

## ONE

### THE LOCAL ORDERLINESS OF CROSSING KINCAID

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A new colleague of mine at the University of Oregon stepped out of the elevator at the eighth floor and confessed in the hallway, “It seems to be a real confusion there in front of the bookstore—I try to avoid crossing there if I can.” About the same time, another colleague reported, “As a driver I find it frustrating at that intersection because so many kids just seem to walk without paying any attention.” The reader can catch a glimpse of what this pedestrian and driver mean by examining Photo 1.1.



Photo 1.1. UO Bookstore

There does appear to be a good deal of chaos reigning at the corner of Kincaid Street and 13th Street, where the majority of the University of Oregon's students, faculty, and staff enter and depart the campus each morning, evening, and whenever they need to visit the UO Bookstore, a bank, or one of the many restaurants and shops next to campus. Pedestrians jaywalk back and forth all day long, paying little attention to the endless stream of vehicular traffic that dead-ends at the campus and that is composed of cars, buses, ambulances, taxis, delivery vans of every size, et cetera. As these two antagonists vie with each other, cyclists and skateboarders weave their ways in between them, determined never to stop and with little regard for the one-way traffic lanes that were intended to render their movements predictable.

Persons new to crossing Kincaid occasionally suggest that "something should be done" about the chaos there. But as a matter of social organization, there is nothing at the corner of 13th and Kincaid that requires fixing. What is more, it is likely that no repair is possible. There may be some disorder, but the disorder there is durable, not amenable to remedy, reproduced all day long, and probably essential for the ability of the great many pedestrians and drivers who cross there to do so in an efficient and safe manner. Crossing Kincaid is a locally produced procedure that relies heavily upon the natural and learned expertise of the crossers who pay intricate attention to the task. Novices and experts concert themselves—experts teaching experts along with the novices—to ensure that the maximum number of crossers can be accommodated at all times. At first sight, the busiest crossing at the entrance to the UO campus may look like confusion, but despite hundreds of ticketable offenses per hour the people who staff those crossings know how to figure things out for themselves; moreover, what they are doing there is far too complicated for any set of traffic rules to handle or improve. For the most part—for the vast majority of tens of thousands of daily crossings—pedestrians and motorized traffic work well together in coordinating a local orderliness, and their crossings are efficient and orderly.

It is not just that the majority of crossers know how to cross well—it is that they are experts. There are many venues in our everyday lives where objective rules or laws can contribute to the orderliness of the social interaction. In addition to rules, the locally concerted practices of the persons who staff those occasions contribute to the orderliness. In most cases the locally concerted practices are more important than the rules, and even in those situations where the rules and regulations seem to be more important, it is probably the locally concerted practices that are doing the heavy lifting. Perhaps there is a place where rules and locally concerted practices meet regularly, or it may be that rules have their origins in locally concerted practices, or that rules are one of the locally concerted practices. But it is

for certain that crossing Kincaid is one phenomenon of *local* order where the concerted practices are what is vital for the organization of affairs on-the-ground; however, these local procedures escape detection by most of the widely applied methods of professional scientific inquiry, methods that would include surveys, interviews, questionnaires, “content analysis,” document coding, and historical research.

#### THE HISTORY OF CROSSING KINCAID

The crossings at Kincaid are a well studied phenomenon. The first study that my students and I could locate was a 1952 survey of “the problem” there, which led to a decision to close off most vehicular traffic to the portion of 13th Street that runs through campus. This inaugurated the situation where the traffic on 13th Street dead-ends at the campus and must turn left toward the major thoroughfares or right toward the parking district, a decision that forces the flow of traffic to slow down, hesitate, and become congested just where the majority of the University of Oregon’s students enter and exit the campus on foot, by bicycle, and by skateboard. In 1955, the student newspaper, the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, featured an article, “How to Cross a Street,” that offered advice to students for making the crossing. This led the City of Eugene to formally acknowledge persistence of a “problem” there in 1956, when they requested an Oregon Highway Department study. Alarmed by the perceived threat of the vehicular congestion to some of the state’s brightest youth and following accepted general practice at the time, the authorities provided additional protection for the students by installing stop signs for all vehicles and by clearly marking the pedestrian crossings.

This remedy did not change very much at 13th and Kincaid, and there were calls over the succeeding decade for further studies of “the problem.” However, in 1973 a city report concluded, “The students already know how to cross. . . . So wasting money on a survey is pointless.” In that same year, use of the “Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices” (MUTCD) was applied to traffic statewide. MUTCD was a remarkable piece of governmental policy in that it recommended experimentation as the driver of changes to traffic design rather than rational theorizing in the abstract, thereby acknowledging that at most of the locations where traffic flow is problematic there will be too much going on for rational prediction to be reliable. All applications for a change in traffic design were required to be accompanied by a successful experiment that employs the changes being proposed. Since most of the problems at localities with heavy congestion are resolved by local orderlinesses that are autochthonous, *solutions can only be discovered* and not simply applied in reliance upon one or another theory of traffic flow; the legal authorities in the State of Oregon came to recognize

that it was problematic to manage the local orderlinesses with objective one-size-fits-all regulations and that even survey methods of field research may not be able to locate or accurately describe the local orderliness that is taking place, an admission that it is likely most mainstream scientific researchers would be unwilling to make.

Memos in the late 1970s began to entertain the notion that rather than the students of Oregon needing protection from the motorists, it was the motorists who required protection from the students. The problem the city was facing was that as the city and the university grew in size, the stalled traffic on 13th Street was getting backed up across the intersections one and two blocks west of the dead-end of 13th Street at Kincaid. Some of this traffic found itself stuck in the middle of these two intersections during red lights, freezing in place the city's cross-traffic at two vital north-south arteries there. Something had to be done to speed up the flow of vehicular traffic through 13th Street; simply put, the student pedestrians had become too successful at crossing Kincaid. So in 1988, the city removed two of the traffic control mechanisms that had been benefiting the pedestrians—the white crosswalk markings across Kincaid at the north corner of 13th and the stop sign that was restricting the flow of vehicles traveling east one-way on 13th. The resulting situation is depicted by this photograph of the situation today (Photo 1.2).



Photo 1.2

At the place where the pedestrian is crossing, there is no crosswalk; and the car attempting to turn from 13th Street onto Kincaid Street has the right-of-way, there being no stop sign requiring it to wait for competing traffic. Apart from continuous repaving of the area, made necessary by the heavy traffic there, the two white lines that are visible mark off a one-way bicycle lane (more imaginary than real for everyone concerned) from the bus lane to the right of the lines (lower left of Photo 1.2) and the vehicular lane to the left of the bicycle traffic flow (above the lines in the photo). Across the way, at the middle left of the picture, are cyclists who are riding across Kincaid into campus along 13th. While ordinary vehicles are prohibited from entering the campus (delivery and maintenance vans may enter), cyclists are allowed free access. Waiting at the south side of 13th (on Kincaid) for the cyclists to cross are cars on Kincaid who must stop at the posted stop sign on Kincaid. A quick glance at Photo 1.1 will clearly reveal the stop sign there and also the very largely drawn pedestrian crossing intended to attract the majority of pedestrian crossings; however, fewer pedestrians cross there than cross at the north side of 13th where there is no pedestrian crossing, and even the jaywalkers regularly outnumber the pedestrians who cross at the designated pedestrian crosswalk. Traffic flow is one-way on 13th Street, except for a very small one-way bicycle lane between the parked cars and the Bookstore, which runs in the opposite direction to the west along 13th. Traffic on Kincaid north of 13th is one-way going north, and the traffic on Kincaid south of 13th is two-way. While the traffic on 13th east of Kincaid is restricted to all but authorized vehicles, there is usually a steady flow of cyclists and skateboarders in both directions. In all locations, the pedestrians have the strength of numbers. The University of Oregon bookstore on the corner (see Photo 1.1), dominates the scene and receives a good percentage of the foot traffic.

Nothing that the city could do to enforce traffic law there could improve upon the pedestrians' and motorists' indigenous capabilities to manage their own affairs, and every time the city has tried to do to improve the flow of vehicles at 13th Street and Kincaid by enforcing the traffic laws the traffic jams only worsened. The city's traffic police told us that it was current city policy not to enforce city traffic regulations there and to keep away from the site (except for some daily observations on foot). They explained that when they do not enforce traffic rules the problems seem to resolve themselves! Something the people crossing there are doing manages to provide sufficient organization of the crossings and passings-through. With the added advantage of having no stop sign to impede the flow of traffic where 13th Street traffic meets Kincaid, the traffic flow along 13th was no longer backing up, while a maximum number of nonvehicular crossers could still get across safely. The solution rests in not enforcing traffic regulations.

So the question I posed to my students was “Why?” What is it that the people crossing Kincaid were doing that solved the problem without recourse to supervision and enforcement? More than that, supervision and enforcement only slows things down. Who are these people? They are bus drivers, skateboarders, bicyclists riding outside of the bike lanes, bicyclists riding in the bike lanes but in the wrong direction, especially bicyclists who will not stop under nearly any circumstances, pedestrians who keep stepping into the same bike lanes while staring at their iPods, other pedestrians jaywalking, still other pedestrians waiting dutifully and sometimes perplexed at the curb, a stroller who wears flip-flops in the winter rain and drinks his coffee as he casually seizes a right-of-way that is not lawfully his (and in the face of which the motorists sit frozen), law-abiding motorists who come to a stop at the corner where there is no stop sign, mothers with baby carriages using the carriage to help block vehicular access to the lane, and so on. The coherence of these people occupied with concerting their crossings is a unique kind of coherence. It is not just that there are one or two methods for crossing Kincaid, there are numerous local systems operating together, predictably and repeatedly. It is not the confusion that is amazing, it is the orderliness of the streaming flows of participants. To better understand the orderliness there, my students and I—armed with video cameras—recorded some 20 hours of crossings, divided up into teams, and analyzed the data carefully, crossing by crossing, on a digital video platform.

Generally speaking, human affairs proceed better when they are orderly; and laws, regulations, and local rules can assist in achieving an organization that provides efficiency, predictability, and safety. But not always. My students and I discovered that sometimes a local orderliness will proceed more effectively when rules are not adhered to slavishly; and there are common situations where the *smooth functioning* of affairs—a government office, a queue for service, an international crisis—makes it necessary *not* to follow rules. It is not as if rules exist so that God can be happy. Rules exist to facilitate a local orderliness, and wherever the local orderliness can be better served by not following rules, the rules may not be enforced. The key insight here would be that *orderliness itself has precedence over rules*.

#### LOCAL METHODS

Pedestrians dominate the crossings here, but cars, cyclists, and skateboarders also have their methods. Photo 1.3 displays an occasion in which both the car and the two cyclists failed to stop at their designated stop signs; however, if they concert their movements across the intersection, all of them can cross without stopping. It is all a matter of pacing: on this occasion, the car sped up and cyclists slowed down. The car sped up not only to be able to move out of the cyclists’ way more quickly; the driver was



Photo 1.3

also interested in displaying a certain inevitability to the car's crossing, an inevitability which thereby became more public and more compelling. The cyclists, who are more vulnerable to the rain, were primarily concerned with not stopping their bicycles' momentum, and slowing was an acceptable method for them to concert their crossing. It was no problem, despite two ticketable traffic violations.

The chaos at Kincaid is exacerbated by the wrong-way traffic of cyclists (Photo 1.4.) and skateboarders (Photo 1.5).



Photo 1.4. Wrong-Way Cyclist

Here the helmeted cyclist is traveling the wrong way against the designated flow of traffic in the one-way bike lane (the car is traveling in the correct one-way direction for its lane). Below (Photo 1.5), the skateboarder is traveling the wrong way and sailing seamlessly between two cars who have the right-of-way. Just as with the case of the car and the two cyclists, they are all concerting their movements perfectly and efficiently.

The skateboarder in Photo 1.6 would be traveling in the correct direction if he had been in the one-way bike lane, but that would have entailed him stopping to wait for the car who is turning left into the flow of pedestrians; skateboarders care to stop even less than cyclists, so instead the skateboarder moves into the vehicular lane, traveling in violation of the one-way designation there, but no one is delayed by his doing so; on the contrary, the pace of traffic flow is increased by his actions. Here scrupulous attention to the regulations can result in hanging everyone up in long delays, and the end result will be the backing up of the traffic along 13th Street.

The car in Photo 1.6 has no choice but to wait for the pedestrians, and it will be necessary also for it to wait for the jogger who soon steps off the curb (remember, there is no crosswalk here for pedestrians) to cross in the opposite direction, and for the couple who takes advantage of the latter delay, as well as the swarm that arrives just in time to join in behind the couple. These swarms can involve *heavy flows* of pedestrians, and so the



Photo 1.5





Photo 1.6

most sincere negotiation gifted to a lone pleading pedestrian by a friendly motorist can halt the flow of traffic for several other pedestrians, and then a bursting floodgate of foot traffic, leaving the kind motorist with plenty of time to contemplate the fate of motorists.

A good deal of the traffic flow is not reasoned but mimetic: people copy what they see happening, and methods for crossing wax and wane in spurts of reproducibility. If one car stops dutifully where there is no stop sign, it is common for the succeeding car also to stop, without ever having spied a stop sign; and the car after that. Rarely is there time for making a “rational choice,” and the compliance-oriented crosser will simply replicate the embodied looks of affairs. One’s actions are not strictly personal but part of an emerging public event, in which the parties collaborate in making one or another method for crossing Kincaid observable and publicly witnessable. The local collaborative displays, and not any regulations, signal the objective methods for organizing the crossings.

Old hands at crossing know how to handle the challenges, and many of them are renegades. Take the case of three female friends most probably returning to campus from lunch. They are standing in front of the bookstore, two of them with umbrellas protecting them from the rain. They wish to cross Kincaid at the same time that a city bus with the right-of-way is moving to turn left from 13th Street onto Kincaid, where a bus stop is

located. Two of the three friends are veteran crossers and one is a novice. As the three commence to cross, the novice crosser spies the bus barreling into the intersection and hesitates, making a bid to catch the gaze of the driver in hope of securing his permission to cross. The veterans brook no such illusion, and lunge straightforward into the wet crossing, the one with an umbrella shielding her head from the driver's gaze and the other in a rain jacket staring steadily at the opposite side. They know from experience that this driver will not run them over and that if they hesitate they will lose the opportunity to cross. The novice stands paralyzed at the curb as her friends move across without her (see Photo 1.11)—and for a moment she is left alone to vie with the bus and the rest. After a bit of indecision, she hops across the street and quickly catches up with her friends, and the three reunite while the bus driver sits in the intersection waiting for them all to complete their crossing.

#### SALIENCES

There is no need to overdo the rational aspects of crossing Kincaid. The persons traversing the intersection do not depend upon any analysts working out a theory of crossing, nor do they have a theory themselves. A person crossing Kincaid does not even need to make sense of what everyone is doing—one only has to get across. So there can be no question of any “grand theory of crossing” having to be worked out rationally and then stuffed into the heads of the crossers before they will be able to cross. While rational agency is not totally absent, the bulk of the actions are responses to one or another *salience* of a gestalt contexture and are largely unavailable to rational planning. By “gestalt” is meant a coherence that “detaches itself as an organized and closed unit from the surrounding field” (Gurwitsch 1964, 115), or in other words a salience is an opportunity that is segregated from the phenomenal field and seized upon. Gurwitsch (1966, 432–4) came to question “Husserl’s egological conception of consciousness” and contended that the phenomenal identity of things matters more than what can be worked out formally by a synthesis of meanings. The looks of the world involve more than what is strictly rational, and organization is more public than it is personal.

There is no single method for crossing Kincaid, there are all manner of methods taking place at once. And there is not one phenomenal field but heterogeneous fields, reflecting the perspectives of the persons who are intending to cross. The situation is not one that is easily amenable to modeling or rational analyses without the model grossly ruining the intricacy that is the local achievement. There is a swarm, perhaps at first undifferentiated, and out of the chaos an opening “emerges from the camouflage” (Garfinkel

and Livingston 2003, 24) and a crosser moves through it. A “salience” of a particular pattern emerges autochthonously and disappears suddenly, and usually there is insufficient time for thinking about it. As Garfinkel (2002, 281) observed, “Salience abbreviates the endogenous coherence of a figure of organized gestalt contexture that emerges upon its background, disengaged from its background.” Saliences are worldly things like an opening to skate through. That the open zone on the left, into which one is skating in order to avoid a car, is designated as one-way against one matters less than snagging that salient opening before it closes. A cyclist, willing to adopt any method that can be used to avoid coming to a complete stop, will embrace the space adjacent to a self-absorbed cellphone user who suddenly appears and gains access to the intersection, and no advanced planning was necessary or possible. Pedestrians face a continually changing complex of developing possibilities. They have in view a phenomenal field of possible routes as *emerging things* with which they contend.

“Salience” is a notion that Gurwitsch borrowed from William James, and it refers to a self-organizing phenomenon whereby “some part emerges from this chaotic and inarticulate mass and stands out” (Gurwitsch 1964, 28). A salience is *not an interpretation* projected by a crosser; *neither is it a representation* of crossing in the mind of a crosser; rather, it is a self-organization of the flow of traffic that is “immanent to and not superimposed upon the stream” (Gurwitsch 1964, 31). It arises autochthonously.<sup>1</sup> Gurwitsch writes (1964, 34), “Organization emerges out of the experiential stream and thus proves a feature immanent to and exhibited by immediate experience, not bestowed upon the latter from without,” and so here there is an emphasis that departs somewhat from Husserl’s original constitutional phenomenology. Gurwitsch adds (1964, 31), “If salience is admitted, it follows that not all organization is derived from a selective and organizing activity working on the chaotic stream.” The point of our addressing the phenomenal field is to cease our quest for finding solutions by examining the mind of the person crossing and instead to examine the world. The methods for coping with the traffic here emerge from the world and are presented to the crossers as worldly opportunities. Let us examine some of the methodologies cultivated by the persons who cross Kincaid.

#### LOOKING AND RECOGNITION

Among the methods for crossing Kincaid, the use of looks and gazes to concert the crossings is the most refined. The very first step is to [Look] at the other party (see Photo 1.7). The brackets that surround the gloss “[Look]” are for reminding the reader that one should not interrogate the *name* for the ethnomethod but examine the worldly practice itself in its

course, and as its course, of the worldly activities that compose it. In Photo 1.7, in addition to wanting to cross Kincaid, the pedestrian is attending to the need to produce an orderliness there. The orderliness is responsive not just to his looking but to the way his head is turned, the casualness or tension there, the rich gestural arsenal that may be employed, and the body's orientation. The pedestrian is not only looking but doing so in a manner that renders his looking as witnessable and recognizable as looking. It is a public display of looking, an engagement in social interaction, and not just any social interaction but a diligent concern for the interaction that remains to be organized by the parties there. We cannot see the look of the driver, but it would not be unreasonable to imagine that there is a similar look and diligent concern there as well.

In Photo 1.8a the head-turn is so slight that it is best studied in slow motion on the videotape. There is some soliciting of the driver's recognition by the young woman in white (the car is partly visible beneath the foliage of the tree), which they seem to have received since in Photo 1.8b the pair is able to cross Kincaid without having to wait.

In Photo 1.9 only one of the two parties turns her head, but it is sufficient for slowing the advance of the car. What is consequential is not what one does or what one intends to do but what is *observable* by others as one's intended movement. An analyst could divide the act into subjective and



Photo 1.7. The Look



Photo 1.8

objective phases, but it is really only what is objective that matters, and the parties who staff these crossings work at making what they do objectively available to parties present.

The second key component of the ethnomethod here is that following the [Look] there may or may not be a [Recognition]. In most cases, as the looker is soliciting a recognition of her look the other party will look back. Not only will the other party look back but in that look back that party will make it publicly available that it sees her looking, that she is being looked at. This is made increasingly difficult by modern windows that are glazed



Photo 1.9. The Look

with a heavy gray or green tint, making eye contact difficult to establish. We may have entered an historical phase during which persons in sunglasses will not be reciprocally looking at people behind tinted windows. During [Recognition] there may be a struggle while their attentions converge. It is a very subtle phenomenon; for instance, it may be a struggle to avoid their attentions converging. The victory here can depend upon an eye-blink, with the first to blink ceding the right-of-way. And if no [Recognition] is received, it may be that the pedestrian will need to cede to the vehicle. Here in Photo 1.10 it seems that the struggle between the car and the pedestrian has yet to be won or lost, and the [Recognition] may be still up in the air. The pedestrian who shoots a [Look] is just stepping off the curb in front of the sedan.

In our story of the three women crossing in front of the bus who had the right-of-way, the novice crosser was stalled in her wait for the [Recognition] of the bus driver (the bus is approaching just outside the right of edge of Photo 1.11). But of course it is a [Recognition] that never came, for there are few practices at Kincaid more hopeless than waiting for the [Recognition] of a bus driver. Bus drivers are too experienced and know better than to give away their phenomenal field, which is why the old-hand crossers that were her friends had to steal it.



Photo 1.10



Photo 1.11

The final stage of this ethnomethod is that once a [Recognition] is received, the person who originally commenced the [Look] is advised to [Acknowledge the Recognition]. This serves the public availability of what they have coordinated, minimizes surprises, and contributes to the objectivity of their affairs. The [Acknowledgment] can include a gesture, however slight, and it is common for the gesture to be one of gratitude, even when it is the gesture itself that becomes the tool that is used to ensure one's ability to cross (Photo 1.12).



Photo 1.12. Acknowledging the Recognition

While this entire process—from [Look] to [Recognition] to [Acknowledgment]—can take place quickly, it does consume some time, and so it tends to be employed more commonly during off-peak hours. During periods when the traffic is highly congested, there is considerably less recourse to this ethnomethod for crossing Kincaid. The details that compose the three stages of this method vary widely, but overall it is a safe and secure method for gaining a right to cross. In one case there was a car who wished to brook no such negotiation, and so the pedestrian waved slightly to get the driver's attention. The pedestrian hardly paused long enough to secure the [Recognition], but once he got it, even fleetingly, it was over for the car's designs on the right-of-way. When the traffic is heavy, such negotiations are complicated by the fact that the different pedestrians and cars may be employing different methods simultaneously, and there may be multiple sequences of [Look] – [Recognition] – [Acknowledgment] in play. One pedestrian may successfully capture the [Recognition] of a car; however, a succeeding vehicle's driver may have missed the entire show, cut inside of the turning car that has been made to wait for pedestrians, and threaten to inadvertently mow down the pedestrians who had already pocketed the acknowledgments. Indeed, accidents may be caused by drivers who were not part of an already completed and publicly acknowledged negotiation procedure arriving late with their own competing strategy; however, here at Kincaid there are nearly no accidents. But if there are not, then these pedestrians each of whom has a method, and these motorists each of whom has a method, must be doing some very elegant work concerting their methods.

#### BEING OBLIVIOUS

If the age-old advice, "Look both ways before you cross the street," is to be found at one pole, then at the opposite pole is the ethnomethod of [Being oblivious], and there are many occasions where looking both ways would only complicate a crosser's passage. *Being oblivious is a skilled practice* that is widely employed by vehicles and pedestrians alike as a method for securing rights to the intersection at Kincaid Street. Among the methods for never having to look at a competing crosser are staring at the ground or at an object across the street, talking with friends in an engaged manner, being absorbed in a cellphone call, keeping one's hood draped over the eyes, selecting a tune on one's iPod, and so forth. Rummaging around in one's bag or backpack for a cellphone all the while crossing in the middle of traffic is a very effective method; it is possible the motorists will question the person's sanity, which will work further toward the pedestrian's gaining access to the crossing. In fact, acting unpredictably crazy is another reliable ethnomethod for securing the right-of-way, and in a city that is filled



with street people—whose expertise at crossing streets exceeds that of other pedestrians—motorists are accustomed to ceding the way to people who do not appear to be completely sane. Not that the students at the University of Oregon are slouches at appearing to have a touch of lunacy, an appearance they are willing to use to their advantage when crossing Kincaid: any method for crossing will do; however, [Being oblivious] is one of the best.

The pedestrian in Photo 1.13 is a decent example of being oblivious. Probably a student of architecture or graphic arts, he pays no attention to the car whatsoever and even uses the side of his folio bag to his advantage. Of him, one of my students commented, “The pedestrian never seems to give the car a second thought.” There does not seem to be any first thought either.

When perambulating across the center of the intersection while being oblivious is accompanied by a large poster, as happens frequently during the course of any day, even taxi drivers are rendered powerless. On our videotapes there are times when the jaywalking-with-poster crosser is too absorbed with a cellphone conversation to even notice there is traffic, let alone make eye contact with it. On those occasions when the cellphone is being held between the crosser’s chin and shoulder, making eye-contact with a driver would necessitate the cellphone falling to the ground. Crossers like these always gain the right-of-way. In sum, if one wishes to cross Kincaid



Photo 1.13. Being Oblivious

without any delay, then simply entering the intersection without glancing toward the cars is an effective ethnomethod.

Photo 1.14 features an expert crosser who brooks no compromise with the cars who had been queuing up for the right to cross. The white car managed to make a left turn from 13th onto Kincaid before the crosser arrives, and the darker sedan, who had been waiting dutifully at the stop sign on the other side of Kincaid and had allowed some pedestrians there to cross, after deferring further to the white car (who had the right-of-way) is relatively determined to make it across before another group of pedestrians block the way. It appears that at least one pedestrian had lost the [Look] negotiation with the sedan and is pausing at the curb waiting for it to pass, just as the man in the dark jacket, accepting no prisoners, came out of the doors of the Bookstore and headed directly into the intersection with his cup of coffee in hand. As a method for crossing, staring at one's coffee while savoring a sip will do nicely. The sedan had no recourse but to allow the man with the coffee to slip in front of his passage.

A person accomplished at doing [Oblivious] is featured in Photo 1.15, who takes advantage of the space produced by the pair who had negotiated their passage by means of the [Look] method (cf. Photo 1.9). That he may not truly be oblivious is suggested by the fact that his gait is quite fast, which suggests that he knows that the opening behind the pedestrians is closing down.



Photo 1.14



Photo 1.15

The actions of this oblivious crosser illustrates that there exists a difference between “being oblivious” and “doing oblivious.” Some crossers are really oblivious, and it is obvious that other crossers are simply pretending to be oblivious, and there are all shades of methodologies in between. It is a simple matter, for instance, to feign distraction by becoming preoccupied with the controls of one’s iPod. Doing [Oblivious] is a simple but effective practice that the reader can experiment with at any 4-corner traffic stop: the next time you come to a corner where several cars reach their stop signs at about the same time, do not [Look] at any of the other cars, just wait *without looking at them* until they cede you the right-of-way. This also works very well when one is walking on the sidewalk toward a group of three or four persons moving in the opposite direction, none of whom is ready to cede any space to for you to pass them: just cast your eyes to the ground and proceed as if you think there is no obstruction. You will gain access every time! Avoiding eye-contact, as a motorist or pedestrian, is roughly equivalent to the discovery made by some early conversation analysts that the most secure way to obtain a turn for talking is to simply to keep talking, ignoring the other person who is also trying to get the floor, no matter how long that takes. Even an interlocutor who is determined to win the floor will persist only for a few seconds so long as you keep talking also and do not stop. In part, they are unable to hear what you are saying, and the

length of your utterance offers the possibility that what you are saying may be important or be offering some justification for getting the floor; so they stop long enough to take a reading of what you are saying, and by then they have lost the struggle. The rule of thumb is that the last person to stop talking will have the floor. Similarly, among those doing [oblivious] at Kincaid, the last person to look up to gaze at what is happening will win the competition for the intersection.

For this reason, when crossers look to assess the congestion in the street, they may do so with only the slightest head motion, or with none at all, so that they can preserve the option of doing [Oblivious]. It is like having one's cake and eating it too. At times the gaze, occasionally required to verify the unlikelihood of imminent destruction, will be hardly more than an eye-blink. The real world-class virtuosos with this ethnomethod are people from the Indian subcontinent. During more than five years of residence in India, I have never ceased to be amazed at the way *no one*—not pedestrian, motorcyclist, rickshaw driver, cyclist, taxi driver—will ever gaze at another traveler. It may be considered a sign of weakness, and it is for certain that anyone who tries to [Look] will become the one prevented from gaining access to the street (I am an expert at this way of failing). What Indian drivers and pedestrians are doing may look like something chaotic and dangerous, but they know just what they are doing, and since they have such highly congested flows of traffic I can only presume that it is a procedure necessary for the tasks they face regularly. Knowing this, I never drive in India but hire vehicles that come with knowledgeable drivers.

A similar phenomenon of orderliness transpires with queues in India, which mostly appear to the novice visitor to be an absence of queues. Every line in India is a swarm—ticket offices, photocopying machines, stores, taxi stands, service lines, etc. are under siege by more parties than can be serviced in the available time. So, in most venues the potential clients crowd around the focal point of service, and lines there are nearly nonexistent. Take the queues for the many photocopying machine shops that line the streets of Indian cities: there is no apparent order of service, and being “first-in-line” can be an achievement without any consequences. The task of the server is to process as many people as possible in the shortest possible time, and so they are taking readings of who will be quick and who will present complications. The conversations of foreign visitors when they finally get back to their hotels for lunch commonly turn to how there is no order to the queues in India, and the probably racist sentiment is offered that Indians seem to be unorganized or uncivil. This is not the case at all. Inside of the swarms that compose Indian queues, like the figure that is still lost in the camouflage, are intricate methods of social organization, and a corporate orientation is in no way lacking there.