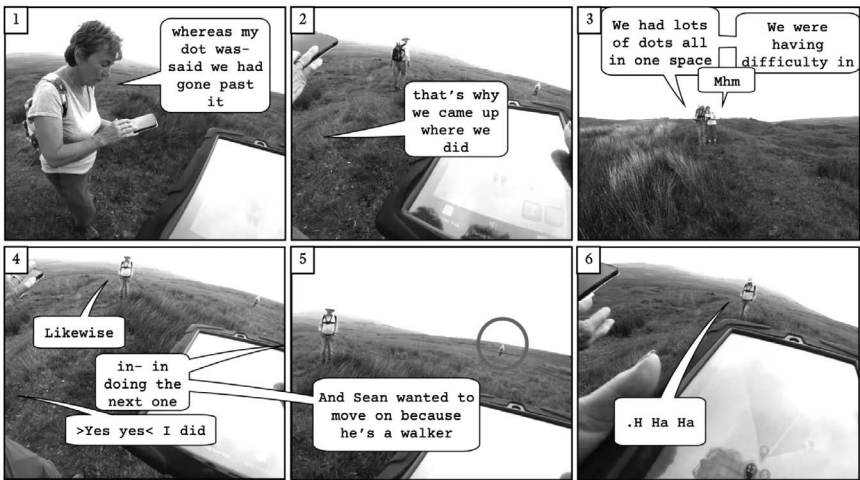


Figure 12.3 Part 3a: How Sean’s “move on” should be understood (Tina’s camera angle).

adding “likewise” (Figure 12.3, panel 4). Meantime, Peter is the last to stop walking after Sean. In his walking, Peter had reformatted their spatial arrangement to potentially produce Sean and Peter as the front pair. Now though, he turns around to create a loose and stationary grouping. The three have stopped together, yet in an arrangement that retains an orientation to the departing Sean.

The scene in Figure 12.3 is Garfinkel’s scene of the lived work of following instructions on and via a map in the midst of the walk. There is in it their finding of the shared problem “in doing the next one” which gets a “yes yes” from Jenny (Figure 12.3, panel 4). In finding the commonality, they are resolving their divergence of routes, not in disagreement with one another, or with anything else, but holding the map app and GPS themselves as accountable for their taking different routes. Meantime their settling of the previous apartness in their agreements is making Sean’s apartness on this occasion all the more apparent.

As Sacks noted, “how it is that for the different collections of people walking into a room, the inspectable features of that room are a function of who happens to be with you” (1992, Winter 1971: 298). Accordingly, the accountable features of Sean’s having walked ahead *again* are inspectable features of the landscapes for Tina, as a function Jenny and Robert being with her, and for Jenny and Robert for being with Tina. When Tina, as one half of her couple, produces her story of the clustered dots, it also finds in its production a sense of the standing of these couples with one another. As Jenny (Figure 12.3, panels 1 and 2) provided her explanation of taking their own route, so it is that Tina now provides an explanation for the route that she and Sean walked. Each in their explanation wards off the inference that they were up to something else. The inference, which is there to be found in the relation of either couple toward the other, is that in walking apart from them, there was a lack of desire to walk in a sociable way with the other couple.

It is Tina who provides the script formulation of their apartness (Figure 12.3, panel 5): “and Sean wanted to move on because he’s a walker.” The script formulation of his apartness is hearable as emerging from the navigational troubles that they had just been discussing. It is also hearable, in light of Sean’s once again having walked ahead, as a spatial display of their splintered walking group in Sean’s singularized distance. Tina could build up their apartness as Sean’s fault, using his absence to make a complaint about him “always walking off,” “being too impatient,” etc. We, and they, were witnesses to her having to be explicit previously as a confrontation with his inattentiveness to her voice and their shared task. Sean’s walking apart, again, becomes something which could be taken as, not so much instructive for their wayfinding, as destructive of their day out. When Tina formulates Sean’s apartness, then and now, as “he’s a walker,” she makes of it, something improper, though in a particular way. “He’s a walker” draws on her entitlement, as his intimate, because it accounts for his apartness by the alternate version of their activity together, the walking and navigating version rather than the socializing version of their trip. Alongside her entitlement to be the one that accounts for Sean, Tina is dealing with what Jennifer and Peter could make of Sean’s apartness. Available to Jenny and Peter, in understanding Sean’s walking as instructed action, is their couple status. As Sacks (1992: 277) noted, “applying, say, relationships that

one has to the recipient, to find what's been done to you." Sean walked apart from his intimate earlier and she treated that in terms of his desire to walk and they have the same formulation available now.

In response to "and Sean wanted to move on because he's a walker," Peter laughs as a competent hearing that finds a quick affiliation. The laugh nevertheless finds the double meaning in Tina's "because he's a walker" because the walk on the day out is more than a walk (Cuff 1994). Available to the three who are still together and accounting for their apartness is that Sean as a walker is oblivious to the occasion – that they are on a day out. Peter's laugh shows the appreciation of how using the script formulation deals with what Sean has just done to them again, now, and his obliviousness.

Let us return though, in Peter's laugh as hearing and seeing, not just to what more there was of Tina's instructed action but also as part of the other couple analyzing the scene from Jenny's perspective (see part 3a [Figure 12.3]). In her instructed action's embodied details, Tina steps slightly to the side and raises her gaze direction, as if just adjusting her glasses. One aspect of Peter's accomplishment in finding Tina's wit in her comment about Sean's current absence is that it brings off their togetherness. Because he has one of the cameras on his chest, I can reproduce the earlier graphic transcript from his chest-cam which provides us with a proxy of his perspective. He (and we) can see how Tina looks up as she goes on to talking about Sean; her look then topicalizing Sean's current remote position from the group; a look that Peter can see that Jenny is likely to have missed, with Jenny's continued attention to the map (Figure 12.4, panels 1 to 3). Peter has available, as half of his couple hearing Tina, that his other half will not notice it and so he ought to provide the laughter. (For you, the reader, my circling of Sean in Figure 2.3, panel 5, instructs a seeing of a certain comic identification of the remote figure almost disappeared in the camcorder's visual field, the camcorder's lens perspective adding to that distant effect.)

We are, then, starting to instruct ourselves in how to understand a day out and walking together and apart, as sense-making devices for its members as couples, and, through them, each couple's attentiveness to their standing and how that maintains and transforms their relationships. In examining groups of couples and friends together, Sacks directs us to the alertness and careful monitoring of who is present when something is said and what can be done in an absence of one half of



Figure 12.4 Part 3b – Peter's camera angle on Tina and Jenny.

a couple (1992, Spring 1970: 278). Sean's absence, because it is accountable here, leaves him vulnerable and yet we see how delicately Tina deals with his absence and that her care deals with the fragility around complaining or complimenting him to the other couple and what they can make of her relationship with him. "Because he's a walker" is hearable as categorizing him intentionally in neither compliment nor complaint. Instead, it is building the explanation as an acceptance of him for what he is and as an instruction for making sense of his walking apart then, now, and in the next parts of the day out.

Complimenting a part of one couple by members of the other couple

A few hundred meters later, Tina has fallen into last place and Sean waits for her to stand beside him. All the walkers gather together for another next time. Peter and Jenny closely examine the digital guide. With no delay, Sean moves off on a different route to walk apart, now, for a third time. Tina walks to join Peter and Jenny. After a brief discussion, they commence walking as a threesome, Tina lagging slightly behind Peter and Jenny. This is perceptibly, instructably, another occasion to understand Sean's walking apart (he's circled in [Figure 12.5](#), panel 2).

On this next occasion to account for Sean, it is Jenny providing an announcement, from checking the map app, that Sean is on the right route ([Figure 12.5](#), panels 1 and 2). The word "actually," at the end of Jenny's informing, marks the reversal of their perception: from, presumably, seeing his walking as merely his own desire to move on ("because he's a walker") to finding it as following the route correctly. It is navigation-relevant news which Peter marks with his "oh" (panel 3). When Peter joins Jenny in examining the map, they collaboratively report on their error: they had "drifted off" and they're "believing it" ("it" is the GPS dot showing

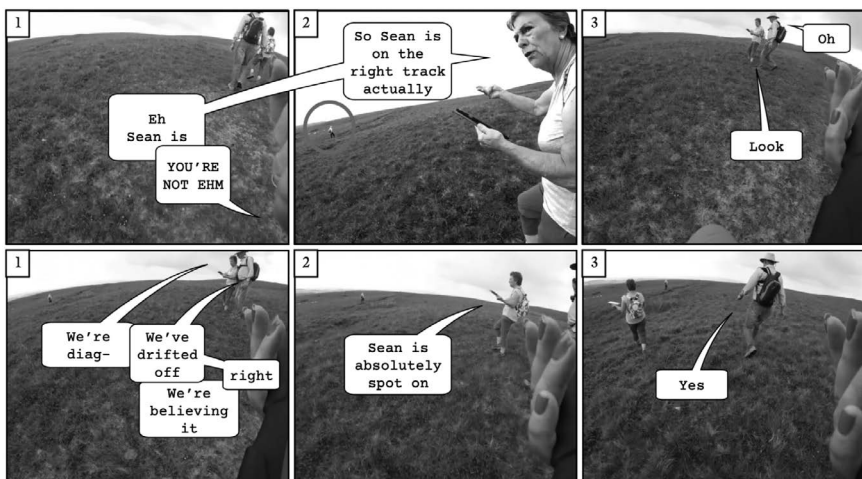


Figure 12.5 Part 4 – What complimenting Sean does (Tina's camera angle, apart from panel 2 which is Peter's).

an erroneous location). Built on their investigation of the map, she then compliments Sean for his “spot on” navigation, and Peter agrees.

While the way the other couple bring together Sean’s position on the landscape with the digital map is itself interesting, my focus remains on how that knowledge is to be sensitively handled in terms of the couples’ standing toward one another, which is constituted in and through the walking. The compliment is shaped to whom is present to hear and what they can hear it as: Peter as a partner of Jenny and Tina as a partner of the absent Sean. It was only a few hundred meters earlier that Tina, as the intimate, and the one who had already been walked apart from, provided an explanation of what was being done to them by his walking, that was hearable, and was heard as, more than categorizing him as “a walker.” In the presence of Tina as one who is analyzably more intimate, Jenny begins instead with her entitlement as a map reader to inform them that Sean is witnessably on the right track.

Jenny’s “he’s absolutely spot on” is in a distinct register from Tina’s formulation of Sean’s tendencies; it is elaborated and celebratory. It attends to his instructed actions as following the map app’s instructions and not doing being anti-social. Compared to his earlier response to “because he’s a walker,” Peter’s “yes” is without the laughter that marks Jenny as ironic, or that there is a double-edge to this compliment to be found. In complimenting him and confirming, Jenny and Peter show how they stand as a couple in relation to Sean’s walking apart. They are saying it with Tina there to hear the compliment, because, of course, Sean is visibly present but, in his apartness, out of hearing range. Tina can find not just what the compliment does, in terms of how the other couple feel about what Sean has been doing to them, but also what their compliment does for her. As Sacks writes: “there is some kind of formality to the way in which relationships are used to find ‘what’s been done to me’ for secondary non-recipient parties” (1992, Spring 1970: 278), where what has been done to Tina as Sean’s partner is made sense of, retrospectively, in relation to their “discovery” of what he has been doing all along. In the face of its recurrence, Tina need not feel embarrassed by Sean’s walking apart: what is hearable for Tina is that their compliments now relieve any worry that may have been heard in Tina’s earlier explanation.

Each time after Sean’s walking apart raises itself as a problem of its instructiveness for the partner and friends, the group carefully finds a way to return to their walk together. His recurrent departures do not become a crisis like the divorces and remarriages examined by Cavell (2005a) yet it remains a confrontation that raises a confusion for his wife and for the other couple of what, on this day out, his walking apart reveals about their desire or aversion to walk together as friends. The other parties could understand his walking apart as variously excusable, understandable, and grieve-able. Finding his walking apart to be any of those, the parties could be forgiven, or apologized to, by Sean if they have misunderstood what he is up to. Over the sequential course of the three occasions, each, as a member of a couple, deal with that confrontation. By its close, walking apart is something to be celebrated by finding it as an instructed action that is succeeding in following the instructions, where they are failing to do so. Dealing with him as an actor, acting within the limits of instructed action is, in that sense, a resolution to the problem of

couples and friends in their confrontations, excusings, and forgivings that maintain or erode their friendships each and every time they are together (and apart).

Confronting instruction-action

Several times over, for the other walkers, Sean challenges their walking together with his departures from their work of consulting the map and app; he walks apart on in his own route. His walking apart has threatened the walking together as an occasion for talking together as the constitutional sociability of couples on a day out. It is not that he isn't following the instructions provided by the map and the audio guide; his partner and friends use that following of the instructions to find a good reason for his departures and his distinct route. The app's instructions and GPS are usefully inadequate for the others, via their maintaining their relationships to him, for avoiding pursuing what else he might be found to be doing. We have examined Tina's account as, itself, instructing the other couple on how to see Sean's walking ahead and that Tina, as Sean's intimate, has the right to provide the script that excuses his departures: "Because he is a walker." Her account provides recipients with neither known nor unknown "information"; it is not an epistemic matter, though, at times, recognizing where he is walking is. It is that Tina, in making what is available to be heard as more than an explanation, which Peter hears that way, discloses something which recognizes and perhaps builds the intimacy between her and the other couple. In these asides are the makings of intimacies. Hearable in the other couple's celebration of Sean's wayfinding is the sustaining of their good standing toward him, which is a sustaining of their standing with her.

For the couple, for each half for the other, they are there to figure out the minor injuries that could be seen to be done by the instructed actions of their intimate, injuries to themselves and to others. As helpmeets, they are there to confront one another around the person whose actions might present trouble, awkwardness, or tactlessness; to make their actions more than intelligible (Cavell 2005a). It is not just the other intimate in the couple, as a helpmeet, that finds, in his apartness, Sean to be Sean, the other couple does too. Sean's very absence from the conversations is the arrangement that allows them to avoid the confrontations of providing acceptable justifications for his walking apart and walking on his own route, rather than on a collectively agreed route (Sacks 1992). Yet we can also consider what more Sean does in his walking ahead, not so much in instructing as in confronting them for not having followed his instructed action, and instead staying with their map discussion and continuing to follow the map. They could then find themselves to be dawdling, sticking to their incorrect route and failing to find the way ahead in the map. By reflecting on what went wrong previously, Jenny's "discovery" before complimenting Sean recasts his wandering off as just that kind of confrontation with their wayfinding.

Instructed actions, while providing an alternate to conventional descriptions of action in their radical sufficiency, in their unique adequacy, in that very moment of being detailed and being all that is needed to be intelligible, draw us into a restricted realm of action. We stay in the room upstairs with Garfinkel, with the door

closed on the couples' occasion, even while feeling the pressure to follow those instructions before the guests arrive. Instructed actions risk circumscribing actions with organizational things, with projects, with what we can learn, and with contingencies of worksites. Macbeth drew upon Garfinkel to show us that the response "I do" to a wedding vow is hearable as more than Austin's performance of the action of marrying. In drawing upon both Sacks's (1992) and Cavell's (2005b) consideration of the fragility of actions done between and within couples and friendships, we find the insufficiencies of instructed action.

It is perfectly in keeping with EMCA conceptions of action that the recognition of what is being done about their companions by each instructed action is adequately unintelligible to its producers. This is not to argue that the person is a dupe or a cultural dope – a shadow puppet for a sociologist's theory or a contextual, ideological, or cognitive explanation. Instead, an instructed action involving intimates and their intimacy, their friends and their friendships, and other relationships, takes their lived and living personal relationships as essential to making their actions intelligible and as more than matters of epistemics and more than their intelligibility; as actions through which intimates have access to what Raffel (2013) calls their "innermost" and what we might call soul or character. This sense of intimacies and friendships acknowledges that each person involved will need help from friends in finding what they are in what they are doing, not just to those others present (Sacks 1992) but also to themselves, because, by what they do to those who know them (again, not in an epistemic register), they reveal desires and confusions over desires and aversions in as much as they reveal reasons (Cavell 2005b). It was not as though Garfinkel ever guaranteed how instructed actions would be taken, could be taken, or ought to be taken, but that he was simply less concerned with worlds built upon understandings. Worlds where others would be figuring actions out as instructive in terms of what was done to them as sometimes justifying that standing, sometimes relying on that standing, sometimes sustaining it, and sometimes eroding it.

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