

1982

Perspectives on speechlessness : a case study

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Michelle Alexander Carlson for the Master of Arts in Speech Communication presented July 16, 1982.

Title: Perspectives on Speechlessness: A Case Study.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


Larry Steward, Chairman


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This study addresses a problem of speech disruption as an individual abruptly and without explanation stops speaking to those around her. The matter for investigation involves the meaning this event has for those who are closely involved with this individual either in a practical day to day way or in a continuing relationship.

Meaning is taken to be a by-product of the social construction of reality and it is this mutual process which is claimed to be disrupted. The fact that meaning is here so defined has several affects:

1. The question for consideration is deflected away from specificity and into variability, one question splits into many.
2. One veers away from an attempt to isolate the primary relationship or the most likely explanation toward an attempt to identify the range of variation in explanation and behavior.
3. Speculations and suggestions replace conclusions as the product of the investigation.

Since the impetus for the study was to answer a qualitative question a qualitative methodology was selected. Reduction of tape recorded interviews to meaningful statements allowed data to be easily considered for analysis.

These data were the perceptions of ten individuals as to what was happening in their interpersonal involvement with the person who had renounced speech and what they were doing or intended to do in the new situation.

In addition, two other sources of data rounded out the possibilities for interpretation of the event in question. These were the words and writings of the speechless person before, during and after her period of speechlessness and the medical record of a psychiatric consultation relevant to this particular aberrant behavior.

What the data show is that there was, in fact, a rather wide range of variation in explanations for what was happening. At the same time all participants were, more or less uniformly, going through a process of distancing themselves from the speechless person toward the end of breaking off contact altogether.

PERSPECTIVES ON SPEECHLESSNESS: A CASE STUDY

by

MICHELLE ALEXANDER CARLSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

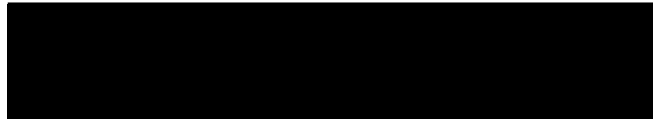
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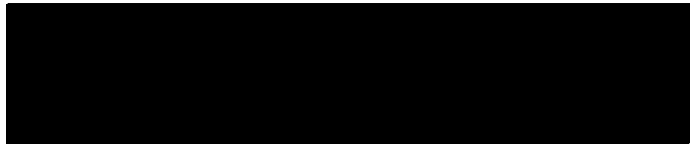
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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Michelle Alexander Carlson presented July 16, 1982.



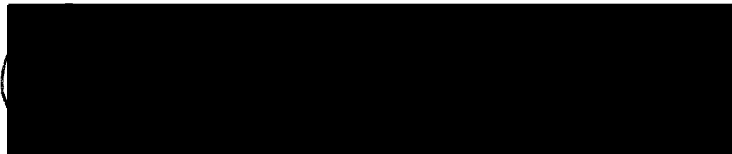
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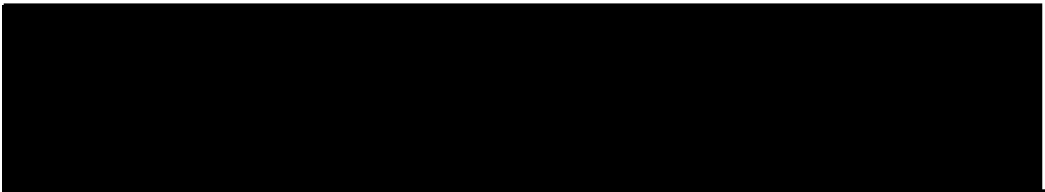


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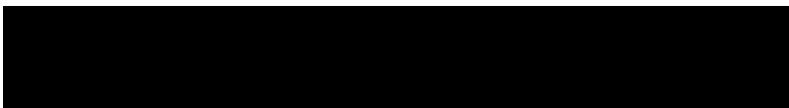


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Questions: A Case of Speech Renunciation.	1
Choices: Broad Issues of Interpersonal Communication.	3
Method: Participant Observation	5
Procedures: Obtaining a Variety of Perspectives	8
II APPROACH	12
Standard Communication Models: Insights and Problems.	12
Phenomenological Inquiring Systems	17
Husserl	
Schutz	
Merleau-Ponty	
Attribution.	23
III PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE	27
Problems with Language	27
Feminist Observations	31
Being "Of Another Mind"	37
IV MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE	41
V VARIABILITY AMONG OBSERVERS	43
Overview	43

CHAPTER	PAGE
Alternative Explanations: Three Themes	45
The Poor Thing	
The Witch	
The Saint	
Personal Context of Observer	46
Time-Investment in Relationship	
Tolerance for Symptom	
Psycho/Social Orientation	
The "Why" Question	51
VI UNIFORMITY AMONG OBSERVERS	56
Phases.	56
Tactics	60
VII CONCLUSION	65
Choosing Among Alternative Explanations	65
Language and Chatter.	69
The Shared World	72
REFERENCES	75
APPENDIX	80

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Comparison of elements of positivist and phenomenological social theory	4
2. Wilden model.	13
3. Relationship of factors on which participants differed. . .	49
4. Relationship between self and other	50
5. Causal attribution.	52
6. Relationship/attribution continuum.	53
7. Perspectives model.	68

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, social reality is so successfully created that there is no "news" to report. We make use of habitual response almost exclusively, applying formulas pointed out by Edmund Husserl: "And so forth, and so on;" "It is happening again;" "I can do it again;" and "Let it pass." (1)

However when something unusual happens we are highly disconcerted, we have a fleeting impression that reality is "up for grabs" before we settle down and fit the wild card somehow into the deck in order that the game may proceed. Prior to this adjustment it is possible to see a phenomenon in a new way, by assessing what happens when disruption of the expected order occurs.

The first level of the process we go through when faced with a socially deviant situation involves making personal sense of the thing with which we are confronted. The second level (2) involves making social sense of it; that is, getting a close match of our story with that of other observers whose opinions we care about. A great part of the process in both stages occurs outside of our conscious awareness.

QUESTIONS: A CASE OF SPEECH RENUNCIATION

As I was preparing to propose a more or less conventional research project, a situation came about which had numerous possibilities for

exploring these processes. A woman I had known for some years abruptly and without explanation stopped talking altogether. The central question this situation posed was this: What is the effect on communication and on other aspects of relationship when one of the interacting partners stops speaking?

There were, however, secondary questions which were even more intriguing. There was first of all that set of questions which centered on the subject herself. I felt that whatever reasons this particular woman, whom we shall call Vera, might have for her silence, a great deal could be learned about communication and its relationship to the social construction of reality by asking the questions: What did she learn about the imposition of language between ourselves and sensory experience? What perceptions had she gained by her silence? How was her behavior guided by her past and present relationships? In what ways was she different at the end of the ten months of silence?

In addition to this I was interested in what Vera's silence meant to those with whom she frequently interacted and how it changed that interaction. My attention to this aspect was reinforced when I heard that Vera had written on a slip of paper passed to a visitor the sentences: "I am like a Rorschach. People react to silence in ways that indicate something about themselves."

Questions surrounding the maintenance of a relationship with the non-speaking person are these: What insights into the nature of social reality might be gathered by examining the reasons conjured by Vera's visitors to explain her silence? Is there variation in explanations of what is happening? Are communication strategies as new as the new

situation or do they duplicate pre-existing patterns? Does reaction to the speechlessness evolve through phases which might have an affect on interaction? Did Vera's speech renunciation cancel the possibility of mutually satisfactory relationships? All of these questions motivated the present study. Existing theories of communication seemed on the surface insufficient to provide a satisfactory framework for these complex matters. My desire was for an exposition which would allow the most scope in responding to them.

CHOICES: BROAD ISSUES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

As investigator I was faced with several choices in how to approach these questions. Reviewing the scant literature on speech renunciation it was apparent that the tendency of researchers, when confronted with similar circumstances, had been to focus on the medical history of the individual who displays the symptom or, even more narrowly, on the symptom itself.

Such a focus would certainly not be sufficient to allow the central question to be fully addressed and would also close off pursuit of the interesting related problems. Other possible choices, for example direct observation of communication settings in which participants were instructed to alter aspects of setting or behavior, while they might have enabled a more elegant structuring of the work, were deficient in the same way. It was exactly the nuances and peculiarities of the situation in which its meaning seemed to lie and I endeavored to find or develop a method which would not obscure the secondary questions.

The differences between the research project I hoped to do and those things I might have done seemed to reflect differences in social theory between positivist and phenomenological philosophy. A characterization of these differences, adapted from Scheele (3), may be seen in the following figure:

<u>Positivist</u>	<u>Phenomenological</u>
Behavior follows laws that can be derived from situational observation.	Behavior occurs in activity sets that presume and assert meaning.
Actions are an expression of internal motivations and conflicts.	Actions are delayed in response to assessment of interactional consequences.
Organizations and roles are structures which define possible actions.	Actions and the need for their explication define roles and organizations.
Society is categorized by structural and functional properties to permit measurement and management.	Categorizations of society mark limits for special realities in order to facilitate communication and collaborative actions.

Figure 1. Comparison of elements of positivist and phenomenological social theory.

With this in mind I settled on a phenomenological analysis as presenting several advantages. First, the very peculiarity of the situation made it most suitable for phenomenological treatment. That the situation causes communication problems of an exceptional kind; that the situation is, at least at first, puzzling and inexplicable; that certain problems having to do with silence (ultimately with the use of language) are embedded in the situation and form a cultural background which increases the dilemma for those who are trying to communicate with the silent person; all these things tend to force those persons choosing

to interact with the speechless person to feel themselves outside conventional reality.

Secondly, rather than beginning with a formed hypothesis, constructing some event and applying a standard method to test it, phenomenological analysis allows us to begin with the event, already there structuring itself. That this event contains a range of probable interpretations is perhaps the only hypothesis which is tested.

Finally, speech disruption, if it means anything, is a disruption of a two-way process. Phenomenological analysis holds that interacting subjects are mutually responsible for the creation and interpretation of their communication in a very real sense. Expression accompanies meaning; meaning does not lie in people in any form other than words. "Communication between consciousnesses is not based on the common meaning of their respective experiences, for it is equally the basis of that meaning." (4) Observer-provided explanations of what is happening are expected to vary. A phenomenological perspective (5) directs us to look at the extent of this variation and to the context of the specific relationship for reasons for this variation.

METHOD: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Phenomenological inquiry into the individual's view of reality is a fairly well defined process which makes use of a variety of techniques but maintains as essential the shift in point of view from an objective observer to that of the subject. Most of the case studies (6, 7) which have been conducted on this model are relevant to the problems of intrapersonal communication (i.e. Words and concerns conducted inside the

head of the individual), the life-world as thematized by an individual acting for self, and only by extension to the interpersonal world.

Personal history is the only context judged germane to the action of the personal life. This vision of the individual's relationship to reality is similar to that posited by Janes (8) in a recent work which distinguished the conscious individual as one possessing an "analog I" which can be manipulated in an equally present and verifiably fictitious field of space/time.

In contrast, to uncover interpersonal consciousness one must posit the existence of an analog "we" existing in an unbreachable common world for which space/time exists as but one construct. The existence of this "we" and this world is assumed by the present study. The self, although paramount, is always "I by comparison," not to inanimate things (I am softer than a stone) but to others (I am taller than my mother, I am louder than my grandmother, I am better at this than I used to be) and the "we" which begins interpersonal experience "can refer only to myself and other persons who are apprehended as other selves." (9) This is only a modification of the fertile self/other concept developed by George Mead (10).

This expansion of the idea of self concept may allow us to derive new insights from use of the standard technique of the verbatim recorded interview. Social reality anticipates reciprocity. It is a variant of an encounter between the self and the not-self in which the not-self talks back. The construction of social reality is characterized by the wavering midpoint. "The world of man dances," as the Hindu saying has it, and it dances especially hard in reaction to the inexplicable,

perhaps because in facing the inexplicable we are facing more of ourselves. Like a turtle with a mirror, like a microphone with an amplifier such self-feedback causes us to waver, question, come back again. We dance.

Those who chose to interact with Vera needed to reestablish the fact of her self-determination, and with it reciprocity in the relationship. To do this they were bound to see purpose in her behavior. Human beings need to be apprehended by us as subject and object at the same time in order for the "we" relationship to obtain. In other words they must be both objects for us and subjects like us. In order to objectify a person we reduce their self-determination. To establish or reestablish personhood we restore the subjective property (11), which is precisely the self-generation of purpose.

Conceiving relationships in such a way led me to predict that those confronted with Vera's unexplained speechlessness would be forced to supply an interpretation of it which would allow them to continue interaction or cease interaction. These various interpretations were likely to be discernible in the way that different participants answered for themselves the question "Why is Vera doing this?" This, therefore, in a variety of forms was the question I asked of the ten participants I interviewed.

The newly formed relationships which were worked out around the symptom were unsettled in form during the period of this investigation. Since I intended to uncover whether phases of adjustment were present it seemed a poor strategy to break into the ongoing arrangements. Reference to discussions of qualitative methodology in Filstead (12) and

Lofland (13) was helpful in making some initial methodological decisions. I resolved to make no direct observation of interactions between Vera and her visitors, instead relying on descriptions of interactions and rationales provided by my informants. The attempt here was to record in the most comfortable setting the most complete answers to the questions this research opened. My impression was that during this period those who participated were more than eager to discuss their concerns about the situation.

Analysis of this data consists in forming orderly groupings of these explanations and relating them in a logically consistent way to the "we" relationships to which they refer. The patterns and categories which emerge identify the idiosyncratic portions of joint communication. Common aspects may also be identified.

PROCEDURES: OBTAINING A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES

Interviews did not happen at a proscribed time or in a proscribed place. Certain questions, for example: How long have you known Vera?; How often do you see her now?; What do you do when you are with her? tended to be asked at each interview with someone from whom I needed this information.

However, as a recognized insider, someone whom people knew or knew of, someone who was trusted, I counted on the privilege of my informants' good faith. My responsibility was to misrepresent no one, to allow contradictions and awkward intersections to emerge, to try not to squelch complexity. My procedure was to keep exploring connections with the respondent until I had heard what I wanted to hear and he or she had told what seemed important to tell.

Information about both sides of the interaction was taken from the point of view of one participant. I felt this method would allow more variation to be expressed than could be expected by intruding into relationships which because they were at the point of readjusting were already highly self-conscious.

Ten interviews ranging in length from 20 to 90-minutes were taken and transcribed. (A sample interview and statement reduction is given as an Appendix). These data were then reviewed closely and all statements which attributed some cause to the silence were isolated. Next the interviews were reviewed for statements which contributed information about the context of the relationship as was seen by the interviewee. By context I mean a frame of reference, what Whitehead (14) calls the background of discarded data. In actuality, of course, the background is never truly discarded. A subject without its background has no edge and cannot be distinguished as a separate entity. The context of interest here includes time investment, tolerance for symptom and psycho-social orientation of the observer. Finally, statements which revealed tactics being used by the interviewee in relating to Vera were isolated.

Other material used in addition to interviews was my personal collection of writing by and about Vera.

I have chosen in Chapter II to elaborate further the relationship between a phenomenological model for inquiry into communication process and conventional communication models. I have done so because a study which intends to present multiple contradictory explanations of a single event and not to bring these into concordance with one another is

exceptional and requires some justification.

I also hope to set up in the reader a certain mental attitude, (akin perhaps to the phenomenological attitude of bracketing, which will be discussed), through which the less resolved presentation may be found more acceptable.

Chapters III-VI can be taken as a unit and will examine a case of speech renunciation from a variety of perspectives. Chapter III presents my personal examination of Vera's writings and her explanation of the speechless period as this made sense for me as participant observer. Chapter IV presents a medical perspective on Vera's speechless period. Chapters V and VI present the viewpoints of ten other observers (Vera's friends and relations) reduced to a set of three narratized descriptions to which have been matched statements indicative of observer self-image and observer-provided reasons for Vera's speechlessness. Phases and tactics of interaction in the ten examples are also drawn from the interview material. The concluding chapter, Chapter VII will present a phenomenological analysis of these materials and possible implications of case study data for communication theory.

In reading this it should be remembered that every word has been affected by my presence, either chosen directly from the personal dictionary or words and thoughts I considered worth keeping, or chosen by others in response to me, my perceived role as researcher, our mutual history. How this set of structurally similar interviews were all the while being tucked in and let out in instantaneous response to the smallest of such cues might be the subject of another study. It is recognized here that the interviews were in this way dissimilar. None

of this is repeatable. Such is the richness of communication and the problem of language.

An analyst may say that he has discovered something about reality; the phenomenologist will say that something has been put together which may enhance a certain view of reality. The ultimate justification for this study is that the event in question, ten months of self-imposed silence, is intrinsically interesting.

CHAPTER II

APPROACH

STANDARD COMMUNICATION MODELS: INSIGHTS AND PROBLEMS

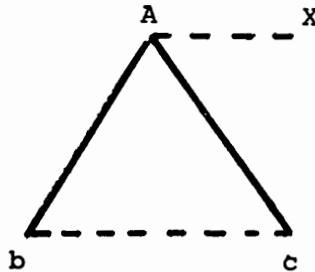
Standard contemporary models of the communication process are of insufficient complexity to provide insight into the meaning of human communication. First, the most-used models are built on the supposition that communication is meant to deliver discrete, determinable messages. Second, spoken language has been crucially deemphasized in importance, becoming simply one of many kinds of behavioral cue. A typical example which exhibits both problems is this from Wenburg and Wilmot (15):

While encoding a message, person A sends verbal and nonverbal behavioral cues. Person B perceives the public cues, certain behavioral cues (verbal and nonverbal), and private verbal and nonverbal cues. While B is going through this process, A is doing the same thing. In addition to the presence of cues, noise, or message and cue distortion, occurs in both the decoding and encoding processes.

The Wilmot model (16) which is a late version variant of the Shannon and Weaver (17) transmission/reception model, is useful in exposing two basic facts of communication:

1. Communication is an ongoing interaction between people or within a person which involves more than just words and may be both intentional or unintentional.
2. Communication takes place in a space/time context which may change or distort what is transmitted or received and for which the starting point is uncertain.

A model truer to phenomenological perceptions, recently proposed by Anthony Wilden (18), can be seen in Figure 2.



A: Locus of the code
 b,c: Goalseeking sender-receivers mediated by the code
 b-c: Locus of the messages (message channels)
 A-b, A-c: Coding channels
 X: Relationship to an environment

Figure 2. Wilden model.

It is significant that Wilden sees the diagram as representing a relationship, that it defines the minimal conditions for communication and that it is generalizable to other kinds of relationship.

However, we do no justice to any particular situation by applying a general model. Rather, with the understanding that on the personal level individual communications cannot be standardized, we should use them to discover the ways in which intentional human communication differs from that of a dog, a device or a dendrite.

These differences are to be found in the way people use language to make personal sense and social sense in the context of their experience.

It should be possible to construct particularly in light of recent work in the field of phenomenology (19) a model which allows the meaning of human communication to be addressed and which makes use of insights promoted through the study of phenomenology. I have found, however,

that most studies which call themselves phenomenological have managed to skirt the more profound implications of the theory. One which does not is Shapiro and Alexander's The Experience of Introversion (20), although it does not look at interactive situations nor take a multiple perspective approach.

Phenomenological theory has been used primarily in communication research to justify intuitive analysis. "The phenomenologist does not test hypotheses to determine their accuracy as does the traditional empiricist. He believes that judging and/or pre-determining by hypothesizing significantly colors the analysis and understanding of a phenomenon (21). (In other words, ask me no questions -- I'll tell you no lies.)

Checking further by reviewing a number of studies (as examples: 22, 23, 24) which their authors had identified as "Phenomenological analysis" it was clear that phenomenological analysis is often construed as pattern analysis of first person present tense taped responses to in-depth interviews. Statements are extracted indicative of the person's unique experience. Statements so extracted are "reduced" either through explicit rules or intuitively, at which point scaling techniques may be applied.

Dealing with interactive situations in this fashion requires the reification of the statement which, proffered by one individual or another, can be accepted, rejected or ignored. For example, a recent study combined reciprocated speech acts into interact constructs (25):

Once the data were transcribed in this manner, it became apparent that concepts could be categorized in three ways. Concepts could be overlapped (O), discarded (D), or extended (E) ... Overall, these conversations were characterized by the

balanced fashion with which the D,O,E elements were employed. This balance is best described as the retention of some concepts, the discarding of others and the extension of new ones. These data seem to blend with commonsense experience.

If one wishes to do more than this with interpersonal case data where does one begin?

A more sophisticated adaptation of interpersonal communication theory which also focuses on interactions between members of a dyad (a pair) is the Laing, Phillipson and Lee, Interpersonal Perception Methodology (IPM), (26). The authors present one of the few adaptations of theories of interpersonal perception for research purposes. Acknowledging that experience of another is both given and constructed, that it is a synthesis of interpretation based on perception, the authors chose the matching of expectations as the primary stuff of interpersonal reality.

Human beings are constantly thinking about others, and about what others are thinking about them, and so on. The news about interpersonal relationships is in the conjunction or disjunction of these perspectives, metaperspectives, and meta-metaperspectives. In a dyadic (two person) system, there is no isolated individual. The one person, in order to maintain his or her own self identity, has to act in relation to others. Based on this understanding of interpersonal relations the authors developed a sixty point test, the IPM, designed to reveal perspectives, metaperspectives and meta-metaperspectives around six categories of affective behavior.

In my experience much more than the matching of expectations goes on in interpersonal communication. This focus, however, reveals the

surface expression of the complementary grand themes with which interpersonal communication is so generously entwined. Under the most mundane or the most grandiose conversation the one great theme continues to be heard: You will be who I say you are and I will continue to be who I know I am. What of this? There is some reluctance to address it directly.

The reason for this timidity is not hard to find. Part of the problem is the real difficulty in conveying complex ideas with language. Remy Kwant (27) holds that:

Speaking is the transposition of all meaning into a single sphere. This transposition is a great good because it objectivizes the meaning and makes it communicable. The same transposition however, becomes a great danger if one fails to realize how defective it can sometimes be, if one forgets that the things which are expressed in the single sphere of speech belong to essentially different spheres.

There is a principle of incompatibility which states that as the complexity of a system increases, our ability to make precise yet significant statements about its behavior diminishes until a threshold is reached beyond which precision and significance become mutually exclusive categories (28).

Equally burdensome is the stricture to appear scientific, that is, to be precise. These factors combine to practically guarantee that the more profound aspects of communication are little discussed.

In the situation presented here, however, we cannot avoid approaching these mysteries as mysteries, because the partners in this interpersonal setting were thrown into a novel situation.

A novel situation has distinct advantages for an investigator. As William Garfinkle asserts:

The operations that one would have to perform in order to multiply the senseless features of perceived environments; to produce and sustain bewilderment, consternation and confusion; to produce the socially structured affects of anxiety, shame, guilt and indignation; and to produce disorganized interaction should tell us something about how the structures of everyday activities are ordinarily and routinely produced and maintained (29).

I have suggested that phenomenology may provide a perspective from which to assess difficulties. I would like now to highlight certain concepts of phenomenology which seem particularly important in this effort.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRING SYSTEMS

A phenomenological system of inquiry is an appropriate choice for the exploration of a vague and surprising interpersonal event such as one person's renunciation of the spoken word. Every event has its own logic which, if found, will disclose the meaning of that event (30). Phenomenology conforms to the logic of the event we propose to study and can therefore provide the most useful metaphors for the study.

Husserl

Phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl (31) was interested not in the conscious object (event) nor in the objects of consciousness but in the interstices between, the point at which consciousness enters and infects an external object. This constitutive act, conducted through the medium of language, whereby a known and understood and above all meaningful world emerges Husserl called intentionality.

It is by this act that the world of objects as they exist (which we cannot know) is transformed into the world as it seems to be (which

is all that we can know), a world which by its nature cannot be other than replete with meaningfulness.

To do phenomenology is to step beyond facts, whether in the world or in the head, and go directly to meanings -- how we constitute the facts.

"Facts" are equally things, ideas, sensations, feelings or anything else which a human being in meaningful response to his world as he lives it might "have" in "mind."

Husserl moved from the linear sequence of meaning construction: jumble → ego + senses → imposed order → world as we know it (the idea that we impose meaning on a neutral world) to a reciprocal sequence:

jumble → world as we know it ← consciousness (the idea that the jumble of what is there and our individual and even perhaps our joint consciousness (32) of it meet in a crescendo of meaning).

In phenomenology reality as it seems to be is bracketed, (that is, noted and set aside) so that the larger context, which includes the constituting consciousness, can be explored. This exploration always takes place from within the system. There is no pretension to the status of a "super observer" and there should be no confusion with the notion from experimental science of observer bias, because the intentionality of the observer cannot be corrected for, it is intrinsic to every situation. Through bracketing we can say who we are, what the object we are experiencing is and in what manner we are interpreting that experience.

In order to define the manner of our experience we are forced to look at an object as it is framed in a temporal context for us.

An object is not merely what we synthesize it to be within the rather narrow stretch of the present but we add to our present experience of an object the reminiscences of the past and the anticipations of the future. An object is not only its present: it carries a past with it.... Above all, an object is what it is in virtue of predictions that we make about its behavior in the future (33).

This future behavior provides a horizon against which the present behavior of the object is seen. The horizon itself can be seen in those situations, such as the one presented here, where surprising or unanticipated behavior takes place.

Of the followers of Husserl, each of whom have adapted and expanded particular segments of his extensive work according to their personal vision, there are two who hold particular interest for a student of communication: Alfred Schutz and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Schutz

When examining events within an interpersonal context as we are here, the work of Alfred Schutz (34) provides phenomenological insight. In everyday life the 'fringes' or context of behavior has special importance as we distinguish between likely and unlikely interpretations. Sliding transitions rather than sudden awakenings are the rule. The matter of choice in action takes on a quirkiness and imprecision which maddens the scientist and reflects the complexity of social life.

Ordinarily, according to Schutz, we are not called on to act in the rational mode. We instead rely on stock responses, mechanically apply and reapply precedents, continuously draw analogies and often tenuous parallels. It is only when a surprising situation arises that we are confronted with the alarming exceptionalness of those things we so deeply took for granted.

With Husserl one would start with the inner personal life as the beginning point of inquiry into the situation. To this Schutz joined the contextual thinking of Bergson and James and his own interest in sociological rather than psychological concerns. According to Schutz we naturally see an inherently social picture of reality. It is "from the outset, not the private world of the single individual but an intersubjective world, common to all of us, in which we have not a theoretical but an eminently practical interest." (35)

Schutz provides insight into the mutual-causal process through which the intersubjective world is formed. He suggests that the course of an act, from the point of view of the actor, depends on the following conditions: the interpretation or misinterpretation of the act by observers (given verbally); the reaction by other people to the act and the motivation assigned to it; the personality and type of the actor and other "soft" categories: intimacy, familiarity or strangeness, socio-historical context, etc. "Being silent" is obviously an act in this sense since the concept "silence" means nothing if there is no one around to hear and interpret the silence.

If it is true that social reality is constructed interactively then every concept which is held of us represents a taboo against our expression of other interpretations (as we are intuitively aware, for example, when we prepare a list of guests to an unstructured event) just as every concept that we hold "represents a sort of taboo against other possible sources of meaning, simplifying and unifying the manifoldness of life for the sake of action." (36)

Therefore, not only is it true that we can only really be silent when we are with those who are able to listen to our silence, it is also true that we may be caused to emit a negative silence with certain individuals and a positive silence with others. Silence has meaning provided by the listener and the silent person.

Merleau-Ponty

For Merleau-Ponty (37) this mutual exchange through which an act (in this case silence) comes to mean something is itself the cause of that meaning. Merleau-Ponty drew attention to the social act itself, that is to the act of communication, as the process by which meaning was developed in the world.

When a person interacts with another person a special case of intentionality occurs because it is reflexive, moving from simple consciousness of something to consciousness of something which is conscious of us. Here we emerge into the possibility of a jointly constructed experience. We don't fail to attribute to others a consciousness of the world compatible with our own, nor do we fail to both reassure ourselves of this compatibility and manipulate others' awareness through dialogue. Dialogue constantly reassures of the drift of common experience.

The process of reaching the point where we have established predictability in interaction is limned by the development of what may be called a chatter relationship. Using this terminology builds in two essential attributes of chatter:

1. It is found throughout the primate kingdom
2. It is loose and idle

Such a relationship is characterized by a relaxed and informal feeling. By this chatter is distinguished from "small talk" which is formal in tone. In chatter the symbols used do not have to be attended to. The proportion of conventions and pre-fabricated speech-blocks, such as insertions from television commercials, can be very high. As a result the amount of meaning or new information contained in chatter is low. Meaning contained at the symbol level is not important however, while pattern matching seems to be. A very basic medium is being established: the message is "you and I share a common world." For this reason learning how to chatter may be as basic to human development as learning to crawl.

And keeping up a certain number of chatter relationships may be basic to what we call sanity. The affective sense of a chatter relationship was conveyed by one of the respondents when she said: "there we were, talking away." This wash of words on which deep and shallow understandings alike are carried is the very medium of human communication. Silence takes it away.

Misunderstandings and, even more, silences take us to a disconcerting place. The world full of our meanings for it has become our primary world, the world which we knew before language is an impossibility for us. Yet, the world without our meanings is there, and we see it when another person says to us, "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all." (38)

Even more, to be faced with another person's silence is to be faced with our own death. Language acts assume future prospects (39). A child who yells, "mom" from the living room wants to be reassured not

that the mother is still there but that he is. However, acknowledging this we encounter an unavoidable paradox -- if I call out and the other person is silent it may mean that he does not hear me, that is, that I do not exist. Yet when I am answered I always am answered by another whose views of me are not consistent with my views of myself, who in the act of answering negates the only authentic me. As Merleau-Ponty expresses it, simple contact with another "causes me to lose the assurance which I enjoyed in my solitude of having access to the only being conceivable for me, being that is, as it is aimed at and constituted by me." (40)

Yet all the same it is we ourselves who make the decision to suffer this loss (which our calling out to another anticipates) in order that the sharing experience -- the "we" relationship -- can be felt again. The greater our sense of who we presume we are the more intensely this paradox is felt.

The giving up of speech by the subject of this study universally produced a disturbance in her relationships. A reduction of the degree of this disturbance seems to have been attained when individuals with whom she interacted were able to answer for themselves the question "Why the silence?"

ATTRIBUTION

Causal attribution has proven a central theme of phenomenologists. In "Social Perception and Phenomenal Causality" Fritz Heider (41) emphasized the important influence of attribution on states of mind.

Our reaction to a disagreeable experience ... is greatly influenced by the attribution to a source, which we may see in

another person, in the workings of chance or in ourselves. The same datum may mean aggression, misfortune or a stupid mistake.

In attributing a reason to Vera's silence observers were constrained both by the desire to give a reason which would allow the quickest return to the comfortable point of stock responses (the mechanical application and reapplication of precedents which verify that the world exists in the same old way) and also by the need to find a believable reason. If we give a reason for a behavior then "it is assumed that the behavior was actually evoked by the reason which we adduce when offering it as an explanation, rather than being just accompanied by the reason or simply compatible with having it." (42)

Because we understand that both the point of stock response and the belief that a particular reason is causally efficacious are bound in the context of particular lives, we anticipate that various observers will provide rather different explanations of any event.

The observation that different witnesses of an event may have separate and conflicting opinions as to what happened is certainly well documented. That different observers may maintain different and conflicting interpretations of an ongoing situation in spite of the fact that

1. they are talking to each other, and
2. they have access to information which would bring their
different viewpoints more into accord

is also receiving attention.

This type of situation has been labeled the Roshomon effect (43), an effect which happens when "the same story, told from the point of view

of several participants, fragments into several different and incompatible stories." Study of this type of situation depends on an adequate base of phenomenological theory.

Any situation is open to multiple and conflicting interpretations, but some situations, due to their puzzling nature are intrinsically ambiguous and may be less open to resolution of multiple conflicting interpretations.

One well studied ambiguous event was Van Gogh's self mutilation and presentation of his severed ear to a prostitute. William Runyan (44) has undertaken to review the varied and conflicting explanations of the Van Gogh self mutilation episode offered by various researchers. He presents thirteen such stories, all of which seem equally plausible to the uninformed reader. Following the examination of the stories relevant facts which were available to, but not necessarily used by the authors of the several explanations are presented. In some cases researchers have brought in extraneous or anachronistic materials in support of their claims. The reader is led to conclude that certain of the explanations are exceedingly more likely than others.

In general it may be true that through critical analysis one may determine, for many cases, a single best explanation. The phenomenologically oriented researcher is, however, not content to leave the situation thus. The meaning of the event having been resolved, he is curious about the meaning of the variety of analyses. The varying viewpoints themselves become the new data for consideration. In facing a new or puzzling interpersonal situation each of us are analysts.

"The views varied because each analyst did not look at all the relevant

facts" has a distinctly unresolved feel to it. Why did each analyst stop where he did? Why did he not reach out for more information? What determined the explanation he would be satisfied with? How did he know he was done? And, in general, what are the modes of selective attention which people use to validate their perceptions? The remainder of this thesis is an attempt to give a clearer understanding of the nature of these questions and some possible answers.

CHAPTER III

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

As a model for a later chapter in which a number of other persons' views on Vera's period of silence are catalogued I wish at this point to present my view of Vera. My predilections influenced what I saw in the same way that their predilections influenced what they saw. Because of certain beliefs I held, Vera's ideas about and use of language were of great importance for me.

PROBLEMS WITH LANGUAGE

It is a basic assumption of mine that there is a kind of person for whom words are vehicles full of themselves, for whom words are alive in a very important way. If this lively unpredictability of words leads to a rich contemplative life, it also at times can lead to interrupted communication -- interrupted by an uncomfortable awareness of the distance between the intention to mean a given thing and the effect of the words being used. This kind of person can begin to feel used by words, cluttered, taken over, out of control. For no matter how carefully one chooses words, accidents of meaning happen -- a sentence becomes a sentence, a judgement passed on the immediate past of the figment that inspired it. Yet we must live together in a world smothered in words.

The awesome physiological difficulty as well as the enormous frustration involved in matching symbol to desire is displayed by the aphasic and hebephrenic disorders: "Hand me the pipe (knife)." "I want to go down, brown, town, city, kitty." In these conditions pathology is apparent in both verbal and non-verbal behavior (45).

The formidable responsibility of being held to your words and known by them is displayed by the reticent speaker and the elective mute whose tensions are fear-inspired. Elective mutism, which usually appears in childhood, is characterized by tightly pursed lips and rigid posture. The elective mute distinguishes between situations which are safe and those which are unsafe for verbal communication (46). Unsafe situations usually involve groups and/or strangers.

In literature, particularly in poetry, the problem of words and silence is both described and demonstrated. The poet seems to hold these two things, talk and silence, at arm's length and extract from each of them the promise of meaning. This process is a conscious one and poets have perhaps spent more words finding the feeling of the language dilemma than have either psychologists or philosophers. We have, for example, the following description by Faulkner (47): "... we had had to use one another by words like spiders dangling by their mouths from a beam, swinging and twisting and never touching ..." followed by a demonstration of silence later in the same source:

I hear the cow a long time, clopping on the street.
 Then she comes into the square. She goes across the square,
 her head down clopping. She lows.
 There was nothing in the square before she lowed, but it wasn't
 empty. Now it is empty after she lowed.

In the case at hand, Vera, the individual who has elected not to speak, has a deep and persistent suspicion that the act of communicating will wear and perhaps rend the fabric of the self no matter how successfully the communication is achieved.

There is a sense in which less successful message delivery -- the most minimal, the most ambiguous -- being less strenuous for the initiator and less invasive for the recipient may yield better communication. It is significant that the characteristics minimalism and multiplicity of meaning are the characteristics of poetry: Vera is a published poet.

Poetry, as Archibald MacLeish (48) has pointed out, is the relating of things which have not logical but counter-logical, symbolic and intuitive connections. Poet Kenneth Rexroth defines the act of creating poetry as the problem of turning primitive disorder into sophisticated disorder. For Appollinaire poetry is a compass pointing all four directions at once.

Language allows us to make poetry. In talking to one another we often describe scenes and state facts in order to convey meanings which abide elsewhere: "The dog is sleeping" we say, meaning: (we can safely pass). "The dog is sleeping" we say, meaning: (the dog is not dead as you suppose). "The dog" (my inner demon) "is sleeping" we say, meaning: ([let sleeping dogs lie]). According to Kwant (49), we always say more than we know.

We know what we say, but it is also true that we always say more than we know. The words we use, the language we speak, and the structures we utilize contain latent forms of visions which do not entirely escape us but yet are not wholly understood.

If we wish to concentrate on the meaning, as I believe Vera did, rather than the words, we are immediately led away from the world of verifiabiles and into the world of operatives.

If we wish to apprehend the "manifoldness of life," rather than separate meanings, then we must let go of verifiabiles and also renounce conventional human interaction, at least for the duration. The phenomenological process of bracketing reality begins to look much like the Zen act of quieting the mind (50).

However, and this is essential to understand, once we have achieved our holistic insight we are stuck with it, we can make poetry but we can no longer make sense.

Part of what I have available as I try to make personal sense of Vera's silence are those things which she herself wrote and read and talked about before her silence, during the silence, and afterward. For me there emerges quite naturally a message which already has meaning for me and which concerns the nature of language. The problems of language are twofold. Words have power; and words are unstable. Silence has advantages.

Our daily experience leads us to the idea that words may not be needed. One can describe by pointing, and the effect may be to convey much more than words could do, depending on how near to you in space as well as nature the receiver of the message is.

Imagine a scene through a curtained window. Clouds are passing, there is light and shadow, trees sway, people are getting into a car across the street and laughing; through the partly open front door you can hear bird song, car sounds, the breeze. To indicate even a portion

of this to another person with words is impossible because either you will cause an improper focus -- as by saying "Look," or you will, in attempting to say it all put up a heavy word screen in the foreground against which it is impossible to receive the original thing in itself as it existed against a foreground of silence.

Or take the present case: to choose a way to describe it is almost automatically to ascribe (please note the word) a relationship between the subject and her speechlessness which may be false. Distinctions between the following forms are clear: she stopped talking; she renounced speech; she did not talk; she would not talk; she could not talk; she was quiet; she was silent; she kept still, etc.

FEMINIST OBSERVATIONS

In putting meaning to Vera's silent period I start with the assumption that she was in charge of her own silence. It suits the needs of my relationship with Vera that this be so because if it is not so, we are not equals. Therefore I begin with the idea that silence had special meaning for this silent person.

At the same time it should be clear that what the silence meant to her may or may not have been the reason for the silence. There is a point, as we shall see, at which I must confront the reason for the silence but the meaning of it remains more important. I construct the meaning out of myself and what Vera has shown me of herself. For example, here is a piece from an interview with Vera two years prior to the silent period taken as part of an oral history project:

My husband would get infuriated because when I got mad I'd just shut up and I wouldn't speak or wouldn't say anything and that

would infuriate him to the point (where he would) push me around a lot ... (but when he finally got the divorce) he got it on the grounds I read too much ... that I didn't neglect the children but I neglected ironing his shirts because I read so much. He used to tear up my library books.

In this example silence can be seen as either coping or as an aggressive tactic, or both. The silent person is unavailable when she retreats into books, giving attention to their words and not to his. At the same time she describes feeling silenced:

My alternative was to say just what he wanted me to say. Like Freire (51) says, part of oppression is the silencing of people whose opinions are not those of the dominant. Anything I had to say had to be silenced because categorically I couldn't be dominant or even equal. I was a woman.

Hostile silence is a tactic used by those who feel powerless. Silence defined the foundations of Vera's first relationship with a man. Perhaps the later silent period still held nuances from that time but there are indications of other influences. Not long after the divorce Vera "packed all the children in an old VW Microbus and the mattresses on top" and headed off to school in California. There she worked closely with Magoroh Maruyama (52, 53), then at the University of California, Berkeley. The focus of Maruyama's work at that time was paradigmatology, the effect of vocabulary on seeing. With a background in anthropology Maruyama had observed that the Navaho, with no word for the discrete moment must spend time differently, that sixteen words for snow crystallize life saving distinctions in the Arctic, that some problems only become problems in a certain language and that some problems are easier solved in one language than another. Recent researchers (54) have furthered this work by attempting to show that some kinds of sounds are organized in one or other side of the brain,

putting some physiological underpinning to anthropological observation.

Some years later when I was first introduced to Vera she was still fascinated by these ideas but had begun to frame them within a feminist context. She was concerned then about the use of the male pronoun (55) and "quoting men all the time." She was reading poems in 1970 with lines like (56):

knowledge of the oppressor
this is the oppressor's language

yet I need to talk to you

And she began to write her poems, approaching the page as she put it "with the burden of the precious/and eyes that do not see."

By the time of silence she had renounced, little by little, certain vices, smoking, eating meat, but it had occurred to her then that most sins are sins of speech, and that most of them -- praise and blame, definitions and interpretations, information, arrogance, small questions -- begin in the head. So when I asked her, "What happened to your voice?" I was not surprised that she wrote, "One thing, it silences the rehearsing of what you're going to say in the head."

She had written, "when the bough of language cracks/beneath the icy weight of meaning/will there be snow to break our fall?" Visiting her in silence, in a stifled house, a house sunk so deep in houses that not a single window looked out on anything green, conducting the little rituals required by silence, it seemed to me that this was, for her, a pleasant and natural enough interlude.

"Do you know the song, 'Further Along'?" she wrote, and "I'm reading Ames." (57) A continuing interest in words. "I'll know when the time has come to talk."

During this period she wrote very little poetry. Yet I could choose of what she had previously written numerous poems which seemed to give clues -- in which for instance she described herself as "inside/ a chrysalis of language/only to ripen ... captive/in my own enunciation" or this, called tunnel vision:

a woman is tunneling underground
 escaping the prison of logic
 counting her breaths
 sharpening the spoon

all the logicians of history
 are her jailers

A J Ayer swings the searchlight
 round the prison yard
 B F Skinner is the bookkeeper
 wearing an eyeshade
 high up in the warden's office
 St Thomas Aquinas is the prison chaplain
 the recreation supervisor is Rousseau
 the guards are all named Aristotle

actuality separates he said

the woman imprisoned by logic
 will escape tonight
 into the irrational dark
 she is even now
 tunneling through the blackness
 behind her eyelids

make a distinction says G Spencer Brown

if you hear of her whereabouts
 tell no one
 you will know
 how to communicate with her
 through the same tunnel
 she used to escape

The silence ended in the same undramatic fashion in which it had begun. It had proved after all to be temporary, if extended. To return to words was, in one way, to confer on them a kind of seal of approval -- as Adrienne Rich (58) had when she ended Cartographies of Silence:

If from time to time I envy
the pure annunciations to the eye

the visio beatifica
if from time to time I long to turn

like the Eleusinian hierophant
holding up a simple ear of grain

for return to the concrete and everlasting world
what in fact I keep choosing

are these words, these whispers, conversations
from which time after time the truth breaks moist
and green

Just as I am on the verge of concluding that the silence was a higher level, willful experiment with language and the silencing of the brain, that is, of adopting the view of this silence that its author seems to want me to take, I am stopped by the thought that after this episode she did not go with men anymore.

I am drawn back to the original interview, the first words which she said to me about her use of silence.

The unsubstantiated information which I have of this behavior, and which I take for knowledge, brings me back to a consideration of the possibility that the silent period acted as a transition, a long gestation, before the assumption of a modified identity.

But why did I think about that behavior at all? I had set up that possibility by reviewing all the things which seemed to me to be

related to this woman's use of silence. Whether the result is a marvelously adept hit of sleuthing or a spurious artifact is, in a sense, irrelevant.

We may consider this assertion, that silence for Vera had to do with her relationship to men and male language as one theme to which I, an observer, give special importance in determining why this person would be silent for so long. By theme I mean that piece of a whole which recurs with enough integrity that it is recognizable in spite of variations and may come to characterize the whole.

We have touched on a number of other themes important for me. For me, Vera's speechlessness has to do with women and their hidden knowledge -- out behind, beyond words -- which would split the world open, they say, were it manifest.

It has to do with insanity, witchcraft -- that magic umbilicus which ropes together the female generations. "They say Vera went crazy and lost her voice" -- Sanity/insanity, just another symbol with a certain currency.

It has to do with language, and in particular the American habit of filling up the silence with words, words, words.... "And she said the kitchen was filling up with words, and the words were cheese, knife, cupboard ..." I want to know. Has she abandoned the mystery-hall of language, the strange combining of words in the head, unbidden, that lets us see in new ways? Is her head silent? If her head is silent, from what source comes the laughter and the screams?

BEING "OF ANOTHER MIND"

At this point in the inquiry, after having given myself the task of discovering meaning in the silence and having discovered it, with Vera's help, in her relationships with men, (Problems with father, husband, lovers. Problems using men's words "Quoting men all the time.") and in her poetic awareness of the potential misuses and inevitable weaknesses of language, I am still faced with a very troubling matter. I need to know what acted as the immediate and persistent impetus which enabled Vera to maintain ten months of silence in spite of the counter force of social pressure which was operating. The pressures to be silent which Vera felt must have been stronger than habit and more intense than the desire to speak and the commands of others that she speak. The demands of silence must have been less than the demands of speaking. These pressures must have come from within. What form did they take? Answering this I must at last fully confront what I presume to have been the reasons for this silence. These reasons, philosophical, religious and, above all political, operated for Vera within what she now calls a delusional system. This system may be summarized as follows:

Vera wished to abdicate her position as giver of meaning. She pointed out a quote of the Tao, "He who knows does not speak." Vera wished to know. To this end Vera wished to stop sins of speech. More than anything, Vera wished the world to be saved. The salvation of the world might be accomplished if everyone expressed at all times the utter truth (59). However not only do those in power lie deliberately,

they also lie with the language: "defense" is war, a "family" is a series of missiles and so on. The lie becomes embedded (coded) in the language.

"Like 1984," Vera says, "the language is going and we will go with the language." To Vera it seems impossible that so many people would acquiesce in the world-threatening conditions she sees around her. Therefore she reasons that for most people the surface of the language has already dissolved and it exists only as a code to share necessary plans for how to change those things which at present make the world so wrong. Vera constructs a new and better populace whose every utterance, no matter how banal, in its underground meaning bodes hope. The proof of the underground is that it is not believable that the majority of people, facing extinction as we are, could speak such nonsense so much of the time. Having recognized this Vera immediately intuits that part of what allows this rebellion to continue is everyone's tacit agreement not to reveal the secret fact of the code. After the period of silence Vera writes a story which expresses some of this.

No matter what happens, she musn't tell. Not a matter of her safety, not her personal life, but something that affected the course of events. But of course everybody knew but they never mentioned it. Except in code. And she was supposed to learn ... learn what? Everybody was her teacher, her guru, but what was the lesson? She remembered the courage of the schoolmaster teaching "The Last Lesson" in Daudet's story. This might be her last lesson; if she failed, she would be outside forever. (60)

I am easily able to convince myself that in these notions of Vera's there is enough power to cause her to maintain silence a long time. I am less able to convince myself that she was "out of her mind" during this period. Much more pleasing to me is the theory that she was "of

another mind." This allows me to maintain my position as her ally; we remain capable of mutual assistance. I find in Vera's writing a piece which cements my interpretation:

It seems to me that we can profitably apply Wittgenstein's theory of language as a series of games to thinking. We have long thought that there was one process -- thinking -- but it may be that there are several different processes that have, like games, only their designation in common. For I am aware that mind can participate in many different processes. For instance, there is the stream of words such as I am experiencing right now. However, when I listen to music I play another game. And when I am doing mathematical sums with my mind, I am playing another game. Forms of alternate reality -- such as madness and mystical states -- can be described as games with rules different from that of, for instance, rational thinking ... Psychiatrists call this change "thought disorder." Actually since reality (what we can perceive) is governed by the constructions of the mind, reality can change.

It is an indubitable fact that some people actually are talking in code.

Taking stock where analysis has brought us, we see that I have approached the event of Vera's silence as a datum and have used my experience, my readings, particularly those things in which Vera would also be interested, Vera's own writings and things we have discussed together to bring about as quickly as possible the renorming by naming that I feel the event required. That is, these were attributes I constructed which gave me the sense of doing justice to Vera while reducing contact with her.

This chapter has presented my impressions of the period of Vera's silence, its origins and importance. It is tempting to assume that the following chapter, which introduces the view of medical authorities on these same concerns will give us a more neutral vantage. However, the thesis here is that the medical professionals are going through a

process in all essence the same as that I went through, that they wish to frame what is happening in a way that gives them control, just as I do. Following the medical report we will address more fully the matter of other persons' viewpoints, theme building and the application of alternative explanations.

CHAPTER IV

MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE

Explanations will be found for exceptional behavior. If we are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation ourselves we defer to those who make a profession of explaining individual differences.

After several months' silence Vera went through a period of severe agitation and was admitted to a mental hospital. The linkage of Vera's silence with the possibility of a psychological disorder presented a number of clear advantages to those who were attempting to continue relating to Vera.

1. It provided an established frame of reference within which Vera's behavior was out of her conscious control and therefore was not meant as a rejection of them.
2. It provided some culturally established behaviors: tolerance, dutiful attention, "visiting" in keeping with the sick role.
3. It encapsulated the period of silence as separate from the regular ongoing relationship and subject to different routines.

Hereafter it would be possible for those who wished to distance themselves during this period to excuse themselves by saying "I didn't see much of Vera while she was crazy" and expect that this distancing would not affect taking up the relationship again when the "craziness" disappeared, that is, when Vera began to talk again.

I interviewed two psychiatrists who saw Vera during this period. One of the two was quite communicative. In his opinion Vera was perfectly sane: "right on in her affect," as he put it. The other psychiatrist was quite the opposite. He refused to talk to me about this period, even to venture an opinion as to whether Vera had in fact been psychotic during this time.

When Vera herself asked this person to talk to me he again refused claiming that he was a better judge of Vera's self interest than she was. "She has the right of confidentiality" he stated, "but she does not have the right of revelation."

In our conversation it was clear that an overriding concern was that in presenting the psychiatric perspective of Vera's speechlessness along with and on the same plane with other perspectives the authority which allows the medical profession to make diagnoses and instigate treatment would be lost.

This psychiatrist clearly felt that the authority of his perspective should come from its position as more true than any other while I felt its authority was a result of the fact that this version of the truth was most desirable to a large number of observers.

CHAPTER V

VARIABILITY AMONG OBSERVERS

In the preceding chapters we have taken a brief look at the place of words, language and silence in the culture around us and in the life of the central figure in this case. Now we will change position and adopt the point of view of several individuals who interacted with Vera during her speechless period. The six women and four men represented here are, for the most part, relatives and old friends. It was difficult to find people who attempted to keep up their relationship with Vera during this time who did not have a long-standing involvement. Two of those interviewed were new friends, having made Vera's acquaintance during and just before the beginning of the period under study.

OVERVIEW

This chapter will expose thematized concepts of themselves and of Vera shown by our participants within the context of interactions with Vera during her speechless time. That these concepts are identifiably different from each other I hold to be related to the different explanations which the several participants provided for Vera's speechlessness.

While exploring this relationship in the interviews, some suggestive parallels were found between concepts of self and other and

explanations given by participants about the onset and maintenance of Vera's speechlessness. An attempt will be made to show how concepts of self and other and attribution of cause fit together into an explanatory system which works for each individual, enabling him or her to maintain a degree of contact with Vera. The amount of contact seems to depend both on each person's concept of the new relationship and on the practical realities of Vera's role in their everyday activities, that is, whether she is mother, housemate, patient, friend or sister. Invariably each participant felt that they had less contact and less satisfactory contact than they had had with Vera while she was speaking.

In summary, then, this chapter will use material contained in the interviews to illuminate these concerns:

A. Correspondences

The way in which the view of "self-in relation-to Vera" held by respondents corresponds to their perception of Vera's style of behavior (i.e. the meaning of the symptoms) during the period of speech renunciation.

B. Attribution

The relationship between these paired concepts and the assignment of causes (i.e. the origin of the symptoms) for the renunciation.

C. Maintaining Relationship

The relationship between explanatory systems (i.e. meanings and causes together) and the maintenance of mutual relations.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS: THREE THEMES

It is convenient to begin by formulating very briefly the alternative explanations that were given for the central figure's period of silence by ten other people with whom she associated during that period. In beginning here, there is a deliberate attempt to define a unit for study which displays meaning on its surface, rather than turn to a method of analysis which detects hidden meaning through an elaborate coding system for isolated speech units. It is recognized that meaning is to be found on several levels, that an investigator may be able to determine who is dominant in a relationship by counting the number and type of questions asked by each party without ever looking at what the questions were about, and that it is of some interest to be able to do so. However, here we are focusing on content rather than valence.

I sorted these interviews into three categories based on the salient story line.

The Poor Thing

This theme focused on Vera as victim and on ways earlier events in her life had brought her to this state. Hardships ranging from an early and stifling marriage to too many children to the general sexism of the society were cited as causes of her condition. Her efforts to counteract her situation, for instance by "reading too much," had, in a classic tragic pattern, made matters worse. Her speechlessness was portrayed as an affliction. Her future recovery was cast in doubt.

The Witch

This theme focused on the things which had happened in the past which showed an instinct for irresponsibility and passive aggression on Vera's part. Her speechlessness was portrayed as a weapon. Her future recovery was assured as soon as she got what she wanted out of the theatrics. What she wanted was "attention" or to "get to people."

The Saint

This theme focused on her genius, her sensitivity and her right to her own vision. Past poems and conversations were mentioned if they showed that this speechlessness was part of a system of controls Vera was using to come to terms with the world at a higher level. Vera's present situation fell into a tradition of eccentric genius, religious mystics, mad women writers and so forth. Some of those who held this view of Vera felt that the situation was no longer under her control. Her speechlessness was portrayed as a somewhat dangerous experiment. Her future recovery was problematic.

Information was readily available which would modify all three of these versions of reality and bring them closer to each other. Rather than try to forge of them a best explanation of the event we leave them disparate for now and focus on the needs which the different explanations may have met for their authors.

PERSONAL CONTEXT OF OBSERVER

There were a number of ways in which the participants in this study differed from each other. The most important of these factors, I felt, were the following:

Time-Investment In Relationship

Interviews brought out information on the number of encounters per week, and the length of time the respondent had been acquainted with Vera. Participants were felt to have a high time-investment in the relationship if it was high on both these factors. For example, if relationship pre-dated speechlessness by a year and encounters were weekly or more often, the investment and by extension the motivation for continuing the relationship were substantial.

Tolerance For Symptom

High tolerance for the symptom was exhibited by those who visited both publicly (that is, in the presence of those who were not informed about the situation) and privately and those who spent most of the visit in communication with Vera rather than structuring the visit around a mutual activity. Most people seem to have preferred a short quiet visit in private. They seemed to want to preserve as closely as possible the communicative interpersonal interaction that had existed before the onset of speechlessness made normal reciprocity and sharing of thoughts impossible. Some excerpts from the interviews may clarify the reasons for the desire for privacy.

I also feel when I'm with Vera when we're in public a whole lot of worry about how they're going to relate to her. Are they going to be nice to her, are they going to think she's weird. People who would only meet her through me. (Interview 3)

She came to the restaurant with my grandmother; the waitress handled it pretty well but she came back to me and said, "What's the matter? Can't she talk?" (Interview 4)

And I would feel like I should go over and see her and when I did it would just be a real uncomfortable scene. Sometimes there would be other people there who had also come to see her

and everybody would just be sitting around staring into space and not talking because nobody wanted to make eye contact. (Interview 8)

The problem with dealing with Vera's problem in public seems to be that it caused those whom she was with to focus on the tactics they were using or not using to maintain communication. Whereas they had chosen a public setting to emphasize her normalcy, in being out among strangers her difference was made more clear, exactly as with any handicap.

Most visitors, anticipating difficulty with the outside world, chose to make a private visit, and chose to structure this visit as if nothing very dramatic were happening.

Psycho/Social Orientation

Interviews brought out the fact that those interacting with the speechless person took positions regarding her speechlessness in which they either identified with her (ally), felt victimized by her (victim) or felt that they should take care of her (protector). These positions were not fully stable in some cases. Since this factor is more interpretive than the others, excerpts from the interviews will show how these three orientations were derived.

Victim

"Her silence cuts me off; I wanted to get back at her; ... she gets to everyone with this ... it appears to me to be very willful."

(Interview 1)

Protector

I saw no indication from her of playing any of those kinds of games ... I just try to make her comfortable and aware of

what she's doing.... I think just by acting normal with her it's had good results. (Interview 2)

Ally

Oh I think it is my suspicion, that she is experiencing things she never learned the words for.... especially because of her phrase "I tried to go through a door with my ego still on" I felt that there was some area of the self that she was trying to explore and wasn't able to somehow and has now given that up and has been left kind of handicapped.... I was curious. (Interview 3)

That these factors: time investment, tolerance for symptom and psycho/social orientation to the subject show little relationship to each other can be seen in the diagram below.

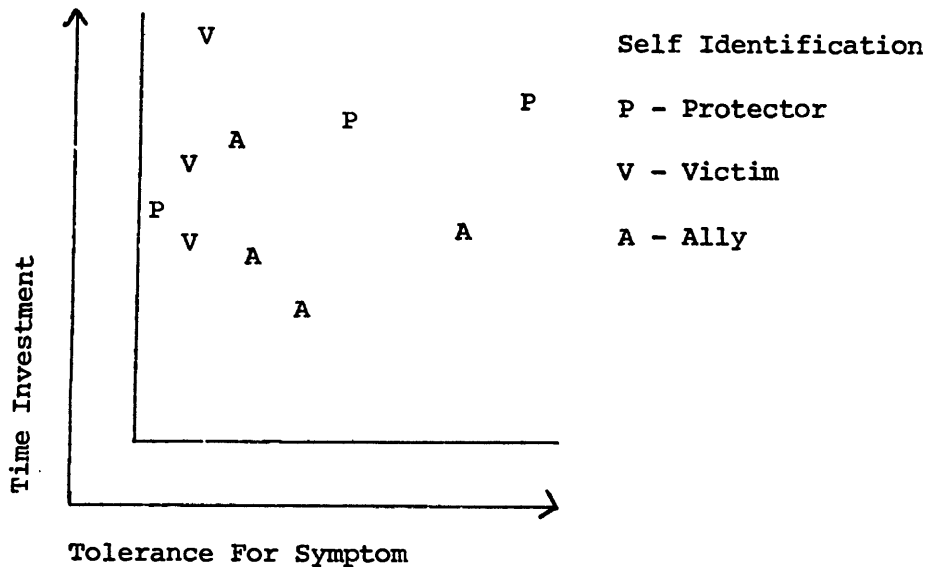


Figure 3. Relationship of factors on which participants differed.

With more data a pattern may have emerged showing self-identified victims as having the least tolerance as assessed by visiting behavior and self-identified protectors as having the most tolerance. This pattern would be in accordance with common sense.

It will be recognized that the three forms of psychological positioning (victim, protector, ally) are analogous to the three themes which were presented at the beginning of this chapter (saint, witch, poor soul), the one being the projection of the other.

The three themes are then, for the purposes of this study, considered to be dependent on certain external and internal influences affecting the respondent's relationship with the central figure. The diagram below shows the relationship suggested.

<u>Self Concept</u>	<u>Concept Of Other Person</u>
Protector	The Poor Thing
Ally	The Saint
Victim	The Witch

Figure 4. Relationship between self and other.

A study of the interviews confirms that in most cases descriptions of self and the subject are matched in this way. It must be remembered that we are paying attention here to the views that our observers hold of themselves and of Vera in their interactions with her. These views may or may not be reciprocated by Vera or indeed match other people's views of either. At least in two cases it was clear that a person who self-identified as victim was seen by Vera as protector and a person who self-identified as protector was seen by Vera, at least partially, as victimizer.

THE "WHY" QUESTION

With the addition of one other emphasis which was present in all interviews this diagram may be turned into a continuum. This additional emphasis was the puzzle of causation which was addressed by those interviewed by way of answering for themselves the "why" question. Observers volunteered that this question rose to their minds unbidden virtually at the moment they heard the words "Vera has stopped talking." However, social reality is so processed through language and so bound in history that at the moment of answering this question, by their very choice of the words "because" or "in order to" the respondents both revealed and constrained their beliefs as to what the answer would be. (I calls 'em like I sees 'em ... and vice versa). According to Alfred Schutz use of the "because" motif reveals a fix on past behavior -- as for example, "Vera stopped talking because she had gone nuts," whereas use of the "in order to" motif reveals a fix on the future, as in "Vera stopped talking in order to slow down."

Several reactions were possible in answer to the question "Why is Vera not speaking?" One was mere avoidance. In reacting with avoidance, however, the observer didn't entirely relieve himself of the need to explain -- so we see the pattern "She doesn't talk, don't know why, don't care to know, that's her business" -- in which the symptom is described, distancing takes place and rationalization follows.

A second reaction was explanation by series description -- this happened, then this, then this- - -. One of the interviews to a large extent shows this option, being a chronicle of occasions over a period

of years on which Vera "went nuts" and ending "one day she went nuts and she just quit talking."

By far the most common reaction, however, was causal attribution focusing on deliberate or willful determination on the one hand and unintentional determination on the other. Unintentional determination in this sense included physiological and psychological explanations of the "her body turned against her -- she can't help it" sort. Finding the behavior unintentional was an important part of acceptance of the new situation for several of those involved.

Figure 5 shows types of causal attribution to be found in the interviews.

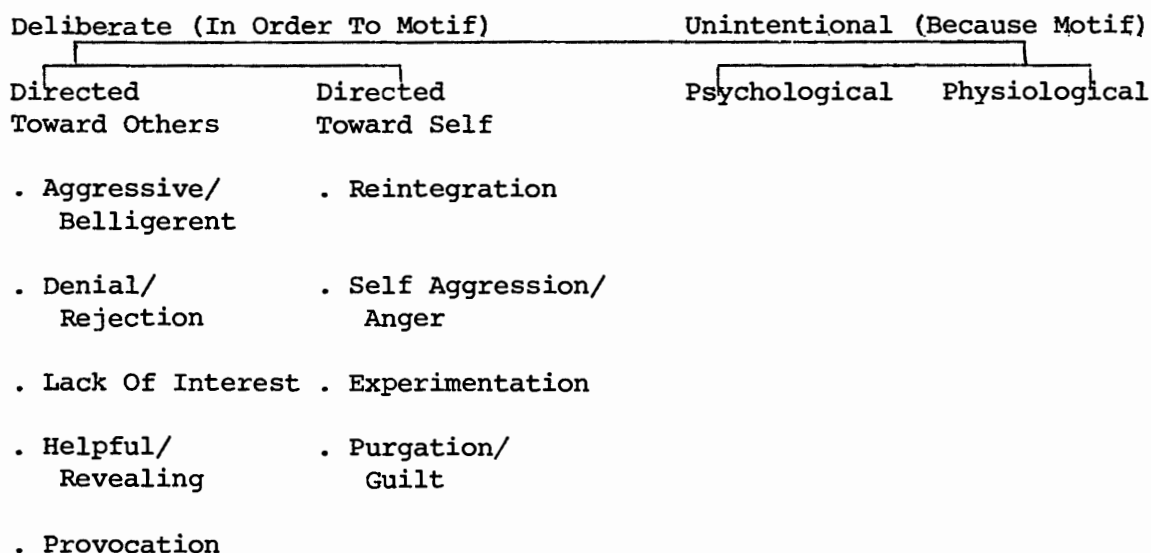


Figure 5. Causal attribution.

This figure reflects the fuller development of descriptions of deliberate causation. Clearly if someone is acting in an absurd fashion, is offering no explanation and you are not comfortable with the explanation "they can't help it," there will be some adjusting to do (58).

The discovered themes can now be ranged on a continuum which at one end attributes the cause of speechlessness to the most deliberate actions and on the other sees the speechlessness as totally out of the control of the speechless person. So expressed and matched with the earlier figure the themes fall approximately as indicated below.

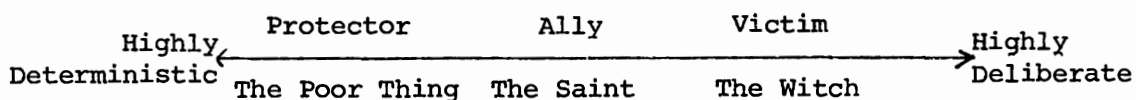


Figure 6. Relationship/attribution continuum.

In most of the interviews we find just this expected match between the story of the behavior, position of self in regard to subject and attribution as to the cause of the speechlessness. We expect people in responding to the extreme change in Vera to ask themselves how permanent the change is, then what has caused it and how fundamental is this cause. For some of the respondents there appears to have been great reluctance to move away from the belief in Vera's self-determination. Others immediately proposed the most deterministic of causes -- physical damage to the brain.

In assessing a new situation the observer will be looking for analogies within that set of possible explanations which are thought likeliest by culturally accepted authorities. In Western culture likely explanations are arranged hierarchically in order of acceptability from the physical and substantial through the psychological to the metaphysical and ephemeral. Physical explanations are considered the most satisfying. In the present case a laryngectomy would have been the most culturally acceptable way to explain this subject's silence

and, in fact, two of the individuals interviewed admitted that they explained the woman's silence in public by saying, "She can't talk."

One layer removed from this is another possibility that the subject "could not help it" -- that psychological forces beyond her control were causing the problem. Was trauma involved? Was she hearing voices? Some observers found these explanations so satisfying that they stayed with them even to the point of having to break contact with the subject when the subject's behavior did not support the explanation.

The last kind of explanation we are willing to take up is one which would suggest that the subject rather than wishing to talk and not being able to, wished not to talk. Now the "why" questions begin in earnest and a new dialectic emerges: if the subject can talk but wishes not to is that choice other-directed (the silent treatment) or self-directed (the silence treatment)?

Pulling back verbal communication has to be a social action. In order to maintain a portentous silence others must be brought in to observe it, they must notice the not speaking.

This is the sense in which people frequently give each other the "silent treatment." As soon as the not speaking is noticed it is invested with this meaning -- "a withdrawal full of hostility, rancor and sulkiness." (61) But after days of silence, weeks of silence, accompanied by sweet temper, what is one to think?

As much as the silent person wanted to tell her silence the visitor who receives her silence wants to understand. One does not observe previously existing relationships with only verbal communication

removed. Out of the tension engendered by withholding talk a new situation arises which brings new behaviors and adjusts old relationships. Silence brought tension, impatience and embarrassment to the woman's friends and finally acceptance or rejection of the friendship under the new conditions. Many saw an act staged to acquire power. Some saw an attempt to refocus, to cleanse herself of words, a kind of personalized "silence treatment."

Although meanings ascribed and reasons given in regard to Vera's silence varied, as we have seen, there were some common areas in the interviews. Response to Vera's speechlessness changed in predictable ways over time and tactics were adopted which were different from everyday reciprocal communication and were related to the phase of response.

CHAPTER VI

UNIFORMITY AMONG OBSERVERS

The preceding chapter investigated some of the variation among interviewees in ascribing meaning to and reasons for Vera's silence. This chapter presents two new elements: phases, and tactics of interaction.

PHASES

In the developing interaction between the speechless Vera and those who continued relating to her, response modalities went through distinct phases. These are:

1. Denying or making light of the situation. An expression of this in one interview was the following -- "At first I thought I could get her to come out of it, to talk...." (Interview 8); in another "her mother thought that even though she wasn't talking to other people she would talk to her." (Interview 7)
2. Reacting with guilt or anger depending on whether the observer saw himself or herself as a victim of the silence. Examples of this can be found in every interview: "I felt that I'd neglected (her) ... why wasn't I more there in ways that really counted ..." (Interview 3) And on the other hand "(Her) silence cuts me off and that is

painful. And the pain turns to resentment.... If she wanted to choose a symptom to get to people she gets to everyone with this one." (Interview 1)

3. Adjusting as the speechlessness goes on over months.

From three of the interviews: "We get along okay now, but I miss Vera." (Interview 4); "You know actually, in a way, it's like she's a different person." (Interview 4); "I didn't feel like I still had any rapport with her as a friend, you know, or that I could feel comfortable in confiding in her. She was more like a stranger sitting there very quietly." (Interview 8)

This last phase, in which the speechless person is seen as a new person is pervasive in the interviews and appears to be linked to the idea that this silence has a hidden meaning. Response and behavior of respondents moved in an uninterrupted fashion toward this endpoint. Over time unexplained silence begins to give the power advantage to the observer. After an initial period of activity, as described, strenuously directed toward getting the person to talk, there is an emotional adjustment phase wherein the observer prepares an explanation and set of routines which suits the facts of his or her own history and plans, leading to a tapering off of interest in the phenomenon and a tendency to summarize the person as utterly different.

Having gone through a process of attributing some reason for the speechlessness, we might expect that those around her could have adjusted less radically. Along with the adjustment there is a gradual lessening of contact. By the time of the interviews, six months or

more into the period of silence, contact was less than once per week for everyone except those who lived in the same house with Vera. A housemate commented --

A lot of her old friends who don't get anything from her when they come over here just stopped coming around. Friendship is a 50-50 kind of thing. One was spending a lot of time and that was Cindy. Cindy is a very rescuing, very mothering type of person ... But now Cindy has gotten busy. (Interview 5)

Vera, for her part, clearly intended to keep up communication. Her non-verbal behavior verged on pantomime,

... she'll get an expression on her face -- like um -- a sort of "OH" of surprise, and I'll know she has something she wants to say ... she has these two monkey dolls, that are child's toys, that she puts in different positions -- there'll be a happy looking position or a dejected looking position -- it's very simple. (Interview 3)

She wrote notes almost from the first, yet she was seen as utterly changed.

Taken together this means that moving from a speaking to a non-speaking mode of communication is something very different from moving from meat to a vegetarian diet. While the non-speaking person goes on relating to herself as the same person and may expect others to relate to her as they always did, a crisis takes place in the relationship and the responses of people to the new situation can be as abrupt and dramatic in their own way as the speechlessness is.

The old friends, in particular, whatever their orientation, now weave veils around their interactions with Vera. Something very troubling has been brought to the surface. It may be the recognition of the paradox: In order to "be someone" we must be observed, in order to be "ourselves" we must be alone. It seemed to several of those

interviewed that Vera was trying at once to be with company and to be alone.

But all of this is conjecture, one visitor goes to another, they compare notes, prepare theories. Everyone without exception is convinced that the silence means something. "One human attaches meaning to the silence of another human being because it is assumed that thought processes are occurring. Human silence is pregnant with meaning because of this assumption." (62) In this case, where the silence goes on unexplained and Vera refuses to recognize the frustration of others there is a note of betrayal of the trust of friendship, again leading to the adaptation: she is not the same person.

When people react to Vera as though she is a different person this is a recognition that her concept of herself may have changed. Given the facts that Vera was not socially identified by her friends previously as liable to this sort of action and was not giving sufficient explanation of it, the other choices available to explain the symptom, namely, that they didn't really know her or that the world is unpredictable, were less acceptable than seeing her as a different person (64).

Related to this is the fact that at some point in the silent period a new appreciation of the former relationship is established. One respondent (Interview 6) said "She's just so easy to ignore ... Sort of a shadow there, not really living" and compared this to the former condition: "Vera had given so much before. She was a warm communicating person." Moreover, during the initial response, and during the readjustment that follows, the person who has renounced

the act of speaking to others can observe their reactions and better understand what she had meant to them. For Vera is as though she has had a brush with death; for the others is is as though she has died. Removal of the speaking self, without prior explanation, is equated with removal of the self altogether.

TACTICS

Just as the feelings and objectives which participants hoped to obtain from interaction with Vera changed over time, the tactics, or method, of that interaction changed also. It becomes apparent after one has discussed the problems which Vera's speechlessness is causing those around her that the least disruptive of these difficulties involves the actual exchange of information needed in conducting the business of everyday life. Vera expressed herself by crying, laughing, stomping around; she pantomimed effectively, and wrote extensive notes on a child's erasable slate which she carried. Yet she was seen as "not communicating" because while having the physical capacity to talk she elected not to use it.

In choosing their response tactics many of the people I talked with at first tried to figure out what exactly it was that Vera wanted to get out of this behavior. Things would have been much easier if this step had been eliminated. The ten months of silence might have been acceptable if Vera had begun it by informing everyone of what she had planned and why and how long it could be expected to last. Alternatively if she had simply gone away out of their presence they would have been able to make whatever inferences they felt comfortable with to explain her non-responsiveness.

The fact that she remained there with her friends, expressing her unexplained silence in her own ways, at times even initiating communication, certainly seeming to expect them to communicate, thwarted freedom of speculation. Whole areas of conjecture were checked, and the sense of being a target for the silence may have increased for some.

It seemed to me in reviewing the tactics used by those in contact with Vera during this period that all the tactics had in common the aim of equalizing communication. Some novel solutions were to talk gibberish or dance. Several people expressed that they "slowed down" in the face of the slower written responses of Vera. Another suggestion made by several individuals was that they "simplified" conversation.

Being with Vera one morning for tea it seemed to me that the process of communicating was slowed and near empty. It was as though without words, without sound, we could not generate the substance to make vital conversation.
(Interview 7)

More deliberate were the choices to turn the tables and redress the perceived power imbalance as in:

There was a bit of getting back at her when I started using the slate too. Put us on an equal base. If it's going to take five minutes waiting for me then I'm going to make you wait five minutes too. That was the last time I saw her.
(Interview 1)

With other tactics there may have been the intention to force Vera to see what she lost by not speaking:

The other day she wrote a note to me and I didn't say "What is that?" I mean she came down out of her room with a note written on the board and she was carrying it around. She kind of laid it down to the side and helped me do something. I never asked her to show me the board or if that note was

for me or anything. I did kind of glance at it and saw that it was about getting some money for her. A couple of days later she did hand it to me -- ask me to get some money for her. Which I forgot to do. See this is where it really gets difficult. Somehow I get this feeling I don't know where it comes from -- that she's punishing me. You know that I haven't quite lived up to her expectations. That can really just wear out a person too. (Interview 5)

Both these examples are taken from interviews with persons who felt victimized and saw Vera as having gained power through silence. These interviews see abdication on Vera's part of her share of responsibility for mutual construction of the interpersonal field.

In part the slowdown was intended to pressure Vera into talking. Slowdown tactics were part of the pressure used in the earliest phase of response.

"During the time when she was incommunicado," suggests one respondent, "there were ungodly pressures on her to talk, especially by the medical profession." (Interview 7)

Vera spent several weeks in a mental hospital during her silent period. The tactics used by the staff at the hospital were seen by some participants in the present study as punitive.

I didn't want to leave her there with nobody to come and see her because, you know, those guys have her all locked up and they can do anything they want ... I'd come and see her and she looked just terrible and she was obviously all drugged and they wouldn't give her her teeth and they took away her glasses and there would be this terrible food when they brought her food and it just broke my heart. But she wouldn't get herself out of it. Pretty good punishment. (Interview 4)

Vera said like they'd try to get her to talk by putting her in solitary confinement -- which they called the quiet room -- she wrote me that -- then she wrote "But I fooled them, I just did yoga." (Interview 3)

As time went on and relations moved into the reactive and adjustive phases I had the sense from the interviews that people simply

lost patience: "Gibberish, painting, writing are freeing for a short while but limited. As communication it is limited." (Interview 1)

And having lost patience with discovering why it was happening and correcting it they formalized the relationship and prepared to let it go:

I talk to her in the ways I learned to talk to my grandfather who has aphasia. I think up questions for her to answer.... I take this as a challenge to my ability to communicate. (Interview 3)

Another adjustment:

I would try to arrange things so it was comfortable ... I would think of a whole bunch of activities we could perform so that talking didn't become an issue. She would just sort of stand there and I would say "Here Vera, here's this to look at and here's that to look at." (Interview 10)

And another:

Sometimes I've been feeling, I get to feeling really impatient with her, and I feel that not talking is just giving up all sorts of responsibility toward other people ... One time we were having a house meeting and Paul and I were having a hard time communicating. I wanted him to clarify what he was saying and Vera was sitting kind of between Paul and I and I was trying to talk to Paul and he would say one thing and I would say one thing. And she would sit there, nodding her head and shaking her head and it made me so angry because here I was trying to communicate and she was really interfering with this very intense communication she was making and completely confusing the issue even more -- and finally I yelled at her -- and she got up and walked out of the room and went up to her room for awhile then came back down -- I mean she had to be there. It was a house meeting and we had to have everybody there. She came down and put on a cheerful face. I don't know what she was thinking. (Interview 5)

Toward the end of the period of silence nearly everyone, including Vera's family, had drastically reduced contact. Her housemates were contemplating asking her to leave in order to "relieve themselves."

After ten months of silence Vera began speaking again quite normally one afternoon. Her friends and family welcomed this development as though it had been anticipated:

It was real nice when she came in when she was talking. I mean a few days afterwards we had a real nice morning just talking away. It was quite a difference in the tension level. The physical feeling of having her back. (Interview 10)

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a number of portraits of Vera and of relationships which developed during a ten month period during which Vera did not speak. Each participant in the study, including myself, developed his or her own portrait during an informal taped interview. In addition my knowledge of the length and depth of Vera's relationship with each of the participants and my long conversations with Vera before and after the speechless period provided material.

CHOOSING AMONG ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

There was sufficient material in each interview to separately address four aspects of interaction as it had been affected by the central event of Vera's speechlessness. For clarity let me review those aspects: causation, (Why is Vera doing this?); valuation, (What does it mean to others that Vera is doing this?); phases, (How do feelings change over time?); tactics, (What behaviors are taking place between Vera and her associates which allow the speechlessness to continue and, at the same time allow the relationship to continue?)

In taking up the topic I had expected to find and report relationships between interpretive explanations of the behavior and tactics used to maintain or terminate the relationship. What I instead found was that people with very different expressed beliefs about what was

happening to Vera, and why, were going through similar phases and using similar tactics in adjusting to the new situation. In other words there was a variety of explanations in contrast to a uniformity of behavior. Some, who saw the speechlessness as a form of handicap, sympathized more with Vera and may have treated her more gently than those who saw the speechlessness as willful. However I took this difference as less essential than the fact that in either case Vera was seen as utterly changed and a process was started for ending the relationship.

That perceptions (truths, realities) differ markedly has become the normal paradigm of physical and behavioral science, but little work has been done to assess how these various perceptions may be determined and how they affect behavior.

For any observer of an event the event is seated against a fuzzy norm for causation and against a fuzzy norm for valuation. If the event is a behavior produced by an individual that individual also will act as an auto-observer providing his or her own interpretation of the event. Is this interpretation to be given more weight than those provided by observers $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, \dots$ etc? If so, under what rules? If given the same or equal weight, what rules apply? An investigator (decision maker) acting within the new paradigm and seeing himself as a professional super-observer may wish to make predictions as to the likelihood of the truth of one observation over another without approaching the event directly. Correct determination of the meaning of the event may be important for action or policy. For a variety of

reasons it may be impossible to "go to" the event. It may, for example, have taken place in the past.

Each observation increases the difficulty of the decision unless each observer shares norms or unless each observer assigns some probability to the likelihood of his preferred version.

The more shallow the definition of the event the more it loses touch with norms and the easier it is to take action or develop policy regarding it. For example, if speech renunciation is schizophrenia the treatment is shock therapy.

On the other hand better decisions may be reached by reducing uncertainty about what the event means by knowing what is going on in society (the norms of various observers) and in the decision maker. Figure 7 illustrates a reduction of uncertainty in this manner regarding the study at hand.

It is essential to realize that none of the sample spaces in this figure contain the truth, however certain views may be more workable, more valuable, more ethical and so on. The thing called reality which we are describing is a thing of dimensions unknown; truth does not reside in boxes. This is a pragmatic exercise. Leaving truth aside one decides if a response to the event is necessary; then the range of choice of that response (i.e. continuation, change, death, inconsistency); then who has power to effect that choice and so on.

A transpective phenomenological inquiry provides the investigator with a range of possible choices for the meaning of an event, each derived from a presently accepted relationship with the central person. It has not been possible to show that tactics consistent with

1	I 1A	II 1A	III 1A	IV 1A	V 1A
2	I 2A	II 2A	III 2A	IV 2A	V 2A
3	I 3A	II 3A	III 3A	IV 3A	V 3A
4	I 4A	II 4A	III 4A	IV 4A	V 4A
5	I 5A	II 5A	III 5A	IV 5A	V 5A
6	I 6A	II 6A	III 6A	IV 6A	V 6A
7	I 7A	II 7A	III 7A	IV 7A	V 7A
8	I 8A	II 8A	III 8A	IV 8A	V 8A
9	I 9A	II 9A	III 9A	IV 9A	V 9A
10	I10A	II10A	III10A	IV10A	V10A

SAMPLE SPACE I	SAMPLE SPACE II	SAMPLE SPACE III
Meaning to interviewees	Meaning to subject	Meaning to researcher
1. Victim/witch?, Deliberate, Other-directed	I. Metaphysical/poetic	A. Friend
2. Protector/poor thing, Unintentional	II. Physiological/biochemical	B. Student
3. Ally/saint, Deliberate?, Self-directed	III. Psychological	C. Phenomenologist
4. Ally/saint, Deliberate, Self-directed	IV. Pragmatic	D. Positivist
5. Victim/witch, Deliberate, Other-directed	V. Historical	E. Feminist
6. Protector/poor thing?, Unintentional?, Psychological	.	.
7. Protector/poor thing, Unintentional, Physiological	.	.
8. Victim/witch?, Deliberate, Self-directed	.	.
9. Ally?/saint?, Unintentional	etc.	etc.
10. Ally/saint, Intentional, Self-directed		

Figure 7. Perspectives model.

these various perspectives dovetail into the behavior of the subject to form several distinct self reinforcing realities. Instead it emerged that explanations were much more various than ways of acting. Pragmatically it would seem that giving attention to various explanations, meanings and so forth makes no sense. However, without the underlayer of assigned meaning something very silly and a bit annoying seems to be happening. No one in the study is treating anyone else very well.

Harré and Secord (64) have proposed that social behavior is action mediated by meanings. However, what this study partially exposes shows the circumstance of social reality to be action accompanied by meaning. The mechanism of interrelationship goes on functioning while meaning is being generated. Perhaps the action and its companion meaning mediate what follows.

LANGUAGE AND CHATTER

When we refer to meaning we always are talking about language -- the effect of words. Action unaccompanied by words becomes meaningless except in those cases where some other highly ritualized and mutually agreed on system accompanies action (65).

Will knowing the meaning an event holds for an individual allow us to say anything about how that individual will act? Although it appears that language names our relationship to the surrounding world as expressed in action, the inexactness of language allows disguises for our actions. We act for our survival. We explain our action also for our survival. Since the self has many levels the word "our" in

these sentences means different things. We may not be able to predict how a person will act.

The fact that language is available to us means that even actions themselves are ambiguous because they can be explained in various ways later. Events are informed not only by their past but by their future. "By waiting to see what will have happened we learn what it was we previously saw."

In the present case tactics and phases allowed family and friends to alter their relationship with Vera in the direction of reducing the amount and intensity of contact.

The reasons given, the narratives, the anger and excuses provided a base on which to reestablish a talking relationship at some later time and to effect adjustment in other relationships than that with the central figure.

Using an analogy from chemistry, language provided the open bond to which events could attach. Once bonded in this way the meaning of that event in that relationship was established. However, the movement of the unit as a whole was principally directed by forces in the surrounding medium, the involuntary pole around which all choice is made.

All of our respondents were impelled to end their relationship with Vera. Their culture had not provided them the necessary time, nor the necessary rituals to make communication with a non-speaking person feel natural. On the other hand, the various respondents were eager to be interviewed so that the language (personal meanings) which they attached to the event and which distinguished the respondents from one another might be formally recorded.

For the investigator these meanings are far more impelling than the actions. It is significant that Vera wanted the cement of long established cultural patterns to be stripped off -- for things to be absolutely stripped bare -- so that people could relate person to person and language would fly out the window. This remains significant even though people do not respond that way.

It is significant that those around her wanted to try out new ways to communicate. They discovered that the gibberish they were saying was defined by their English; their dance pantomimed spoken requests; slowing down got boring after awhile; but this was less important than that the attempt was made.

What all those involved were aware of was how important the missing chatter relationship was to them. A chatter relationship depends on and is the proof of a common symbolic code. Although not reflected in the dictionary, the connotations of "having a little chat" with someone, as this is presently being used, exactly reflects this meaning. The chat is meant to reestablish some common ground. In chattering (gabbing) one is able to lose oneself in the expressive act. While rational discourse and attention to public address are nearly always accompanied by an internal critical appraisal of the speaker's words and other messages, and by preparatory rehearsal of an intended response, chattering is not. Vera, in moving away from the symbolic code in common use to a personal code which made more sense to her in terms of world and personal survival, cut herself off from the possibility of chatter. Rehearsal and appraisal were constantly with her and she was subjected to a very noisy mind.

Additional study of the establishment and conduct of a chatter relationship might bring in anthropological insights: Is chatter and loose talk basic to all cultures? Is it perhaps at some level basic to primates? Developmental psychology might provide new awareness of the importance of chatter for adolescents as previously it established the need for play in children. The field of speech communication would determine if the act of chattering is a meta-message which supports a variety of secondary messages.

THE SHARED WORLD

Another and different area for further investigation involves following up the possibility that our practical interest in the shared world has to do with our survival. This may be true to such an extent that if the world we perceive as necessary and the world we seem to share with others are at variance we must establish a new shared world. We may need to both be able to share in a common world and to survive in that world -- for this reason we believe that others are speaking our code, we don't have to speak theirs. We attribute to others a consciousness of the world compatible with our own even if we have to jettison conventional interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues to do it.

In the present study three components of interrelationship were disturbed by the subjects speechlessness:

1. Behaviors -- released by internal cues which were triggered by a personally sufficient level of culturally determined criteria. Behaviors were structured by what was culturally permitted.

2. Feeling of Relating -- determined by the establishment and periodic conduct of a chatter relationship, evidence of a shared world.
3. Directional Tendency of Relationship -- determined by the compatibility and usefulness of the communication taking place.

Expanding relationships are characterized by a feeling of intense interest, of sharing and learning. Stable relationships are characterized by a feeling of comfort and of sharing and accepting. Terminating relationships are characterized by a sense of distinction from the other. One explanation of what happened in the relationships around the subject is that disturbance of behavior and the feeling of relating displaced the relationships toward termination.

With existing models it is possible to visualize how various types of information are exchanged but nothing about where the exchange is leading or how satisfactory it is. These things may be related and predictable.

Narratization and attribution were mechanisms which allowed the process to work by reducing conflict between the concept of Vera as the same person except for her unexplained speechlessness and the concept of Vera as a person utterly changed and existing in an absurd, private and perhaps privileged world of her own.

It is an important finding that in spite of all the various methods Vera used to communicate (writing, singing, screaming, laughing, pantomime, non-verbal expressions, sign language) the latter view, that she is "incommunicado" wins out. Not only is a shared symbol system a requirement for maintaining a comfortable relationship but a common and

facile medium is equally necessary. The "spoken world" is the field of interpersonal existence. The existence of this field needs to be acknowledged in interpersonal communication models.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE NARRATIVE

INTERVIEW 8

D -- Several days ago I had to go over to the house where Vera lives to measure my stained glass windows that are there because I'm going to sell them. I had to get an idea how big they were again. So I called -- did I call -- no. I tried to call and nobody answered the telephone and I thought that's good cause I don't want to talk to anybody there and I went on over and the house seemed to be swarming with people by the time I arrived (laughs), well anyway.

Vera was just coming in from someplace and C was there and so I just went in sort of brusquely and Vera was just taking off her coat and she looked at me and registered a great deal of surprise on her face and smiled (pauses) and it was very strange -- I feel strange talking about it -- so anyway.

So she looked at me in a way like she was really trying to open up communication -- just by looking at me and smiling. So I said "hello," and said that I had come to look at the windows. And I went around, just sort of went on my way and did the measuring -- uncovered the stuff in the basement so G could get to it. So then I went back upstairs and said that I would be going, that I had taken care of everything. C was getting ready to leave too so we both walked out the door at the same time. I forget what we talked about. Anyway, I got about a block away

and then I realized I hadn't measured the windows. I had just kind of cleared the junk away from them...

M -- Were you in a hurry to get out?

D -- Yeah. I think I was in a hurry to get out. (Laughs). I didn't want to hang around there and interact. So I got about a block away and then I realized I was going to have to go back and do it. And as I was coming back to the house C was also coming back to the house. I don't know what she had forgotten. But it was very strange. So I walked in and said "Forgot to measure the windows" (says brusquely). So then I hunted around for a measuring tape -- and I was looking in the kitchen -- Vera was fixing something to eat -- and she pointed to the other room where I could find a measuring tape and I went and wrote down my measurements and meanwhile C got what she needed and she left and so I felt a little more relaxed -- I don't know whether I was more tense about Vera or about C. I think perhaps about C. And just the house itself, that I hate so much. And I just kept thinking how am I going to get my things out of here in the next two weeks. And so as I was measuring the windows -- then in the front room -- Vera came in and motioned to me you know with this little sign you know, (makes sign in air) but she had also brought....

M -- (interrupts) Wait. Does that mean she's going to write?

D -- No (makes a sign again) about having a cup of tea. She was making the sign about tipping up a cup of tea to her lips. And, then she had also brought her slate in. Are you familiar with the slate she has -- she's gotten one of those magic write things you know. They're so much more convenient (edge of sarcasm) than carrying pencil

and paper around. So she had written on that "Tea" and she flashed that at me and I said "OK." And I went with her out to the kitchen then and sat down and started drinking the tea and -- I can't remember drinking the tea and -- I can't remember whether I said anything. I know I wasn't saying very much. And I don't know -- she wrote on the slate "LA" with a question mark and I said "yes" I was going to LA and was probably leaving in a couple of weeks and just kind of ran that thing down to her. And then she -- then we just sat there quietly sipping our tea and I can't remember if she asked -- I just think we sat there in silence. And I felt uncomfortable about looking at her. I just felt like I wanted to be someplace else, that, -- there wasn't any communication happening between us.

M -- Why did you feel uncomfortable looking at her? Was she looking at you?

D -- No. Looking at the table, or looking at her teacup, eating her toast. And every once in awhile she would look at me, occasionally, and I felt like she was waiting for me to say something.

I think I felt a little resentment about that. I felt like I didn't want to be obliged to make conversation with her when there wasn't very much coming back except you know, a smile or a nod. And. Oh. I had this hit about, well like I say, I felt very uncomfortable about the house itself, well like all the people in that house and the house itself was very oppressive to me and very hostile. And ... it was like I didn't want to say very much about my plans, or my feelings or anything -- you know I didn't feel like I knew where that information was going. I didn't feel like I still had any rapport with her as a friend you know

or that I could feel comfortable in confiding with her. She was more like a stranger sitting there very quietly. And finally, she wrote on the slate ah -- "Do you know anything that I don't know that you can tell me." An opening.

And I looked at it and I laughed and said "Well yeah -- I probably do." And then I said you know -- "I feel very uncomfortable talking to you. Maybe you should tell me what you want to know, ask me questions -- I'm not about to just sit here and volunteer information and not know what's happening to it." And so then she asked me some questions I can't remember what in particular. And so then there was a bit of a conversation. She said she was going to go to the movie with Ben that night. (M -- a written conversation? D -- yes) In fact she said to me Ben and I are going to the movies tonight and I sort of looked at her and I said, "Ben who?" I really couldn't quite handle that -- I said, "Oh that reminds me I really should write him a letter because he wrote to me last week -- and I thought it was high time we got a divorce. (discussion of cost of divorce)

M -- Well, are you still angry at Vera as you expressed to me before?

D -- No. I don't feel angry. One thing that she wrote in a note somewhere along the line and I don't -- I guess you know she had asked me how I was doing generally -- and finally I had got to the point where I said how are you getting along and what are you doing and she said, among other things, that she felt that she was surrounded by men in that house -- and I said that that must feel uncomfortable -- I don't think that I could deal with it at all. And then she said that there

are a lot less words in her head -- which really made sense to me because that used to be a big problem with her. And I thought "Oh, OK, so that's what this is all about, it's just cutting down the word level and maybe she's made a good decision for herself to not talk."

M -- Was this the first time you had talked to her though, since she's not talking?

D -- No. I had -- everyonce in a while -- I'd go over there and I'd get trapped into having tea. I don't feel that I can just walk out always.

M -- But this is the first time she's offered that explanation?

D -- Yeah. I don't think I've ever asked her before. There've been other times -- like several months ago when I had gone by one morning to see S actually, -- he wasn't there -- and Vera invited me to have some tea. I can't remember what we talked about. She was just writing little notes on paper then and I don't remember much being said. Very kind of empty conversation. Cause I hadn't -- I guess at that point I was just trying to play along with it and I hadn't gotten to the point where I could ask her questions like, "Well, what are you doing anyway -- how does it feel."

M -- How did you play along with it?

D -- That's a good question. Well, it was kind of like sitting at a table with a stranger in a restaurant when for some reason you feel like you have to carry on some unusual conversation because the two of you are sitting there having tea together. I didn't feel close to her and I didn't feel like we were really talking together. I felt like we were just being polite.

Last summer I had been very close to Vera. She was involved in a similar therapy group for awhile as I was. And she seemed to be making a whole lot of progress and doing some important things for herself and becoming more involved with people and active in the community and I saw it as -- you know -- getting back to being the person that I had known several years ago and I know that she had had these troubles and gone through these several breakdowns and anyway seemed to be really coming out of it and some very close friends had formed sort of a mutual support group both insofar as our personal development and the closeness of our relationship but also in regard to the book project-- writing poetry. So that she was very integral to this small support group and I felt very closely linked to her and then suddenly here she is not talking and just kind of generally going around being weird -- what I thought of as weird, like I go over to her house and she'd been dressed in a clown costume for a couple of days and was wandering around the house. But that was later on. When it first happened I thought oh -- wow -- Vera really needs some support and I need to put more time into this relationship and I went over a couple of times and I gave her a massage and I held her -- and I would really spend a lot of time with her. She was working through some extreme anger and would scream and storm around but she wasn't talking.

And then she persisted in not talking. And I would feel like I should go over and see her and when I did it would just be a real uncomfortable scene. Sometimes there would be other people there who had also come to see her and everybody would just be sitting around staring into space and not talking because nobody wanted to make eye contact.

M -- How long ago was this?

D -- That was around Thanksgiving.

M -- So this has been going on how long?

D -- Since a little before Thanksgiving -- So she seemed to be very depressed. One day I went over there and she was sitting around looking very gloomy -- So by way of making conversation I asked her how she was feeling and she made this sign with her hands of pushing her hands together which meant feeling depressed. And I said I think you really need to get out of the house and I need to run an errand out to Lake Oswego so why don't you come with me. We went out to the P's house and Mrs. P wasn't feeling too well. We went into the house. Now the P's have two dogs. They're very charming dogs. I know them well. The dogs made a great deal of commotion at first. I thought they were going to calm down. I went upstairs and I started talking to Mrs. P thinking I would just be a few minutes but it turned into a bit longer conversation. Well, meanwhile Vera was down in the living room and the dogs just started going crazy. And she wasn't doing anything but she was just being kind of weird -- wandering around -- very depressed. Maybe it was because she wasn't talking to them -- and they wanted some word from this stranger who had come into their house.

Anyway -- I went downstairs and fetched Vera to come upstairs and sit with me and Mrs. P. Anyway she came upstairs and sat on the bed while Mrs. P and I talked -- and she just sat there sort of glowering and gloomy and sad and so silent and I didn't know what to say about her. I said, "Vera's not feeling too well."

M -- Mrs. P didn't know.

D -- No and she hadn't met Vera and didn't know her and had no idea what was going on -- and I had little enough idea what was going on. So I just sort of said that Vera wasn't feeling too well. Which was pretty evident (laughs). Just sort of like a zombie sitting there on the corner of the bed while we're carrying on this frivolous little conversation -- just completely bizarre. And I was a little embarrassed by it and very distressed and so then we left, got back into the car and drove back to town. I was feeling a little annoyed by then -- harassed by the traffic on the road and by the whole situation and like I was totally responsible for the whole scene and Vera just sitting there being very depressed and not willing to talk or get any of her feelings out -- and there's nothing I can do except bear that weight of her depression. So then we get back to town and pull up in front of her house -- and I just wanted her to get out and go away so then I could have that weight off of me. And she didn't want to get out of the car. She was really dependent. She really wanted to be with somebody. So we sat in the car for a long time and I began talking with her -- you know -- talking about what seemed to be going on and the tone of my conversation was, "How much longer are you going to be doing this -- you know let's get it out and get it over with -- I really don't think you're doing the right thing for yourself. It doesn't seem to me that you're doing yourself any good at all." You know, I took it as a decision on her part not to talk -- that she was choosing to do that -- that it wasn't something that she couldn't help. So I really got into trying to make her laugh. And I did make her laugh a whole bunch and we could feel a certain rapport that way. But she still wouldn't talk,

I kept thinking that I could get her laughing about it and just kind of break through the whole thing and it would go away. And nothing changed. She would just laugh and then she'd go back to being quiet. So finally I said -- I've gotta go and she went, still I think a bit reluctantly, into the house.

I then -- I really didn't try to see her for a long time.

M -- That's when you were telling me you were real angry.

D -- Yeah. I just made the decision that I didn't want to mess around with that anymore. I still kind of feel that it's her decision. I think she could talk if she wanted to talk. Maybe that's alright for her. I still don't want to spend much time around her because it's I feel too weighted by that relationship so I'd rather not deal with it ... Maybe I'm just not too good at dealing with people in that state because I think I need to have a certain amount of support out of relationships when I can't get it then I just avoid the relationship. I'm not into being a dupe and I know there are limits to what I can do. Although I was very aware before of trying to be helpful taking her for a ride and giving her massages and so forth and thinking that surely, surely that would turn the trick and she would respond. But it's just a lot heavier than I imagined it would be.

M -- Do you think that you will write to her and that will be a different kind of relationship than trying to talk.

D -- I don't know if she writes letters or not. I could ask her I suppose, if she's interested in doing that. I don't know. I don't want to send my communications to that house. So I guess my main tactic in dealing with Vera is avoidance. I just don't want to have

too much to do with her. It's too deep for me. And so I just want to -- if I have to go to the house to just get in and out as quickly as possible and not get into any prolonged interaction.

REDUCTION

INTERVIEW 8

CONTEXT STATEMENTS

Self (Victim)

- I felt uncomfortable (mentioned 4 times)
- I was embarrassed
- I felt like I wanted to be somewhere else
- I felt obliged
- I felt resentment
- I don't feel angry
- I didn't feel close anymore
- I was a little annoyed
- I felt harassed
- Like I was totally responsible -- and there's nothing I can do
but bear the weight
- I'm not into being a dupe

Vera (Witch?)

- She was really dependent
- like a zombie
- like she was waiting for me to say something
- sad and so silent
- depressed, weird

- gloomy, glowering
- like a stranger sitting there so quietly
- (in my conversation with her) I didn't know where that information was going

ATTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

- Oh OK so that's what this is all about -- it's just cutting down the word level and maybe she's made a good decision for herself not to talk
- I took this as a decision on her part not to talk -- that she was choosing to do that -- that it wasn't something that she couldn't help

TACTICS

Self

- just sort of went on my way
- I didn't want to hang around and interact
- being polite ... like with a stranger
- I gave her a massage and I held her (initial support)
- Nobody wanted to make eye contact
- I did make her laugh a whole bunch
- avoidance

Vera

- She pointed
- She motioned to me with this little sign

- her slate
- She asked questions ... An opening
- She made this sign with her hands of pushing her hands together
which meant feeling depressed
- She would just laugh and then she'd go back to being quiet