FAMILY AS CONTEXT

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Within the last decade, discourse analysts have delved into the private sphere to examine the institution of the family. Analysts have noted how the family is a fertile research site and how investigation of family interaction gives, among other things, crucial insight into the intricate relational struggles between parents and their children (e.g., Dedaic, 2001; Sarangi, 2006; Tannen, Kendall, & Gordon, 2007). Considered a micro institution, the family provides the dayto-day context in which relations of power and connection are enacted, and human bonds are either severed or forged. In this respect, it is a key social institution, one "that mediates the individual and the social, with identifiable structures, functions, and hierarchies" (Sarangi, 2006, p. 403). Within this context, individuals also share a history, having been engaged with one another for a relatively long period of time. As a result of this long and extended contact, interaction among family members runs a gamut of emotions and behaviors. There are moments of tension and tenderness, assertions of autonomy and acts of resistance, and attempts by children to individuate from parents while still retaining some interpersonal attachment to the family as a whole. A discursive analysis of family interaction can provide insight into how family members negotiate these behaviors and attempt to maintain some familial harmony. Despite a concerted effort to "keep the peace," any seemingly innocuous remark, request, or rumination by one family member (typically a parent) may evoke a past event or action that another family member (often a child) wishes to keep in the hinterland of his/her mind. The (re)linking of this prior interaction to the present context—known as intertextuality (c.f. Gordon, 2009)—also offers an opportunity to relive any feelings or tensions that may have accompanied it the first time. Hence, a family's prior interaction clearly (re)shapes and (re)contextualizes their present interaction.

To illustrate both the tensions involved in family interaction and the functions of intertextuality in building the tensions, we will examine a data excerpt from a holiday family dinnertable conversation among two adult children (Rebekah and Keith) and their parents (Mom and Dad). In this brief excerpt, the adult children's discursive construction of their individual identities is at odds with the parents' construction of the children's identities—consequently giving way to familial tension. Just prior to this excerpt, Keith describes some of the choices his friends have made in life, mentioning that many of his friends differ from him in their outlook on travel and material objects. Keith, with some collaboration from Rebekah, discusses the fact that Keith's friends have put large amounts of money into TVs, cars, and houses, whereas Keith has done more traveling.

A Good Investment

1	Rebekah:	Everyone's made choices of where they're putting their money.=
2	Keith:	=Yeah. So ANYway that was the basic point [I was trying to make
3	Rebekah:	[Keith and I put it into
4		travel more than objects.[But I'd like]
5	Mom:	[Everyone would] like it ALL=

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6	Rebekah:	=WELL=
7	Mom:	=but=
8	Dad:	=We-WE have made choices of where we're putting our money. ((pats
9		Rebekah's arm))
10	Rebekah:	Why do you keep doing that?
11	Dad:	Because I want to be sure you hear.
12	Keith:	I heard just fine.
13	Rebekah:	I'm just wondering what the what the background is on that. Is that an
14		attention bid?
15	Mom:	He wanted to point out where our money has been invested.
16	Dad:	And it's been a w- good investment. ((shakes Rebekah's hand))
17	Rebekah:	That wasn't a real handshake.
18	Keith:	You might have perhaps been better off getting a plasma TV.

At the beginning of the excerpt, Rebekah and Keith construct their *adult* identities by continuing discussion of the choices they have made thus far in their adult lives (lines 1-4). Mom moves to build upon this idea, stating: "Everyone would like it ALL" (line 5). However, this comment, done interruptively, brings the focus back to "everyone" and undercuts the distinction Rebekah and Keith have been making between themselves and their friends. We see evidence of tension building in the next few lines. Rebekah responds to Mom's comment with a disaffiliative marker, "WELL," (line 6), to which Mom counters via the contrastive conjunction "but," (line 7). These single words are laden with meaning, demonstrating the tension between two contrasting stances in identity ascription. This tension continues to build as Dad and Mom proceed to allude to their own investment choice (i.e., in their children), a stark contrast to Keith and Rebekah's priority (i.e., travel; lines 8 and 15). This is in part done by Dad patting Rebekah's arm (lines 8-9) and Mom's clarification (line 15). Tension may also be observed as Dad calls his investment a "good" one (line 16), thereby giving the two children an implicit compliment. Although compliments are meant to attend to the listener's positive face wants, they also set up the speaker as the judge. When parents compliment their children, they are also making an assessment, and thus treating them as children, which is often a point of contention for adult children. This can be seen in Keith's response in line 18, where he makes light of Dad's "good investment" by saying "you might have perhaps been better off getting a plasma TV," (line 18).

A particularly interesting demonstration of how intertextuality plays a role in this tension building is captured in Dad's handshake with Rebekah (line 16), reincarnating a family inside joke which involves Dad "shaking hands" with Rebekah or Keith in front of their friends at college in order to pass money to them discreetly. By invoking this routine past interaction in the family history, Dad effectively foregrounds Rebekah and Keith's child identities, as tied to Dad's financial support.

In sum, the amount of tension displayed in one small extract speaks to the richness of the family context, where intertextuality can play an important role. In the family context, we observe how individual members create or diffuse conflict, enhance or preclude connection, and build or resist identity ascriptions.

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