Notes from Gene Lerner Guest Lecture, October 13, 2009

Ask the following: What’s happening & what can we understand about what humans have to do in order to live a social life?

Ex. Monopoly game
• Behavior is only understandable within a context
  o The woman pulls her hand back when she sees the guy pulling his hand back with the card
    ▪ People recognize action-in-progress
    ▪ Body behavior turns action into recognizable action.
    ▪ “Everything happens somewhere and somewhen.” (e.g. in places in time)
  o Action can be recognized before its completion
    ▪ **Progressive realization** – ability to adjust on a moment-to-moment basis and act or react to others' actions
    ▪ **Structural projection** – people know what's coming based on what they see now (you can project what will happen based on the structure of action).
      • You have a local, moment-by-moment, locally enforceable basis for what will and should happen
      • We use actions of others as resources (and we are held accountable to our actions)

Ex. Handshake in restaurant

Ask the following: What builds up social structure of society? What happened?
**Lerner is interested in the thing itself, NOT what people think about the thing.**
• The man and woman orient themselves as a couple (one handshake would’ve been enough; the woman nods during first handshake)
• **Reduced projectability** – the restaurant owner did not project his action fully (by simply shifting his hand from the man to the woman, he did not fully develop an initial stage of action which might have clued the woman in to his intent.)
  o The woman, in response, shrugs and smiles as if apologizing or being embarrassed about not immediately going for the handshake.
  o She puts her hand out fast in order to show that she is orienting herself to the action that should be happening.
• Their actions make visible who they are for each other.
  o We can see those categories (man/woman, husband/wife, etc.) in the action itself (embodied actions of categories)

Ask the following: “Why that now?”
• Why: What’s accomplished?
• That: What is the thing itself?
• Now: Where does it occur in its context? How is it composed or positioned?
Behavior (blinking) VS. action (winking)
- Recipient needs to be aware of context in order to understand action
- Context changes meaning
- How do behaviors come to be known as action? Others treat our behavior as action.

**The observability of an action is a resource for action.**

Co-presence – (Goffman) The experience of being in the presence of another person and being able to see them, knowing that they can see you, and them knowing that you can see them.

Ex. Daycare, offering drink to child
- How do you come to understand that your behavior is communicative action?
- The little boys’ getting up out of his chair communicates to the caregiver (it’s consequential in that it starts up the routine of cleaning up after a meal).
- Our actions can launch a sequence of further actions (ex. Noise-making shake)

Discussion of assigned article
- Looking at the structure of action in which Laura participates (more so than her responses)
- What doesn’t change as we get older is our ability to read/recognize the structure of action.