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Storytelling as a Theory-Building Activity

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The present study examines the activity of storytelling at dinnertime in English-speaking, Caucasian-American families. Our findings demonstrate that, through the process of story co-narration, family members draw upon and stimulate critical social, cognitive, and linguistic skills that underlie scientific and other scholarly discourse as they jointly construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct theories of everyday events. Each story is potentially a theory of a set of events in that it contains an explanation, which may then be overtly challenged and reworked by co-narrators. Our data suggest that complex theory-building through storytelling is promoted by (and constitutive of) interlocutors' familiarity with one another and/or the narrative events. As such, long before children enter a classroom, everyday storytelling among familiars constitutes a commonplace medium for socializing perspective-taking, critical thinking, and other intellectual skills that have been viewed as outcomes of formal schooling.

"Experience, though it seems quite like scientific knowledge and art, is really what produces them."

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (1960, p. 3)

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Note to reader: Within this article there are superscripts, numbers which pertain to endnotes which occur at the end of the text.

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1. STORYTELLING AND THEORY CONSTRUCTION

This article proposes that everyday collaborative storytelling is an experience in dialectic theory-building wherein interlocutors jointly construct, critique, and reconstruct theories of mundane events. In so doing, interlocutors draw upon and socially engender cognitive and linguistic skills which underlie the intellectual discourse of science and other educational domains that our society validates and that our schools are tasked to instruct. We propose that complex theory-building through storytelling is promoted by interlocutors' familiarity with one another and/or the narrative events. Thus, family storytelling is a particularly rich locus for cultivation of skills critical to engagement in the world of theory, including:

- facility in recognizing and expressing different points of view adopted by story protagonists and fellow narrators (i.e., perspective-taking);
- ability to see one's own and others' stories as possible 'versions' or 'theories' rather than necessarily factual accounts of what has happened (i.e., metacognition);
- competence to weigh different perspectives on a set of events, evaluating and challenging the appropriateness and validity of particular narrative theories (i.e., analytic/critical thinking);
- ability to rework/reframe the perspectives of both protagonists within the story narrative and co-narrators who are analyzing the same story from their own vantage points (i.e., theory-reconstruction).

In all these ways and more, collaborative storytelling (i.e., co-narration) both fosters and depends on the refinement of sociocognitive and sociolinguistic skills. As such, the inevitably dialogic storytelling in such untutored settings as the routine family dinner may be an underrated resource for children's intellectual development.

This article describes an illuminating way in which collaborative family storytelling at dinnertime stimulates, and thus socializes, these functions of language. We analyze how perspective-taking, critical thinking, and theory-(re)construction come into play as narrative 'facts' and ideas are presented, pulled apart, and reinterpreted. This process is facilitated, we posit, by the very nature of the family dinner—its familiarity, its 'captive audience' over time, and its generally shared expectation that daily experiences and perspectives will be aired and selectively entered into the evolving 'family album' of collective memories.

Our work supports the notion that storytelling is not normatively monologic but rather an interactionally achieved discourse and sense-making activity. Goodwin (1984), Jefferson (1978), Mandelbaum (1987), Sacks (1972, 1974), Schegloff (1972), among others, have demonstrated that, while there may be a principal narrator, or Initial Teller, who introduces a story into ongoing talk, others co-present contribute critically to the direction that the story takes and, in this sense, function as 'co-authors' (cf. Duranti, 1986)—with, presumably, the

incumbent 'rights' and responsibilities of co-ownership. (See also Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1989.) To this end, all co-present parties play an important role in the process of storytelling even when not verbally eliciting or supplying information, simply from their nonverbal indexes of attention and stance.

The emphasis placed on collaborative narrative activity in this article is compatible with sociocognitive paradigms, where cognition has been shown to be socially constructed (cf. Cicourel, 1973, in press; Cole & Cole, 1989; Griffin & Cole, 1984; Hutchins, 1988; Leontyev, 1981; Luria, 1976, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985). In a given task, cognitive work is seen to be shared among participants, and cognitive skills develop through joint activity, especially through discourse activity. In the sociohistorical approach to the development of thought, pioneered by Vygotsky (1978, 1986), Luria (1976) and Leontyev (1981), language is seen as a semiotic tool, mediating among participants in a social interaction and impacting their ways of thinking about the world. It is not just a medium for communicating 'facts' and ideas but, perhaps even more importantly, a medium for collaboratively constructing and evaluating ideas and recasting 'facts' as interpretations.

What we add here to this perspective on the dynamics of storytelling is a perception of storytellers as collaborative **theory-builders** and, in that sense, not unlike scientists. In everyday casual storytelling, theories are typically about personal events; in scientific circles, the theories are typically about impersonal discipline-relevant events. Collaboration, however, characterizes theory-building in both contexts.

In the past two decades, numerous sociologists, historians, and philosophers of science (including both so-called natural and human sciences) have argued the nature of theory construction. Some have challenged the realist position (cf. Popper, 1959) that individual scientists **discover** facts inherent in the universe. (For a discussion of this dialectic in science, see Angeles, 1981; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Laudan, 1984; Walker, 1963.) These scholars take the point of view that scientists **construct** 'facts' rather than discover them and that they do so through **co-construction** (i.e., construction involving more than one participant). Debunking the image of the lone researcher tucked away in a personal laboratory, these scholars have suggested that important explanations—in the form of theories—emerge out of everyday conversational interaction about collective observations among members of a research group and thus depend on a social interactional process (cf. Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Kuhn, 1962, 1970; Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Lynch, 1985; Traweek, 1980). From this point of view, talk in social interaction is thus critical, in science as elsewhere, not only to the engendering of theories (theory construction) but also to the establishment of those theories as valid generalizations (theory critique).¹

This perspective recognizes that scientific and other scholarly thinking thrives in an atmosphere of open-mindedness where every 'fact' is vulnerable to challenge. Scientific laboratories and schools are predicated on the assumption that

human awareness gains from cultivating the ability to step out of our world of 'fact' and sometimes rigid convictions in order to consider alternative explanations and multiple perspectives on our reality. (For a lucid discussion of these assumptions in the classroom, see Heath, 1983.) We suggest that this process is not the exclusive property of science and other intellectual pursuits trained in the classroom but that it is both available and potentially plays an equally powerful role in family interaction, cultivated through such media as everyday dinnertime co-narration.

The implications of our observations are potentially far-reaching, especially as regards the respective roles of and ideal conditions for effective schooling vis-à-vis family apprenticeship in the kinds of cognitive skills we are addressing. Vygotsky (1986) postulated that scientific thought is an outcome of social interaction between teacher and child in formal school settings. What we are suggesting here, however, is that collaborative storytelling is a vehicle by which families—in varying degrees and styles—socialize their children into certain linguistic, social, and cognitive structures and practices that constitute 'scientific' discourse and thought, potentially long before they enter kindergarten. Our data show that at dinnertime—and clearly in other family activities as well (e.g., see Preece, 1985, regarding the discourse of carpool time)—children are audience to and often direct contributors to jointly produced narratives in which co-narrators construct and evaluate explanations of events and thus engage in basic processes of scientific thought.

2. DATA COLLECTION

The data analyzed for this article consist of transcriptions of verbal and nonverbal activity at dinnertime in two videotaped evenings each from 12 English-speaking American families—4 High, 4 Middle, and 4 Low SES (see Table 1).² The corpus includes 54 stories from the 24 dinners. These data are drawn from a larger study (principal investigators: E. Ochs, T. Weisner) of the discourse of 20 families, each with a 5-year-old child (our 'target child') who has at least one older sibling.³

Each family was videotaped twice in a two-week period from about 5 p.m. until the 5-year-old was in bed. During the actual dinner-eating period of these videotaped evenings, fieldworkers left the camera on a tripod and absented themselves, thus minimizing intrusiveness. In addition, during two intervening evenings, audio recordings were made by the family without researchers present.

3. STORYTELLING AS A TYPE OF NARRATIVE ACTIVITY

In this section, we consider properties of storytelling vis-à-vis other types of narrative activity, characterizing stories in terms of three dimensions—a temporal dimension, a configurational dimension, and a problem-solving dimension.

TABLE 1
Family Dinnertime Data Base: 12 Caucasian-American Families

Family by SES	Adults Present	Children in Family—With Age and Gender of Each						
		TC-2	TC-1	Target Child	TC + 1	TC + 2	TC + 3	TC + 4
Cook	M,F			4;11-m	7;10-m			
Popper	M,F			5;0-f	7;5-m			
Saxe	M,F			5;5-f	9;0-m			
Schultz	M,F			6;1-m	9;7-f			
High SES Mean Age				5;4	8;5			
Crosby	M,F		1;5-f	4;11-f	6;6-f			
Greer	M			6;1-f	7;6-f	10;8-m	(14;7-m)*	
Hope	M,F	1;5-m	3;7-m	5;11-f	8;7-m			
Locke	M,F	0;9-m	3;8-m	5;8-f	7;6-f	9;8-f		
Mid SES Mean Age				5;8	7;6			
Ball	M****			4;11-f	6;4-m			
Jessup	M		4;4-m	5;7-f	7;10-f	10;8-m		
Jones	M,O**, (F)***			5;5-f	6;10-m	11;8-m	17;7-f	18;9-f
North	M,O**, (F)***			6;3-f	11;5-m			
Low SES Mean Age				5;6	8;1			
Overall Mean Age				5;6	8;1			

KEY: M = mother, F = father, O = other adult, TC = target child
 TC-1, TC-2 = younger siblings of TC in descending order
 TC + 1, TC + 2, TC + 3, TC + 4 = older siblings of TC in ascending order
 f = female child, m = male child

Note. All family surnames and family member names used in this article are pseudonyms. Regarding SES, see endnote 3.

*The oldest child in the Greer family was absent, living with his father; of these 12 families, only the Greers and Jessups are single-mother families.

**In the case of the North family, 'other' is the maternal grandmother they live with; in the Jones family, 'other' includes two uncles (one lives with them).

***In both the North and Jones families, the father arrived for dinner after the other family members had already eaten and he ate in the living room with others present.

****The father in the Ball family was not present for dinner because he works until late in the evening during half the year, including our visits.

3.1 Temporal Dimension

In identifying narratives in our transcripts, we relied in part on a linguistic definition of narrative proposed by Labov (1972): at least two clauses conjoined by a temporal disjuncture. Most definitions of narrative (cf. Bruner, 1986; de Beaugrande, 1982; Heath, 1983; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Miller & Sperry, 1988; Polanyi, 1979; Ricouer, 1981; Stein & Glenn, 1979) involve some notion of temporal sequentiality, typically one in which an initial state is disrupted by an event which produces a subsequent state.

There are, of course, three temporal dimensions available: narratives of past,

present, and future time. Stories of personal experience—the focus of the present study—represent but one type of narrative activity, that is, one type of narrative centered around past-time events. (Stories may also refer to present and future time implications and consequences of the narrated past events.)

3.2 Configurational Dimension

Almost every researcher who analyzes narrative agrees that narrative is characterized by more than temporal organization, for every narrative indexes narrators' perspectives on the temporally sequenced events. As Goffman (1974, p. 504) notes:

A tale or anecdote, that is, a replaying, is not merely any reporting of a past event. In the fullest sense, it is such a statement couched from the personal perspective of an actual or potential participant who is located so that some temporal, dramatic development of the reported event proceeds from that starting point.

This perspective is what Ricouer (1981) calls the 'configurational structure' of narrative, which invades every aspect of the narrative, including which events are selected for the telling, how they are temporally ordered, the grammatical and lexical expression of the events, intonation, and voice quality.

It is this dimension which particularly interests us in this article: first, because the activity of constructing narrative perspectives (i.e., configurations) is related to (and gives rise to) the activity of constructing theories; and, second, because the activity of interpreting and assessing narrative perspectives is related to the scientific or other scholarly activity of interpreting and assessing theories.

3.3 Problem-Solving Dimension

A third feature of narrative is the presence or absence of a central narrative problem. In our analytic framework, narrative **types** emerge from the convergence of the temporal dimension with a plus or minus problem-solving orientation. Thus, **stories** are similar to **reports** in that both are centered around past-time events and both allow for the possibility that narrators may posit causal explanations or causal links between events. However, stories are unlike reports in that stories **focus** on—and may even be motivated by—a central problematic event or circumstance. Writers call this central event the 'inciting event' of the story (Sharff, 1982); we will adopt the psychologists' term 'initiating event' (cf. Stein & Glenn, 1979). This Initiating Event or circumstance (the IE) is seen as causing internal psychological responses and/or certain overt action responses, that is, attempts to deal with the IE.

3.4 A Working Definition of Story

Given the above demarcation of stories as past-time, problem-solving narratives, we formulate the following working definition:

Story: Narrative activity which articulates a central problematic event or circumstance arising in the immediate or distant past and the subsequent past, present, and future actions/states relevant to interpreting and responding to the problem. Storytelling may entail the eliciting and/or supplying of the following **Story Contributions:** Abstracts, Settings, Initiating Events (IE), Internal Responses to IE, Attempts to deal with IE, Consequences, and Reactions.

Example (1) illustrates a story narrative. This story, launched by 7-year-old Initial Teller Oren and collaboratively reconstructed by his mother and father, with the potentially critical though silent contribution of his 5-year-old sister as audience, revolves around a central IE in which Oren ate a chili pepper which his mother had thought to be a green bean or green pepper:

(1) **"Chili Peppers" Story** (excerpt)

Mother (Patricia)

Father (Dan)

Oren (older sibling: boy, 7;5)

Jodie (target child: girl, 5;0)

Patricia has just been detailing what she put in the guacamole they are eating. When she mentions hot salsa and chili peppers, Oren immediately gasps, pretends to die in his chair, and then 'revives' with his recall of this story:

- Oren: Wasn't it funny? (when wh-) Wasn't it funny when you - thought that thing was a pickle? and I ate it?
- Mother: no that wasn't funny. - I thought it was uh um:: ((looks at Dan)) - a green bean.
- Father: ((nods yes))
- [
- Oren: and - it was really a chili? - it was really a chili? - when I was about ((turning to Mom)) how old?
- Mother: ((looking to Dan)) How old was he Dan? when that happened?
- [
- Father: two
- Mother: Was he even two?
- (1.0) ((no noticeable affirmation from Dan))
- Oren: yeah I was two?: - and then - and then you know what happened? - ((to Jodie)) I ate that chili pepper? .h ((imitating action of eating it)) and Mom thought it was a bean? - and I ate it? and I burned to death ((turns to Mom)) - what hap?ened. - what=
- Mother: = You burnt your mouth
- (1.2) ((Oren and Mom looking at each other))
- Oren: (was) it all over?
- Mother: ((nodding yes)) (it was/I thought)
- [
- Oren: Did I hafta go to the hospital?

- Mother: ((shakes head no once?, low voice)) (nah)
 Oren: what - (did they) hafta do?
 Mother: We gave you ice
 Oren: where
 Mother: in your mouth
 Oren: oh: my god - How long did I - keep it in
 Mother: (a few minutes)
 [
 Father: (did/do) you kids like the mango? ((raising his mango rind))
 Oren: Did I love it in?
 Mother: You were crying
 (0.8)
 Oren: I didn't like it (in there?)
 Mother: ((shakes head no)) - You were hurting. - Your mouth hurt - It was burned=
 Father: ((leaning to Jodie)) =Oren - I mean Jodie - (did) you (kids like the mango)?
 [
 Oren: ((to Mom)) (I know)
 [
 Mother: (it was like - I-) - we
 were (in a restaurant?)
 [
 Jodie: ((shakes her head no to Dad))
 Father: Can I have this? ((to Jodie, pointing to piece of roll on Jodie's plate))
 [
 Oren: YOUR FAULT - YOUR FAULT= ((pointing at Mom and reaching over til he's touching her cheek))
 Jodie: ((shakes head no to Dad))
 Mother: ((nodding yes)) =It was my fault
 Jodie: hhh ((soft laugh—at Oren's moves toward Mom?))
 Mother: I thought it was ((Oren now pinching both of Mom's cheeks)) a um - green pep?per - .HHHHH - ((pulling Oren's hands away)) OW that really hurts honey?
 Oren: your fault - (I get to do whatever I want to do once)

As to this story's illustration of the dynamics of co-narration, note that, while Oren's mother makes the most verbal contributions as co-narrator here, not only does she bring in the father's verbal contribution but also Oren's gaze to his sister suggests how, even though silent, Jodie too can function as 'active' co-narrator, her very presence having potentially served as an important factor in Oren's initiating the story. The organization of this story and its illustration of the various Story Contribution types is further explicated in section 4.1 below.

4. STORIES AS THEORIES

All stories in our corpus manifest one of the two major properties of all theories: they present explanations. The other major property of theories is that the expla-

nations they offer are challengeable. Whether or not the potential for challenge is taken up and the story takes on the dimensions of theory rather than 'factual' explanation is a function of an Initial Teller's or Other Co-narrator's willingness to invest the group with her/his investigative, iconoclastic, or other theory-(de)constructing orientation.

4.1 The Explanatory Component

Stories meet the explanatory criteria of theories in that storytellers posit at least one problematic event (the IE) which frames or recasts other narrated events as fitting into an explanatory sequence (e.g., cause and effect). It is as if a co-narrator enlists the support of the IE to create an explanatory construct. In **all** stories, the IE is treated as provoking (explaining) internal psychological/emotional states and/or external physical actions or conditions (cf. Trabasso, Secco, & Van Den Broek, 1984). In **some** stories, the Initial Teller or Other Co-narrator may introduce or analyze pieces of Setting as explaining the IE (see Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1989). Sometimes, psychological responses to IEs may be attributed as explaining external actions or conditions which in turn explain other actions or conditions. Attempts/Consequences can be cast as having become problematic in themselves, that is, new IEs, triggering further Attempts and Consequences, and so forth. Conversely, an event cast by one co-narrator as an IE may be recast by the same or another co-narrator as having been an Attempt to deal with, or a Consequence of, an earlier event thus brought forward as the 'real' IE (which, again, may potentially be recast as an Attempt/Consequence of an earlier IE . . . etc.).

As a simple example of explanatory sequencing, in "Chili Peppers," Example (1), Oren's eating a chili pepper (the IE) that his mother had mistaken for a green bean or green pepper (Setting) is posited, through co-narration, as triggering a series of events (Attempts and Consequences) including Oren's burning his mouth, receiving ice, and crying as well as a range of affective/psychological states (Internal Responses to IE and Reactions to Attempts and Consequences) reconstructed in such lines as "Did I love it?" (Internal Response), "Wasn't it funny?" and "[It's] YOUR FAULT [Mom]" (Reactions) and in a present-time vindictiveness (wherein Oren pinches his mother, in order to 'get back'). Cause-effect explanation is central to this storytelling and perhaps even to its motivation: Oren's ultimate sanctioning of his mother ("I get to do whatever I want to do once") has been carefully predicated, it seems, on the narrative activity's jointly produced reconstruction of cause.

4.2 The Challengeability Component

A second characteristic of all theories and potentially of stories as well is that their explanatory accounts are treated not as fact but as challengeable. In our corpus, one or another family member—either Initial Teller or Other Co-narrator—may treat the narrative exposition as but one possible **version** of experi-

ence and may call it into question and/or suggest an alternate explanation. In the terms of conversation analysis, the challenge functions somewhat like a repair initiation in that it signals a trouble source (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). In "Chili Peppers," for example, the Reaction which opens the narrative (Oren: "Wasn't it funny?") proffers an interpretation of events which is immediately challenged by an Other Co-narrator's contrasting point of view (Oren's mother: "No that wasn't funny . . ."). The challenge addresses at least one trouble source—his mother's difficulty with Oren's affective frame for the narrative events.

Such challenges to narrative explanations vary in terms of both 1) the target of the challenge, and 2) the nature of the challenge.

4.2.1 The Target of the Challenge

Challenges may be addressed by co-narrators toward some nonpresent third party (such as a protagonist in a story) or toward a present co-narrator. In the case of family dinnertime storytelling, this usually means challenging either a third party who is **not** a family member or a present co-narrator who is.

4.2.1.1 Challenges to Third-Party Perspectives

In keeping with the preference for agreement in conversation (Pomerantz, 1975; Sacks, 1987), most of the challenges in our corpus are to a nonpresent third party's approach to past events. Indeed, most of our family dinner stories evolve from an Initial Teller's complaint about a nonfamily story protagonist. In these cases, Initial Tellers appear to elicit familial support for their explanation of events over that of a third party. Co-narrators tend then to join together to challenge the third party's perspective on the narrative situation. Co-narrators' versions are thus congruent with one another in such cases but incongruent with that of a (nonpresent) third party. This pattern is exemplified in the beginning of Example (2), "The Detention," where Lucy opens the story with a complaint/challenge ("I don't think Mrs. um Andrews is being fair because . . .") and her mother and younger brother readily align themselves with her and against Mrs. Andrews:

(2) "The Detention" Story

Mother

Father

Lucy (older sibling: girl, 9;7)

Chuck (target child: boy, 6;1)

In answer to a question from Chuck, the family has been discussing degrees of familiarity a person can have with colleagues at work or school. Chuck has just mentioned Mrs. Andrews, the school principal, as an example of someone he knows very well, triggering approval from Mother and this story initiated by Lucy:

- Lucy: Mom?=
 Mother: =(and) she's a good person to know (too)
 [
- Lucy: (Just?) - I don't think Mrs um Andrews is
 being fair because um
 Mother: ((*high-pitched*)) (?do you?)=
 Father: =(about what)
 [
- Lucy: When we were back at school um - this girl? - she pulled um - Vicky's dress
 ((*puts hand to knee*)) up t'here ((*gestures with hand high on chest*)) in front of
 the boys
 Mother: mhm?
 Lucy: She only - all she did was get a day in detention
 Mother: mhm? - you think she should have gotten suspended?
 (0.6)
 Lucy: at LEAST - That's
 (0.4)
 Mother: mhm?
 [
- Lucy: (it's) not allowed in scho?ol.=
 =((*Father clears throat*))
 (1.8)
 Father: ((*to Mother, smirking*)) hm - fortunately capital punishment is still=
 Chuck: =Was it a girl? Lucy? that did it? or a boy.
 [
- Father: (beyond the pur? - view) of elementary school principals
 (1.0)
 Chuck: that did that?
 [
- Mother: (Vicky/Lucy) (was so embarrassed huh Lucy)
 Chuck: hm?
 Mother: (cuz Lucy) was really embarrassed ((*nodding yes, talking while eating*))
 (1.6)
 Mother: (I mean you/Lucy really) would have liked to kill the - the girl - huh?
 Lucy: ((*nods yes slowly, as she chews, fork in mouth*))
 [
- Mother: (cuz) you were upset with her - ((*speaking very fast*)) But you were held back
 because you (thought) your school was goin' to do it and the school didn't do it
 and you feel upset
 (2.6)
 Chuck: I think? she should - be: in there for a h- whole MONTH? or so=
 ?: =(well maybe)
 (0.6)
 Chuck: each day she('d) hafta go there - each day each day each day even if? - (the-)
 [
- Lucy: If you
 go to detention more than three times - then you get suspended
 Father: ((*head leaning forward*)) More than how many times?

- Lucy: three ((raises hand as if to show 3 fingers))
 Father: ((nods yes))
 (0.4)
- Chuck: Lucy? - you only ever went to it once - right?=
 Father: =((clears throat))
 (1.0) ((Lucy arches her back, eyes open wide, looks shocked, starts shaking her head no once; Father looking at her))
- Mother: (You've been in it/You can tell us can't you?)
 [
 Father: (I'm lis?tening)
 Lucy: ((low to Chuck, glaring?)) (thanks)
 (0.4)
 Lucy: ((louder)) yeah (that was)
 [
 Mother: (she was in it) once?
 (0.6)
 Lucy: Once.
 Mother: (It was) in (Mr Dodge)'s year
 (1.4)
 Chuck: only once - that's all
 [
 Mother: (for fighting on the playground)?
 Chuck: ((with conviction, building speed to a crescendo)) (Lucy/only if you) get (it) a second and (a) third and the fourth? that means you're out right?
 Mother: Well? no honey not every year. - You're allowed to start new every year.
 (1.4)
 Father: ((looking at Mom, grinning)) like the statute of limitations hh
 (1.8)
 Mother: ((to Chuck)) Things run out after a while

Here, we see how the drive for co-narrator congruence at the outset leads to an identification by Mother with Lucy's narrative version (especially Lucy's Internal Responses to the IE, e.g., "you were upset with her") and to a richly co-constructed delineation of appropriate values and consequences that should pertain in an outside world, the world of the school (e.g., Mother: "you think she should have gotten suspended?"; Lucy: "at LEAST"). Father takes a detached moderator-like role, but younger brother Chuck gets caught up in the overriding enthusiasm of Mother's and Lucy's perspective to the point of 'going them one better'—or at least trying to. At first, Chuck's contributions to the narrative are requests for clarification but, by mid-narrative, as he works up a sort of vigilante cheerleader fervor, they take the form of proposed 'Attempts' to deal with the narrative problem (revising the actual narrative Consequences) in a way that would better support and satisfy Lucy's third-party challenge (Chuck: "I think? she should - be: in there for a h- whole MONTH? or so . . . each day she'd hafta go there - each day each day each day . . .")

The following Example (3), "Rita's Day Off," further illustrates the tendency

of Other Co-narrators in our family data to respond supportively to an Initial Teller's complaint about a third party's perspective. Here we find Mother (Marie) as Initial Teller and Father (Jon) as Other Co-narrator jointly constructing a perspective incongruous with that of a nonpresent story protagonist, Marie's employee Rita:

(3) "Rita's Day Off" Story (beginning of a 2-round story)

Marie (mother)

Jon (father)

Marie runs a day-care center out of her own home. In the following story, she recounts the reaction she got upon telling her assistant, Rita, that she had arranged for Rita to get a day off from work. Marie and Jon focus on the contrast between their shared perspective (that they have been generous employers) and Rita's alleged view that she works too much and that an extra day off is insufficient. Marie initiates this story 10 minutes into dinner while shifting the food on her plate with her fork and beginning reflectively; the story 'audience' includes Marie and Jon's 3-, 5- and 8-year-old children.

(1.8)

Marie: I asked Billy's Mom? - to barter with me? - for the two days I did (the) day care for her? - to give Rita a day off?

(0.4)

Jon: Oh yeah?

Marie: Yeah - on Monday? - with pay?

(0.4)

Jon: Why ((sniffs))

Marie: Why? Well that's what I thought about after I got the response from Rita. She was like - you know "Forty some hours a week" I don't know - it s:ounded like she had worked it all out in her mind - "Forty five hours a week? is too: mu:ch work" .h I felt like - (tr-/turni-) - I had to kinda hold my temper down because she pushed a button. - Instead of somebody - I mean I did her a favor.

[
((Marie begins gesturing with hands, pointing to Jon as she speaks))

Jon: If Rita's working too much and

[]=

Marie: (I'm) giving her

Jon: =feels she's working too many hours a week? she doesn't belong here

[
((Marie nods and wags finger to concur))

Marie: That's what I- ((nodding yes)) - that's how I felt especially for the amount of money she's making

Jon: She's ma- That was our deal in the beginning n she she's leaving =

Marie: [Yeah

- Jon: = at five instead of five thir?ty - my original agreement (was)=
 [
- Marie: ((pointing to Jon as she talks, elbow on table)) I know
 Jon: = eight to five thirty ((as he resumes eating))
 [
- Marie: My - my point is that - the response that would have made me feel like my effort had been worthwhi?:le would be - uh "Gee: thanks - you know the: - I rilly could use the day off It's nice to have a break" whatever whatever
 Jon: Yeah of course (she should be thankful)=
 ((Jon starts to drink water and finds his glass empty))
- Marie: =But: - she turned it around like "You owe it to me"
 [
- Jon: Right
 Marie: =This is something (.hh) you owe me"
 [
- Jon: Yeah "I'm a-" Yeah "It's about time you gave me something I've been waitin (to see how)" Uh huh?

The story continues with Marie and Jon's co-narrated elaboration of Rita's limited time on the job and of the days-off already allocated her, leading to a broader discussion of her attitude, raising the question of her appropriateness for the position.

Here, even a potentially ambiguous "Why" contributed by Jon in the fourth turn of the narrative is immediately interpreted by Initial Teller Marie as supportive of her perspective and leads to a crescendo of mutually sustained challenges to the audacity of Rita's perspective (as represented by them). Simultaneously, they work in tandem to reinforce a 'family take' on such values as the work ethic, how to show appreciation, the importance of honorability, and the sanctity of a "deal" (Rita being shown to have violated or begrudged a verbal contract).

These last two stories offer classic examples of how an Other Co-narrator can make significant substantive contributions to joint theory-building, not just eliciting but actually supplying characterizations of events to which the Other Co-narrator was not even witness, in the interest of reinforcing a family member's challenge to a third party's position. In "The Detention," the fervor of both Mother's and Chuck's involvement in contributing to the elaboration of narrative responses, attempts, and consequences adds to and reflects the charismatic power of the prevailing theory (before its exposure). In both stories, the adult Other Co-narrators reinforce support of the Initial Teller's position especially powerfully through the supplying of Internal Responses which serve to 'transport' the Other Co-narrator into the time and place—at least the spirit—of the narrated events. In "The Detention," Lucy's Mother devoted her Other Co-

narrator contributions to supplying the psychological responses of her daughter, as protagonist and Initial Teller, even intensifying their expression (Mother: "Lucy was really embarrassed . . . would have liked to kill the girl . . . you were upset with her? But you were held back because you thought . . . and you feel upset"). In "Rita's Day Off," Other Co-narrator Jon 'goes one further', quickly picking up on the tone set by Initial Teller Marie's representation of third-party protagonist Rita and supplying—no less passionately or authoritatively than the Initial Teller does—even the very language of the Internal Response presumed for Rita (Jon: ". . . Yeah 'It's about time you gave me something . . . '"). Internal Response co-constructions thus seem both popular and powerful vehicles for co-narrator collaboration in sustaining a third-party challenge.

4.2.1.2 Challenges to Co-Narrators' Perspectives

In both "Rita's Day Off" and the initial portion of "The Detention," we have seen co-narrators support one another's version of what took place and what should have taken place. In other instances of storytelling, however, co-narrators challenge **one another's** story versions. For example, Other Co-narrators may make a move that explicitly or implicitly calls into question an Initial Teller's story perspective. This is what happens indirectly in "The Detention" when Chuck brings out the heretofore unmentioned information that Lucy herself had once been given one day's detention by Mrs. Andrews. Chuck thereby (inadvertently?) challenges Lucy's version of the story by indicating that Lucy's problem with Mrs. Andrews is not only that she and Mrs. Andrews have different perspectives on the problematic event of someone pulling Vicky's dress up in front of the boys but also (the alternate explanation) that she had suffered no less a punishment from Mrs. Andrews for something she considered much less serious.

A more elaborate, more overtly confrontational example of challenging a co-narrator's perspective is provided in the following story (4), "Photo Negatives." Here we find the same principal co-narrators as in Example (3) above, Jon and Marie, this time deconstructing one another's version of events:

(4) "Photo Negatives" Story

- Marie (mother)
- Jon (father)
- Dick (oldest sibling: boy, 8;7)
- Janie (target child: girl, 5;11)
- Evan (younger sibling: boy, 3;7)

About five minutes after the "Rita's Day Off" Story in (3), Marie again initiates a story by evoking an incident which happened earlier in the day: a friend, Susan, had come by and offered to take their negatives for reprints but, when Marie sent Janie to ask Jon where the negatives were, the response was one of non-

compliance. Jon's perspective/explanation is that a communication breakdown resulted from Janie's reportedly asking him if he could get them rather than where they were located. Marie has just finished eating as has Dick; the others are still eating.

Marie: Jon - Do you have those negatives from the (pony?) pictures?

Jon: Yeah - They're all in your cabinet ((*pointing*))

Marie: ((*clears throat*)) I wish you woulda told (Janie) cuz that's why I sent her down (cuz/and) Susan wanted em - when she came? - (so she could) go (if) she took my roll of film=

((*Dick starts to go to kitchen; Janie looking back and forth between Jon and Marie as they talk*))

Jon: =((*with slight shrug*)) Sorry - I told Janie I didn't have time to come in - Janie didn't ask me that - What Janie asked me was - Can I get the negative for Susan's picture - ((*breathy*)) That meant I had to go through all those negatives and I was- I said "Hey I .h - I don't - tell her I don't have time to do that right now"

((*Dick turns on kitchen sink faucet*))

[

Marie: Are they all together? - Could I have gone through it?

(0.4)

Jon: Sure ((*nodding yes*))

Marie: Did you know Susan was here?

[

Jon: (there are thirteen?)

[

Evan: ((*screaming*)) DADDY MY OUIE IS (HU::RTING)

[

Jon: I didn't know anything

()

[

Marie: Are they separately packaged?

[

Jon: (how) are you trying to find blame?

Evan: MY OUIE IS HU::RTING

[

Jon: Each thing is in a separate package - and=

[

Marie: (exaggerate some kind of)

Jon: =they're all there n you need to look at the negative=

[

]

Evan: (MY) OUIE IS HURTING

Jon: =till you find the per?son's

[

Marie: ((*to Evan*)) Why don't you use something to clean it (up/off)

(0.8)

- Evan: Da:ddy wants me to use - a napkin
- Marie: That's a good thing
- Jon: If you? - wanta look at em now? you can look at em now? n - bring em over to=
[
- Evan: hh hh ((crying))
- Jon: =her (er something/again)=
- Evan: ((crying)) =(I want a na:?pkin)
[
- Marie: Well: that's what I'd hafta do (cuz I) wasn't able to give em to her
this afternoon
[
- Jon: I'm sorry. - kay? It's not my fault.=
- Evan: =I want a na:pkin? ((near hysterical))
[
- I did the best I could with the information that I was given=
((Dick returns, stands by table, as if seeking to interrupt))
- Dick: ==((clears throat))
- Evan: hehe ((sobbing))
[
- Jon: I did not know=
- Dick: =um=
- Jon: =that you needed to know the location of the - film
- Evan: eh
- Jon: ('f) Janie had come out and said to me - "Dad will you tell M:Mommy where the
films- are from the pic?tures" I would have said "Yes? Janie"
- Marie: Well when she's about eight or nine I bet she'll be able to do that
[]
- Jon: Janie came out
[]
- Evan: I was BLEE:DING
- Jon: YOU: are over eight or nine are you not?
- Marie: Ye:s - and that's exactly what I told her to say?
- Jon: That's right?
((Dick is standing behind his chair, as if still waiting to interrupt Jon and Marie,
looking from one to the other))
- Marie: is to find out where the negatives were. so I could give them to Susan
[]
- Evan: Dick (it's) BLEE:din
(0.2)
- Jon: I? see - Well she didn't she di- she didn't give me your message=
[]
- Evan: (Dick?)
- Jon: =in the form you asked it
- Marie: But - did you know Susan was here?
[
- Jon: (you know)

- Jon: No:? - I didn't know who was here Marie I didn't know what was going on. - I was busy with plumbing
(0.6)
- Jon: Is it really ex-stremely important to you to prove that I did something wrong?
(0.4)
- Jon: Is that - Is that
[
- Marie: not extremely important ((*half-laugh*)) nho:
Jon: important enough to carry it to this: - extre?:me
(0.4)

At this point, the co-narrator challenge is cut off by the children's reminding their parents that they are being filmed.

Here, we see Other Co-narrator Jon contest Initial Teller Marie's narrative perspective by challenging her version of what daughter Janie asked of him. This challenge escalates until it is rather abruptly cut off—just as the challenge to Lucy was, in “The Detention,” when her parents dismissed the threat Chuck had posed to her (Chuck: “(Lucy/only if you) get (it) a second and (a) third and the fourth? that means you're out right?”) and the subject was dropped—thereby rescuing the co-narrator target(s) and aborting any further elaboration of contrastive explanations.

4.2.2 The Nature of the Challenge

Challenges differ not only in terms of the target to whom they are directed (third party or co-narrator), but also in terms of the nature and scope of the challenge. As in the realm of scientific and other scholarly debate, explanations in stories can be challenged at a factual level, at the level of methodology, and/or at the level of ideology. (See Laudan, 1984, for an explication of this terminology and of the importance of this framework in the sociology of science.) Laudan stipulates that, in science, the majority of challenges attend to ‘matters of fact,’ fewer attend to methodology, and they rarely address ideology. However, the three domains are interrelated in that an attack on one domain (e.g., claiming an error in ‘fact’) may imply an attack on another (e.g., faulty methodology).

4.2.2.1 Challenges to ‘Matters of Fact’

In stories, challenges to ‘matters of fact’ question claims that some event happened as recounted or that it is explainable as posited because it is based on an erroneous claim about, for example, the Setting of the events or the IE itself. Examples (5) and (6) draw excerpts from two stories we have looked at which illustrate co-narrator challenges to ‘matters of fact’ involving Setting (in 5) or Initiating Event (in 6):

- Father: =(about what)
 [
- Lucy: When we were back at school um - this girl? - she pulled um - Vicky's dress ((*puts hand to knee*)) up t'here ((*gestures with hand high on chest*)) in front of the boys
- Mother: mhm?
- Lucy: She only - all she did was get a day in detention

(8) from "Rita's Day Off" Story (Example 3 above)

- Marie: I asked Billy's Mom? - to barter with me? - for the two days I did (the) day care for her - to give Rita a day off?
 (0.4)
- Jon: Oh yeah?
- Marie: Yeah - on Monday? - with pay?
 (0.4)
- Jon: Why ((*sniffs*))
- Marie: Why? Well that's what I thought about after I got the response from Rita. She was like - you know "Forty some hours a week" I don't know - it sounded like she had worked it all out in her mind - "Forty five hours a week is too: mu:ch work" .h I felt like - (tr-/turni-) - I had to kinda hold my temper down because she pushed a button. - Instead of somebody - I mean-I did her a favor . . .

In our dinner story corpus, challenges to (complaints about) protagonists' **methods** (e.g., Mrs. Andrews's inadequately punishing an offender; Rita's inadequately appreciating Marie's gestures) are quite common and appear, at least in part, to motivate the storytelling in the first place. Challenges of this sort have a transformative property in that they can transform a protagonist's method (e.g., Mrs. Andrews's assignment of one day's detention) for dealing with some problematic IE (the shameful raising of Vicky's skirt) into yet another problematic event—a secondary IE (Mrs. Andrews's unfair methods). In the extreme, this can lead to very elaborate, multi-episodic (multi-IE) stories. In multi-episodic stories, such transformations initiate new episodes in the sense that one episode of a problematic event and its problematic response is followed by a new episode in which the problematic response generates new responses which in turn may or may not be problematic, and so on.

In the dinner stories in our study, there **are** a few such multi-episodic stories but, more commonly, our stories contain only one episode (i.e., one IE), and co-narrator challenges to a protagonist's method for dealing with an IE entail only **present-time** Reactions to Attempts and Consequences (e.g., co-narrators' critiques, at the time of the storytelling, as to how protagonists could or should have responded) or present-time critiques of Internal Responses to IEs (e.g., co-narrators' projections of what protagonists felt or should have felt). These one-episode, reaction-oriented challenges to methodology thus tend to move the

narrative into the present and sometimes suggest how to handle the problematic response in the future.

While the challenges to methodology illustrated in (7) and (8) were launched by Initial Tellers (Lucy and Marie, respectively), our data reveal that Other Co-narrators can contribute significantly to the co-construction of challenges to methodology, in both multi-episode and one-episode structures. This propensity has been well exemplified in (3) and (4) by Jon in his methodological challenges with and of Marie as well as in (2) by both Lucy's mother and brother. Recall that, in scripting Lucy's Internal Responses to the initial IE, Lucy's Mother was voicing Lucy's critique of Mrs. Andrews' methodology ("you think she should have gotten suspended?" . . . "you really would have liked to kill the girl" . . . etc.). Without Mother's hype in co-constructing Lucy's challenge, it is questionable whether Chuck would have been sufficiently inspired to launch his own challenge to methodology ("I think? she should - be: in there for a h-whole MONTH? or so . . . ") and then, in his next turn, to make the pivotal, revelatory move that would grind the narrative and its Initial Teller to a halt.

In the case of "Rita's Day Off," Jon vigorously expands on Marie's scripting of Rita's Internal Response to the IE, fueling Marie's position by turning her critique of Rita's psychological responses into an If-Then proposition (Jon: "If Rita . . . feels she's working too many hours a week? she doesn't belong here"). As such, it is the Other Co-narrator here who first voices the 'logical consequences' of the narrated psychological response for Rita, thus preempting the Initial Teller (Marie: "That's what I- that's how I felt especially for the amount of money she's making") in steering the direction of the challenge.

In "Photo Negatives," Jon challenges Marie's methodology through a self-serving hypothesis which 'proves' that her method, not he, was the culprit (Jon: "If Janie had come out and said to me - 'Dad will you tell M:ommy where the films- are from the pic?tures . . . ' " . . . "I would have said 'Yes? Janie' "). Marie further engages this hypothetical theory-world (Marie: "Well when she's about eight or nine I bet she'll be able to do that") in an apparent drive for self-justification, implying that she is not to blame for the failure of her methodology. This backfires, only inciting Jon's abrupt return to the world of the present in his thinly veiled ultimate challenge (Jon: "YOU: are over eight or nine are you not?") to Marie's method of sending (too young) a child to relay her message and achieve her ends.

As these story co-constructions illustrate, challenges to methodology typically address co-narrators' perspectives on means and ends. As such, challenges to methodology, in both scholarly and everyday narrative contexts, entail deeper value systems and are thus rooted in challengers' ideologies.

4.2.2.3 Challenges to Ideology

Challenges to ideology (including values and aims) of either third parties or co-narrators represent more than just a problem with a specific event or response:

they reveal an underlying problem with a framing, or interpretation, of the event(s) or response(s). As such, challenges to ideology can be seen to have considerable ramifications. In "Chili Peppers" (1), we see a simple illustration of an ideological challenge in the response of Oren's mother to his representation of the chili-eating episode as "funny." Her reframing of the events as "not funny," i.e., serious, presumably resets the tone for the ensuing reconstruction of events and may well factor into Oren's sense of license for his story-ending punishment of his mother for the past offenses recounted.

In the stories in our dinner corpus, ideological challenges sometimes arose out of methodological challenges. Where this occurred in our corpus, the target of the challenge tended to be a nonpresent, third-party protagonist. These challenges became opportunities for co-narrators to affirm their own shared beliefs and values and to contrast them with those of 'others' outside the co-present family group. The story of "Rita's Day Off" provides a good example of contrasting beliefs and values—for example, about the work ethic—which underlie methodological concerns about how a specific situation should have been treated by an outside party. For example, Jon's comment "If Rita's working too much and feels she's working too many hours a week she doesn't belong here" implies that Rita holds a different work ethic than do Jon and Marie. This difference even warrants Rita's dismissal: if she believes differently, she just doesn't belong.

While, in "Rita's Day Off," the co-narrators adhere to similar ideologies, in other stories, co-narrators may not share the same point of view or even the same beliefs and values. In such cases, the issue of whether a method is appropriate or not may not be resolvable unless at least one of the co-narrators shifts from one interpretive framework or ideological paradigm to another—a relatively rare occurrence which is akin to the potentially 'stormy,' revolutionary paradigm shifts seen in the world of science (Kuhn, 1962, 1970; Laudan, 1984). In the rather simple illustration of perspective-shifting in "Chili Peppers," Oren's adoption of his mother's reframing may be seen to have methodological ramifications to the extent that it accounts for the story's retaliatory consequences. The "Bev" Story in Example (9) will more fully illustrate complex interpretive or ideological challenges in a richly multi-episodic (multi-IE) case where the Initial Teller also evidences eventual receptivity to and even acceptance of the co-narrator's alternate framing.

4.3 Redrafting

As co-narrators attempt to re-script narratives and provide alternative explanations, framings and/or outcomes which are more acceptable to their (family) values and aims, they often give proof to the adage that "two heads are better than one." In scientific and other scholarly discourse, incongruous perspectives on 'facts,' methods, or ideologies are the stuff out of which debates are constructed and theories rise and fall. Each challenge bears implications for some current theory—which is often the reason the challenge is made. Each theoretical

account constitutes a draft in an ongoing scholarly exchange. Each draft impacts and is impacted by subsequent drafts. In this sense, scholarly activity involves the redrafting of (one's own and others') theories of experience.

We argue here that theories underlying everyday stories may undergo similar redrafting. Our transcripts indicate that accounts are not necessarily accepted as initially told but rather redrafted through the narrative contributions of another family member. A family member brings in new information that **implicitly** challenges an initial version of a story, as Chuck did in "The Detention"; or a family member **explicitly** challenges an initial interpretation of events, as Oren's mother did in "Chili Peppers," or an initial version of events, as Jon did in "Photo Negatives"; or co-narrators unite to reconstruct the protagonist's version through a hypothetical reworking of the narrative, as Marie and Jon did in "Rita's Day Off."

In "Chili Peppers," an apparently cut-and-dried redrafting abruptly rejects and supplants the Initial Teller's interpretation of events as "funny" (draft one) with a co-narrator's contrasting perspective on the events as "not funny" (draft two). This redrafting seems critical or at least useful to Initial Teller Oren's eventual present-time resolution of the narrative problem, giving him license—under the redrafted frame of "serious" rather than "funny"—to inflict punishment on the narrative culprit, the redrafter herself, Oren's mother.

In "The Detention," the first narrative draft presents a narrative theory in which Lucy is indignant because pulling up Vicky's dress in front of the boys is far more offensive a misdemeanor than the principal took it to be. She calls upon the family ideology to support her against the principal and, to varying degrees of intensity, she receives that support: Lucy's stance is validated; the theory stands up. In the second draft, implicitly revealed when Chuck provides the light-shedding information about Lucy's own detention, Lucy's stance is in jeopardy, and the first theory loses credibility. A second theory is not stated but implied, in which Lucy is indignant because the principal gave "this girl" and Lucy the same amount of detention and Lucy feels the other girl's misdemeanor is far worse than her own misbehavior. It is presumably because this second theory raises negative implications for a co-present member, a child of the family to be defended, that it remains unarticulated. No subsequent verbal evidence of a shift in stance is manifested by any co-narrators.

In "Photo Negatives," draft one (Marie's draft) presents a narrative perspective in which Janie asked her father where the photo negatives were and her father refused to supply the needed information. Draft two (Jon's) presents a very different account in which Janie asked her father to get the negatives for Susan and he said he was too busy to do it at that time. Jon's draft challenges Marie's draft on grounds of erroneous facts and/or methods as he implies in the ensuing discussion that Marie could have come to him directly and been able to correctly pose the request she sought.

In "Rita's Day Off," two theoretical perspectives on the narrative events are

juxtaposed and both are collaboratively drafted, one draft (speaking for Rita) serving to heighten the co-narrators' mutual commitment to the other draft (a hypothetical, wishful account of a world where others would react in keeping with the co-narrators' shared perspective). Here, redraftings take on the detailed level of rescriptings of how things would sound in the world of the preferred draft, discourse which would coincide with the world view of the co-narrators and thus reflect and constitute appreciation of the family ideology.

The process of redrafting indexes an initial narrative telling as only a **version**—and not a complete or necessarily accurate version—of the events described. This orientation is similar to that often favored in our school system (intended to groom children for the world of scholarly practices) whereby a writer's narrative is to be considered as a draft, subject to one or more revisions in an ongoing process. In this sense, children who are systematically exposed to a kind of storytelling where co-narrators challenge and revise initial accounts are being socialized through everyday (familial) discourse into the rudiments of not only the scientific but also the literacy practices so highly valued in our schools and our society.

To see just how elaborate story redrafting can be, we turn to our final example, the "Bev" Story in (9) below—a complex narrative that involves several story 'rounds' threaded through 30 minutes of dinnertime talk. It again involves Marie and Jon as Initial Teller and Other Co-narrator, respectively. The narrative displays all the varieties of challenges we have discussed above: challenges targeted at third party and at co-narrator; challenges to 'matters of fact,' methodology, and ideology. Until well into Round 4 of the narrative, the co-narrators' theories are congruent with one another and incongruent with the story's third-party protagonist, Bev. However, with Marie's sudden mention of a critical piece of the setting in the midst of Round 4 (given in Example 9b), Jon is led to challenge his wife's interpretation of the Initiating Event and, by implication, her methods for handling that event:

(9) "Bev" Story (excerpts from an 8-round story)

Marie (mother)

Jon (father)

Dick (oldest sibling: boy, 8;7)

Janie (target child: girl, 5;11)

Evan (younger sibling: boy, 3;7)

Marie initiates this story early on in the dinner and readdresses it numerous times throughout dinner and into cleanup, with other narratives intervening. Bev is the mother of one of Marie's day-care children. When Bev came to pick up her daughter, Debbie, just before dinner, she offered Marie \$320 for day care. Marie initially frames the event as a mistake which would have meant an overpayment by Bev but which Marie 'caught'. In a subsequent round of the nar-

narrative, however, Marie brings up that Bev is taking Debbie out of Marie's day care—without honoring a two-week notice which is an established policy. This new information triggers a reanalysis by Jon, one which Marie initially resists but then defensively accepts.

This story thus presents a narrative dilemma, namely 'What is the meaning of the \$320 Bev handed to Marie?': Was it an unintended potential overpayment? Or was it intended as compensation for removing a child without two weeks' notice?

(9a) **Round 1** (7:17 p.m.) *Food has been distributed, Jon has said grace, and a family friend has just left.*

(2.8)

Marie: Bev walked up? (and/she) handed me three twenty?

Jon: mhm

(0.6) *((Marie is holding corn cob, looking at Jon as she talks))*

Marie: And I thought she only owed me eighty. - and she said she didn't want a receipt - and I went in and got the: receipt book n: she only owed me *((nodding))* eighty=

Jon: =hmmhm.

(0.4) *((Marie keeps nodding yes))*

Marie: n she was real happy about that

(1.0) *((Marie starts to eat corn, then stops))*

Marie: She says "No no no no no:: I don't need a receipt."

(0.8)

Dick: Mom (did Bev) - (tch)

[

Marie: (and just hands me three twenty)

(2.0) *((sounds of everyone eating corn on the cob))*

Marie: I - took my book out though - cuz she hardly ever - makes mista:h:kes *((laughing))* - I thought maybe I wrote it wrong but I went back and got three receipts

Dick: *((to the cat))* (N:ah::)

[

Marie: and they all were

Jon: mhm=

Marie: =in - you know - what do you call that?

Dick: Daddy? (is the - the) cat's still hungry.

[

[

Jon: consecutive order?

Marie: Yeah

(0.6)

Jon: (Cat) are you hungry - Has he been (fed) today? . . .

In this first draft, Initial Teller Marie presents her theory of the narrative problem underlying the Initiating Event (portrayed as Bev's overpaying her); she also describes her own Internal Responses to that event and her Attempts to deal

with it—as being those of a virtuous business woman. Despite Marie’s efforts to involve Jon (through her own repair initiation), he is only marginally involved in Round 1. That changes dramatically when Marie later brings up other news about Bev:

(9b) **Round 4** excerpt (7:35 p.m.) *Wherein Jon is elaborating on a related story which Marie has brought up about Bev's having received unwarranted insurance benefits after an auto accident, thus showing Bev to be unscrupulous. Dick stands next to Jon throughout, listening intently, looking back and forth from Mom to Dad as they talk. Marie has finished eating and Jon has just finished; only Janie is still eating.*

- Jon: . . . ((*in quiet, professorial tone, gesturing with hand*)) We're living in a culture where it seems appropriate? - and even gratifying - to do something and to get something that you weren't supposed to
(0.4)
- Marie: Yeah I-I would have felt I would have felt real gratified if I hadn'ov=
[
- Jon: I mean - it's like if the lady at the grocery market gives you?
- Marie: =checked my receipt book I thought=
Jon: =if the lady at the grocery market overpays you something
[
- Marie: (if) she hands me three hundred and twenty bucks I'm gonna (accept yeah)
- Jon: you're supposed to think "Hey: that's great" and walk out the ((*laughing*)) store? :re n "She gave me back - .h twenty dollars too: much? cuz she must've thought I gave her a fifty"
- Marie: mhm
Jon: you know .h and you're not supposed to consider yer-
[
- Marie: mm
Jon: consider whether or not that comes out of her pay if the drawer doesn't balance=
[
- Marie: (I know)
- Jon: =at the end of the night? .h or whether it's the ethic - RIGHT thing to do is to say "Hey lady you - you: - gave me too much money"=
Marie: =well: you know what=
Jon: =it's- that's not in anymore It's gone to even to the extreme?
[
- Marie: you know what thou:gh - I started questioning was - the= ((*Marie points index finger to Jon, elbow on table*))
- Marie: =fact she gave me - no notice - she just called up? after the accident and said.
Jon: Yeah "I'm not coming anymore"
[
- Marie: "That's it" - no - no two weeks' pay - not=

- Jon: [(Marie?)
- Marie: =no: consideration - (whether I had to make/without ever)
- Jon: ((wiping mouth)) She did a:ll that when she paid you the three hundred and twenty dollars She didn't do that by mistake
((Marie with hand to mouth, reflective; Janie gets up and goes to kitchen))
- Jon: She wanted to see how you felt about it n she felt she owed you
- Marie: [No: way: -
((shaking head and hand to say No)) no: nonono - no
- Jon: [Oh no? You don't think so?
- Marie: No she thought she had not paid me for the month of June -
- Jon: [Oh ((lightly))
- Marie: and she's paying me fro:m=
- Jon: =eh=
- Marie: =the first week of Ju:ne
- Jon: [I would read it
- Jon: Oh (eh/yeah)
- Marie: [to:: - the? - the ending - the third of
- Dick: ((to Dad)) [()]
- Jon: [You had said that she never made a mistake in the past? though (didn't you) She was always very - good about that
- Dick: [hhhh ((sigh in response to being ignored?))
- Marie: ((with index finger pointed out)) No - she she's made one mistake in the past=
Jon: =oh oh huhuh ((slight nod yes))
- Marie: [but her record i:s - very few mistakes? ((raised finger moves horizontally to indicate Bev's record over time))
- Jon: hmhm (okay) ((nodding yes))
- Marie: [When I went to make out (the/her) recei:pt? she was watching the- my calendar
- Jon: mmhm:
- Marie: and I didn't understand what she was say'ing as far as - u:m she wanted to bring Debbie back - This is another point that she brought up
- Jon: [((Janie in kitchen, crosses to sink))
- Marie: She wanted to bring Debbie back=

Jon: =Whatcha doin Janie?

[

Marie: (for/in) a couple of weeks? =

Janie: =um - just washing my hands . . .

In this round, just prior to the excerpt in (9b), Marie has told of an incident which reveals Bev to be someone who takes advantage of others, and Jon quickly rallies to the cause of aligning himself with Marie against Bev's comportment—against both Bev's methods and the associated ideology. Marie and Jon contrast their own methodological and ideological perspective—on honesty and cheating—with the one attributed to Bev, one which they perceive as unfairly prevailing in the world outside.

In the throes of Jon's elaborate co-construction of the ideological frame for their characterization of Bev, Marie suddenly introduces a critical element of the Setting for the \$320 (Initiating Event): she brings up the fact that Bev is taking her daughter out of day care without the mandated 2-week notice. This mention undermines Marie's first explanation of the \$320 (in much the same way that Chuck's question undermines Lucy's presentation in the "Detention" Story, namely, by uncovering a critical missing piece of Setting—see Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1989). It inadvertently recasts the 'honest businesswoman' of Round 1 as, instead, a 'sucker' (whom Bev took advantage of). Jon uses this information to formulate another theory of the meaning of the \$320, a theory which implies Marie's naiveté—and which Marie flatly rejects—at least during this round. Round 6 (in 9c below) reveals, however, that Jon's point has registered and that Marie is nagged by the possibility of a hole in **her** theory of the meaning of Bev's \$320.

(9c) **Round 6** excerpt (7:40 p.m.) *Everyone has finished eating, the kids have gotten down from the table, and Evan, the 3-year-old, has just remembered that Dad had promised them ice cream if they ate a good dinner. Marie has encouraged the kids to chant "Haagen Dazs Haagen Dazs" over and over until Jon agrees to take them for the ice cream. At the height of this activity, Marie abruptly returns to the unresolved narrative problem in the "Bev" Story:*

Marie: ((*head on hand, elbow on table*)) You know - Jon I verbally did tell Bev two weeks' no?tice Do you think I shouldov stuck to that? or (to have/just) done what I did

(0.8) ((*kids standing by table between Mom and Dad*))

Jon: When I say something I stick to it. unless she: - s-brings it up. If I set a policy - (you know/and I) - and - they accept that policy - .h unless= ((*Dick begins to bounce ball, walking toward living room along with Evan*))

Jon: =they have reason to change it and and say something? I do not change it -

[

Dick: (Let's go outside and play)

Jon: I don't automatically assume .h "We:ll it's not the right thing to do" If I were to do that e- I would be saying in the first place I should never have mentioned it=
((Janie leaves the table, heads for living room too))

Jon: =I should never have set the policy if I didn't believe in it If I thought it was.- a hardship on people I shouldn'a brought it up? - shoulda kept my mouth shut -.h If I: say there's two weeks' notice required - I automatically charge em for two weeks' notice without thinking twice? about it I say and i- "If you-you need - Your pay will include till such and such a date because of the two neek-weeks' notice that's required." I:f THE:Y feel hardship it's on thei:r part *((gesturing emphatically with his hands))* - it's - THEIRS to say "Marie I really? - you know - I didn't expect this to happen 'n I'm *((softly))* sorry I didn't give you two weeks' notice but it was really un - avoidable" - a:nd you can say "We:ll - okay I'll split the difference with you - (it's har-) a one week's notice"

Marie: [see you know in one way=

Jon: [and then they
 (st-if) they push it

Marie: [=wi- in one (instance) *((pointing to Jon))* she owed me that money - but I just didn't feel right? taking it on that (principle because) she (wanted) - she thought she was =

Jon: [well you're - you
((Marie begins twirling corn cob as she talks))

Marie: =paying it for something that (she didn't)

Jon: [You: give her the money and then you let it bother
 you then - you - then you get all ups-set (you'll) You'll be upset for weeks

Marie: [No no no

Marie: I'm not upset - it's just=

Dick: *((from outside, about the dog))* =Janie? - go get Spot out
 (0.4) *((Marie plops cob down, raps knuckles on table))*

Janie: *((from living room area))* [Why?:

Marie: I guess I just wish I would have s:aid - I'm not upset with what happened I just wanted - I think I - would feel better if I had said something

In this draft, Marie asserts at the outset that she **had** explicitly told Bev of the two weeks' notice (an additional detail of the new Setting) and further implies that, at the time Bev gave her \$320, she did think about the two weeks' notice (a new psychological response to the drafts of Rounds 4 and 6). This once again recasts her rejection of the 'excess' money, this time as a conscious act (out of

compassion or lenience) rather than unconscious (as in being suckered). These redraftings of the Setting and psychological response are offered as Marie's defense of her presentation of self (as not **such** a 'sucker') and an attempted reestablishment of her 'honest businesswoman' persona (Marie: "I just didn't feel right . . ."). She redefines the narrative problem as whether or not she should have taken the money when Bev allegedly thought the money was to pay for something else. After Jon's lengthy challenge to Marie's interpretive frame and her method of handling Bev, Marie comes around to Jon's perspective, i.e., that the appropriate response to Bev's handing over \$320 should have been to remind Bev of the two weeks' notice policy and to take the money on that principle. Jon and Marie's reconstruction of the narrative problem exemplifies, for us, a paradigmatic redrafting of Marie's initial theory to a different, more explanatorily adequate theory of narrative events (see Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1989).

4.4 Scholarly Overtones of Family Storytelling

We have exemplified here, in our analysis of five narratives from three different families, how theories and multiple perspectives on past experiences are posited, challenged, and redrafted through the activity of dinnertime co-narration. Such activity—especially when it is as elaborate as the "Bev" Story—is metacognitive in the sense that co-narrators call into question and thereby recontextualize their own thinking about 'matters of fact,' methodology, or ideology. Such narrative activity is also metalinguistic in the sense that co-narrators recontextualize stories as challengeable versions of personal experience and co-critique, recast, and rescript the language of protagonists and selves. In these ways, family storytelling at dinner bears a striking similarity to scholarly dialogues in which narratives of **im**personal experience are constructed, critiqued, and reconstructed. It may appear that scholarly narratives are challenged and redrafted on the basis of careful observation or logical reasoning, whereas everyday narratives of personal experience are not. The examples of family storytelling we have presented, however, indicate to us that observation (e.g., "Lucy? you only ever went to it once - right?") and logic (e.g., "I should never have set the policy if I didn't believe in it If I thought it was - a hardship on people I shouldn'a brought it up - shoulda kept my mouth shut - if I say there's two weeks' notice required - I automatically charge em for two weeks' notice without thinking twice? about it") play an important role in challenges to initial versions. In this sense, the dialogic reworking of scholarly and everyday theories have common properties.

Both scholars and the co-narrators of our dinner stories draw on diverse bits and pieces of gradually unfolding information to construct positions or theories of what did or did not happen. To **elevate** the cognitive processes that posit and evaluate scholarly theories and **dismiss** those that posit and evaluate everyday theories would be a disservice to both, mystifying the realm of scholarship and underappreciating how family and other everyday discourse practices socialize

megacognitive, metalinguistic processes as instincts that scientists and other scholars depend on. The two realms are not so far apart.

5. THEORY-BUILDING AND FAMILIARITY

Our analysis suggests to us that the promotion of meaningful investigative, theory-building discourse may benefit from, if not require, something of the same atmosphere which fosters everyday collaborative storytelling. We propose that complex storytelling in which perspectives are challenged and redrafted collectively is more likely to occur where co-narrators are familiar with one another and/or the narrative events than where co-narrators are socially distant. In the world of personal relationships, familiars include family and friends. In the world of scholarly relationships, familiars include members of one's field, one's laboratory, one's department, or one's seminar. (We would not include large, anonymity-inducing courses.)

Indeed, elementary and secondary schools may face a severe handicap in trying to instill scholarly processes of theory-building, critiquing, and redrafting if the environment of instruction lacks the familiarity that is characteristic of more intimate family or even university research settings. While Vygotsky attributed to schools a vital role in socializing 'scientific concepts' and the processes of evaluation, critique, and redrafting (Vygotsky, 1986), our present schools may have lost a familiarity necessary for students to undertake meaningful engagement in these processes. In other words, size of the co-narrating and co-cognizing group may be inversely related to the facilitation of theory-building and deconstructing.

In both personal and scholarly domains, familiars may share considerable knowledge of the subject matter under narration and often extensive personal knowledge about one another. Moreover, while challenging another's version of a narrative is always face-threatening, familiars—at least in certain cultures and subcultures—have greater license to make such challenges. In this sense, familiar relationships have the potential to be complex linguistically and cognitively as well as socially. If this is the case, then we must rethink sociolinguistic and educational dichotomies which portray the familiarity of friendship, home, and highly contextualized narrative activity as a breeding ground for restricted codes, egocentric discourse, and concrete, low-level thinking and which, conversely, portray socially distant relationships and decontextualized settings (e.g., those of schooling and literacy) as a breeding ground for elaborated codes, sociocentric discourse, and abstract, meta-level thinking.

Our narrative data has led us to posit instead that shared background knowledge and interpersonal bonds of trust and affect, whether at home or in other settings, may very well **propel** multiple perspective-taking, theory building and other complex cognitive skills, whereas more distant personal and professional relationships may very well inhibit the development of these skills. Interlocutors

who are unfamiliar with one another and the background material to each other's stories may not have an equal license to jump in and challenge one another's story line—the equal of familiars, that is. Hence the hesitancy to challenge in an academic setting when the would-be challenger does not feel in command of the full history of the theory in question.

Many storytellers may choose not to engage unfamiliar interlocutors in expounding theory and evaluating multiple perspectives in the first place, if they have to first present an extensive amount of background knowledge as a foundation for others' narrative involvement. Shared knowledge of narrative terminology and protagonists (often captured in reduced, shorthand linguistic references) may facilitate the airing of troublesome narrative problems because interlocutors can bypass relevant background details and get right to the narrative problem at the heart of their concerns. In these ways, the familiarity that derives from group membership and shared knowledge is a context that promotes complex cognitive and linguistic activity.

Another way of looking at the relation between familiarity, thinking, and language behavior is to see familiar relationships as being **constituted** by such complex cognitive and linguistic activity as is involved in co-narration (see also Mandelbaum, 1987). This does not necessarily mean that familiar relationships will always be so constituted. It is up to the family, the friendship, the laboratory, the seminar, and the school to so constitute themselves, and some groups do so more readily than others. But for many, the shared experience of co-narration is critical to their relationships and the instantiation and ongoing reconstitution of their familiarity.

6. CONCLUSIONS

We have suggested in this article that, at a very mundane level of narrative activity that is available within every family, there is a daily message—to adults as well as to children—regarding the approach to 'fact' and to theory which is sanctioned in that family: The message is embedded in the family's response to story explanations. The challengeability of those explanations, whether guarded (i.e., preserving explanations as 'fact') or exploited (i.e., recasting 'fact' as but a version of reality), socializes co-narrators into a particular view of the world, of cognition, of social interaction, of interdependence, of limits, and of the value of multiple perspectives and the weighing of alternatives. Recognizing that narrative activity plays this important role in theory-building and critiquing is important as well to a fuller understanding of how narrative acquisition takes place. We posit that there is at least the potential that children sitting around a dinner table listening to and collaborating in such storytelling theory-building are being socialized into the rudiments of scholarly discourse.

The ramifications of our claim that storytelling promotes theory-building and socializes theory-making skills go beyond stories, beyond dinnertime, and be-

yond the family. First, storytelling is only one type of narrative activity which families and peer groups share and which offers the possibilities for theory-building that we have evidenced in this article. We are especially interested in the parallels for perspective-taking and theory-making which are afforded in planning—the future-time counterpart of storytelling in that it too represents a problem-centered narrative activity. We have observed in our dinner corpus (and will develop in a later article) how everyday planning also serves as an important medium for socializing the kinds of skills described here.

Second, dinnertime is obviously only one of the many activity contexts that constitute family discourse and family life. A fuller ethnography of narrative activity is warranted to more accurately assess when, where, how, and to what extent collaborative drafting and redrafting of narrative theories of personal experience takes place in the lives of families. One interesting candidate is that of carpooling, e.g., one parent taking kids to and from school—an activity which has been cited as having substituted at least in some families for dinnertime as the prime opportunity space for storytelling, planning, and other co-narrative activity.⁴ Given this recognition of alternative opportunity spaces, dinnertime is nonetheless potentially special as a time of the day when most or all family members can see one another after having been apart for many hours, when each has a relatively 'captive' audience for as long as either hunger or family tradition or compliance structure keeps them clustered, and when, as a result, reports and stories about the 'old' day (what has happened since leaving the house in the morning) are initiated, and agendas and plans for 'new', that is, future, days are negotiated.

In this sense, in the United States and in certain other societies, dinnertime is a critical environment for the socialization and acquisition of narrative competence, a competence we claim underlies scientific and other scholarly language activity. We believe that we have probably captured in our corpus the most productive family activity context in which day-to-day co-narrative possibilities are being explored, theories developed, and challenges launched. The more we look at dinnertime the more impressed we are with its potential for involving children in collaborative storytelling activity that promotes theory-building, perspective-taking, and other facets of analytic thinking. A personal outcome of our study is thus a heightened appreciation for family dinnertime as a precious opportunity space that blocks out time for families to build and evaluate theories together, socializing cognition through language.

More important yet is our heightened appreciation for the role and potential of the family (*vis-à-vis* the school)—to engage 'novices' and 'experts' alike in a complexity of collaborative cognition that has too long been thought to be untutored without schooling *per se*. It is our perspective that the procedural framework for theory-building on which to hang any matter of theoretical content, academic or otherwise, is probably scaffolded so early on that this familial co-narrative activity deserves to rank alongside storybook reading, etc., as essential

contributions from the home environment to children's success in scholastic tasks. We suspect that families themselves—and schools—may well underestimate the value of everyday co-narrative activity in nurturing the kinds of perspective-taking and theory-building skills we have portrayed as protoscientific.

Endnotes

1. What we know about the collaborative nature of spoken discourse in scientific settings is primarily the product of ethnographic interviews and notetaking rather than of conversation-analytic procedures (i.e., taping and transcribing spontaneous interaction within laboratory settings). However, Lynch's (1985) important study of agreement in scientific laboratories suggests for us the pervasive nature of co-construction and especially of co-constructed narrative activity in these academic niches as well as in families. Given the paucity of studies such as Lynch's, the comparisons we propose in this article between the organization of talk in and outside of scientific contexts are necessarily tentative until further, more detailed documentation of, for example, scientific lab talk is available. To this end, a research project under the direction of E. Ochs, funded by the Spencer Foundation, is currently undertaking the videorecording and linguistic analysis of scientific laboratory interactions.

2. With regard to SES, we have come to see the need to take into account much more than our original criteria (families either earning over \$40,000/year or under \$20,000/year) and as a result we have revised our original 'bipolar' SES categories to take into consideration family income, education, and occupation of the parents, and education and occupation of the mother's parents. As a result, in Table 1, we have grouped the families into 3 SES categories—High, Middle, and Low. Furthermore, as Table 1 also indicates, in our sample, SES differences entail more than these criteria of income, education, and occupation. For example, in comparison with Low SES families, there are fewer siblings in High SES families, and fathers are more often present at High SES family dinners.

3. Each participating family volunteered for the study in response to flyers or word of mouth and received a nominal remuneration.

4. Preece (1985) has done an important and interesting study of the narrative activity of a particular type of carpool situation, with three children from different families alternately driven by one of their parents, focussing on the narrative acquisition skills of the children. More parallel to our study of intrafamilial co-narration would be the situation where one or more children of one family are driven by a parent to school or to an extracurricular activity. One citation of the increasingly important role of such activity in some families comes from a CBS Sunday Segment (8/14/88) on the status of the American family dinner, where one interviewed mother claimed that dinner was hopeless as a time to converse with her children and that she had come to see car-travel time as her prime time for co-narrating with her kids.

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