Question 1. Theory
Define the term DISCURSIVE ECOLOGY *and situate this concept within the theoretical and analytical frameworks that you plan to use in your dissertation research.*

1.1   Discursive ecology defined

The term DISCURSIVE ECOLOGY posits an EMERGENT LEVEL OF ORGANIZATION in communicative behavior that results from the DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS across time and space among a set of communicative PRACTICES. More concretely, a discursive ecology is a DYNAMIC SYSTEM of mutually informing and COMPLEMENTARY communicative practices whose organization resides in the observable patterns of CONTINUITY and CONTRAST across INDIVIDUAL UTTERANCES and INTERACTIONS.

    I posit that it is at this level of organization of communicative behavior that interacting INDIVIDUALS$_2$ experience and create continuities in their interactions such that they (and outsiders) recognize those individuals as CONSTITUTING an enduring COMMUNITY or SOCIETY.

1.2   Motivations for positing discursive ecology as a meaningful unit of analysis

My EMPIRICAL motivation for positing a Nanti discursive ecology is my desire to DESCRIBE accurately the concrete communicative PHENOMENA I have observed among Nantis over a number of years. It is clear to me that different communicative GENRES, different communicative spaces – and the AFFORDANCES of these – are highly SALIENT to Nanti individuals in conducting their social lives. Nantis choose to communicate with others in particular ways, in particular places, and at particular times as a result of their UNDERSTANDINGS of the large-scale PATTERNS and possibilities that are available to them and to others. The notion of a Nanti discursive ecology is meant to capture the COMPLEX, large-scale organizational principles that can be generalized from the empirical phenomena of specific SITUATED communicative practices that I observe among Nantis.

    My empirical motivation for exploring the notion of discursive ecology through the PHENOMENON$_2$ of *karintaa* poetry is two-fold; first, as I have mentioned, the communicative force of *karintaa* POETRY fascinates Nantis, and their fascination fascinates me; and second, the highly MARKED nature of *karintaa* makes it an excellent point of CONTRAST with other forms of communicative behavior. Note that although the process of exhaustively describing *karintaa* performances involves looking at them in isolation from other forms of communicative behavior, I fully intend this isolation to be temporary, just as the extraction of specific utterances or sets of utterances from the flow of everyday interaction in order to examine them is temporary. Instead, I intend to examine *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* discourse as both FIGURE and GROUND in relation to each other, based on the sets of FEATURES that are characteristic of each.

    My INTELLECTUAL motivation for positing discursive ecology as a primary level of ANALYSIS for my research on Nanti communicative behavior in general, and on *karintaa* PERFORMANCES$_A$ in particular, is my interest in unifying several related THEORETICAL and ANALYTICAL stances toward the role of communicative behavior in constituting social life. Each of these stances (which I will discuss below) contributes a key insight into the relationship between INDIVIDUAL$_1$ acts of communication and enduring patterns of relationality among interactants. In my research, I hope to synthesize these insights in a fruitful way by taking that RELATIONALITY itself as a focal point of inquiry.

    The fundamental reason that I find the notion of discursive ecology so compelling – and the reason that I am struggling to articulate it as an analytical concept – is because I believe that

identifying systematic patterns of organization across discrete utterances across time will prove to be a principled, empirically-demonstrable, and INTERSUBJECTIVELY-accessible way to account for *both* continuity and change in social configurations; a way that will accommodate *both* the INDIVIDUAL AGENCY₁ INHERENT in each discrete UTTERANCE *and* the CONSTRAINTS on the EFFECTS and INTERPRETATIONS of each utterance that are inherent to the social ENVIRONMENT in which they are produced. For example, ¿what are the FORMAL FEATURES of a given *karintaa* utterance, such as *aryoxa pabisaxe* ('it could be said you passed by'),[1] and how do these features facilitate and constrain its social effects and interpretations – for example, as a tentative explanation, a pointed accusation, an invitation to dialogue, or none, or all, of these at once? How is our understanding of the effects of this utterance guided by our knowledge of the effects the same utterance has or might have as part of a non-*karintaa* interaction? How is our understanding of the possible interpretations of this utterance crucially dependent upon our observations of the way it is UPTAKEN by its auditors? The notion of discursive ecology attempts to explain the CONTINGENT nature of specific acts of communicative activity by examining the range of reactions and interpretations that subsequently manifest within that ecology. It attempts to identify that which is DYNAMIC and INNOVATIVE *in relation to* that which is STATIC and CONVENTION-preserving across instances of communicative activity across intervals of time.

1.3   Ethnography of Speaking (Ethnography of Communication)
The *ethnography of speaking/communication* is the PARADIGM that most strongly suggests to me the analytical utility of looking at communicative activity in terms of a discursive ecology, and indeed, to a certain extent the term itself reflects the terms used in certain places by Dell Hymes and John Gumperz, two of the founders of this research tradition (I discuss this further below). This paradigm posits that the discourse – that is, the creative, meaningful, social uses of LANGUAGE₂ – of a specific group of people is organized into recognizable, recurring patterns of communication (WAYS OF SPEAKING) whose FORMAL FEATURES and situations of use (*speech events*) are meaningfully CO-OCCURRING. Researchers in this tradition identify and describe the discrete *ways of speaking* attested in a particular *speech community*, which taken together CONSTITUTE that community's communicative system ((Bauman & Sherzer 1989 [1974]), (Basso 1985, 1987, 1995), (Basso & Sherzer 1990), (Feld 1990 [1982]), (Graham 1995), Sammons & Sherzer 2000), (Sherzer 1983, 1990), (Sherzer & Urban 1986), (Urban 1982, 1986, 1988, 1991)) For the purposes of my own research on Nanti communicative practices, the analytical concepts *speech community* and *way of speaking*, which this research tradition has produced, are two of the defining elements of a discursive ecology.

Joel Sherzer characterizes an ethnography of speaking as "a description in cultural terms of the patterned uses of language and speech in a particular group, institution, community or society" (1983: 11). Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, in their introduction to the second edition of *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, articulated what they consider the central "task" of the ethnographer of speaking:

> ...we took it as our task to show that there is pattern, there is systematic coherence, and there is difference in the ways that speaking is organized from one society to another, and that this pattern, this coherence, this difference are to be discovered ethnographically. (Bauman & Sherzer 1989 [1974]: xi)

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[1] I discussed this example in both my master's thesis and my prospectus.

These perspectives on the doing of ethnography of speaking complement Dell Hymes' broader vision of the ethnography of communication as

> "a science that would approach language neither as abstracted form nor as an abstract correlate of a community, but as situated in the flux and pattern of communicative events. It would study communicative form and function in integral relation to each other" (Hymes 1974: 5).

It is this sense of *integral relation*, both between form and function within particular communicative events and across different events, that my research will pursue, describe, and explore in developing the notion of discursive ecology.

From an analytical point of view, the unit of analysis used in ethnographies of speaking that is most like a discourse ecology is the *speech community,* which John Gumperz defines in the following way:

> To the extent that speakers share knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations, they can be said to be members of the same speech community. (Gumperz, in Gumperz & Hymes 1972: 16)

The principal strength of this definition is its measure of flexibility, in as much as a speech community is always only constituted by those speakers who share the KNOWLEDGE appropriate to the social situation in question. Its principal weakness, however, is its measure of inflexibility in placing emphasis on membership in (or exclusion from) a fixed speech community rather than on differential access to and social enactments of shared knowledge. Using the notion of discursive ecology as a level of analysis for communicative behavior is meant to shift emphasis away from the STATIC categories of 'knowledge' and 'membership' and onto the DYNAMIC phenomena of INTERDEPENDENT activities among diverse interactants.

In a series of publications during the 1960s and 1970s, Hymes elaborated and refined both the goals and the terms that constitute the ethnography of speaking/communication research paradigm. In a book chapter dedicated specifically to articulating the scope of the term *ways of speaking* (1989 [1974]), Hymes proposes this concept as "a productive analytical framework for describing the organization of linguistic behavior" that encompasses the set of "styles" (or "means of speech") together with the "speech economy" of a community. (I will return to these terms below.) In a powerful evocative turn of phrase, Hymes characterizes the speech community as an "organization of diversity" and posits the speech community as the principal unit of analysis for the study of communicative behavior.

In Hymes' discussion of how to DIFFERENTIATE between speech styles shared by the members of a speech community, he turns to two simple but powerful analytical principles that were put forward by Susan Ervin-Tripp (1972) as the principles that guide all linguistic description: "rules of co-occurrence" and "rules of alternation". For my purposes here, Ervin-Tripp's key insight is the primary analytical distinction between CO-OCCURRENCE and ALTERNATION; I consider the formulation of RULES to be a flawed abstraction from the processes of selection that speakers employ when communicating. The power of these principles in studying a SYSTEM of communicative behavior is that they provide an empirically ROBUST way to describe patterning across multi-modal, time-bound social phenomena. In using these principles to understand Nanti interactional data, then, I posit that a Nanti WAY OF SPEAKING can be identified when most (if not all) of the FORMAL and CONTEXTUAL$_2$ features – minimally described in ETIC terms and ideally also described in EMIC terms – adhere to a particular locally-

defined pattern of co-occurrence and alternation.

   Before shifting our attention to another level of organization in discourse, I want to elaborate local definitions for certain key terms that are used in varying ways in the literature in ethnography of speaking/communication tradition (see Question 3 for further discussion of this issue). Within the context of this project, I call those interactions that take place outside feasting (both temporally and spatially), that are the most interactive, least marked, most locally organized, and that have the fewest identifiable formal features EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS. I call those components of verbal interactions that have recognizable sets of marked formal features SPEAKING STYLES. For example, among the speaking styles I have thus far identified in Nanti discourse is scolding-talk, in which the pitch, tempo, and loudness of speaking all increase and accompany words of caution, disapproval, or correction to someone, usually a child. I call those speaking styles that are typically restricted to certain social, temporal, and/or spatial situations GENRES. (See section 1.5 for further discussion of the concept of genre.) For example, in addition to the genre of *karintaa*, I have identified the genre of hunting-story-telling, in which a man or group of men produce a narrative of a personal hunting experience for a group listeners while seated close to one another, usually in the cooking hut of one of the storytellers at eveningtime. Note, however, that none of these definitions assumes that their CONSTITUTIVE FEATURES are confined to one TYPE of interaction or another; in fact the opposite assumption – that these features are SALIENT within interactions because they most frequently constitute a particular type of interaction – is fundamental to the notion of discursive ecology.

   Although in this research project I have chosen to describe Nanti *karintaa* as a WAY OF SPEAKING in the ethnography of speaking framework, it is crucial for the success of my project that I use this framework in its widest possible compass. Although most linguistic anthropologists recognize the breadth and flexibility possible within this framework, I wish to articulate explicitly that while describing *karintaa* as a *way of speaking* is the main organizing principle of this research, I do not intend to limit my description of *karintaa* only to its linguistic or spoken features; moreover, a number of theories and analytical tools from other research traditions are essential to understanding *karintaa*.

   Researchers who have produced ethnographies of speaking have made a contribution toward our understanding communicative behavior as a coherent, patterned system primarily by describing and discussing, in series, the communicative practices attested in a particular social group – usually BOUNDED geographically or temporally. However, the actual patterned connections, resonances, INTERPENETRATIONS among these practices has rarely been discussed in detail. Although the early promise of the ethnography of speaking was to demonstrate how different speaking practices cohered and depended on each other, the actual body of work in this tradition by and large has investigated single – or at most several – (usually highly MARKED) ways of speaking, and has left readers to infer INTERRELATION from JUXTAPOSITION. My research on Nanti discourse ecology is an effort to take the notion of 'organization of diversity' seriously, both theoretically and empirically.

1.4   Performance

Because theories of PERFORMANCE_B have been central to studies of verbal art – in the traditions of folklore, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology, among others – any study that takes verbal art as one of its foci must consider the place of performance in the socially situated production of that verbal art. Like many other terms, however, performance is deceptively HETEROGLOSSIC, so I will begin by addressing the relevance to Nanti communicative practice of

key definitions of this concept, after which I will EVALUATE the appropriateness of using any of these definitions in my research.

In the 1977 version of his seminal essay, *Verbal Art as Performance,* Richard Bauman set the stage for many subsequent discussions of performance in verbal art. In his introduction, he first draws our attention to two "conventional" usages of the term:

> the term "performance" has been used to convey a dual sense of artistic *action* – the doing of folklore – and artistic *event* – the performance situation, involving performer, art form, audience, and setting – both of which are basic to developing the performance approach. (Bauman 1977: 4)

He quickly proceeds to point out, however, that these usages, if foundational, suffer a "lack of conceptual RIGOR" and then frames the purpose of the rest of this text as addressing this lack.

In this essay, Bauman starts from the minimal understandings of performance "as a MODE of speaking," "as a species of situated human communication, a way of speaking," and "as a distinctive FRAME." He then subsequently explores various possible conceptions of a notion of performance, laying out both the FEATURES and the RELATIONS among these features that constitute performance. What in the end counts for Bauman as a useful and appropriate definition of performance is better articulated a later publication:

> I understand performance as a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. (Bauman 1986: 5)

In my master's thesis, I carefully considered the applicability of Bauman's notion of performance to Nanti *karintaa*, because certain of its aspects are so appropriate to this form of verbal art: namely, it is "a mode of communication" which "highlight[s] the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content." But in the end, a Baumanian notion of performance assumes the "responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill" which is simply not present in Nanti *karintaa* interactions. The sense of the term performance that is appropriate to Nanti *karintaa* must be limited to the following: *a mode or style of communication, usually produced in public space, that emphasizes the way in which communication is carried out apart from its referential content.* As a result of this necessary limitation, I now only use the term performance sparingly, when its heteroglossic valences are least likely to mislead the reader (or me). While many aspects of Bauman's discussion of 'verbal art as performance' have been useful to me in understanding the communicative PHENOMENON$_2$ of *karintaa*, I feel that I need to rely on a different analytical paradigm rather than subvert his notion of performance in the guise of employing it.

1.5   Genre

As I mentioned in section 1.3 above, I consider the concept of GENRE to be a meaningful category in the analysis of Nanti discourse. In this section, I will clarify how I will use this concept, and address some of the disciplinary and theoretical issues that attend using this term.

Interestingly, a significant factor in deciding to use this term is Charles Briggs and Bauman's (1992) rich discussion of genre, in which they articulate both the strengths and weaknesses of using genre as an analytical concept and then propose why and how the concept is most analytically useful in contemporary studies of communicative practices.

Briggs and Bauman point out that in its earliest historical manifestations, the notion of genre was a clumsy tool for classifying discourse that "never quite work[ed]: an empirical residue...is always left over." (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 132) However, primarily as a result of the attentions of Hymes and other early ethnographers of speaking, in the 1970s the concept shed much of its inflexibility and cultural insensitivity, EMERGING₁ instead as a resource for understanding the simultaneous phenomena of order and flexibility in forms of discourse. From a contemporary point of view on contrastive FORMS in TYPES of discourse, genre can be understood as "conventionalized yet highly flexible organizations of formal means and structures that constitute complex frames of reference for communicative practice." (1992: 141) Briggs and Bauman go further than this, however, and contrast formal notions of genre – "in which genre is a structural property of texts" (1992: 142) – with the practice-based perspective articulated by Hanks (1987):

> the historically specific conventions and ideals according to which authors [in Bakhtin's sense of authorship as the production of utterances] compose discourse and audiences receive it. In this view, genres consist of orienting frameworks, interpretive procedures, and sets of expectations that are not part of discourse structure, but of the ways actors relate to and use language. (Hanks 1987: 670) (in Briggs & Bauman 1992: 143)

It seems to me that both of these aspects of the concept of genre are salient in describing and analyzing Nanti discourse practices and discursive ecology; speakers, hearers, audience, and analyst alike rely on identifiable formal features to recognize and categorize communicative input. At the same time, the composition and reception of these generic forms emerge from the 'orienting frameworks' of LANGUAGE₁ use that "are not part of discourse structure." It is the richness of these intersecting ideas on genre and generic expression that I wish to bring to my analysis of Nanti *karintaa* performances as historically CONTINGENT yet formally structured communicative activity.

The way in which Briggs and Bauman see genre as most useful for future research on discourse practices is its salience in providing levels of organization at which INTERTEXTUAL relationships can and do emerge:

> We suggest that the creation of intertextual relationships through genre simultaneously renders texts ordered, unified, and bounded, on the one hand, and fragmented, heterogeneous, and open-ended on the other...When viewed synchronically, genres provide a powerful means of shaping discourse into ordered unified, bounded texts...When viewed in diachronic...perspective, generic intertextuality provides a powerful means of ordering discourse in historical and social terms. (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 147)

I will address in powerful notion of intertextuality in the next section.

1.6 *Dialogism, heteroglossia, and intertextuality*

Successfully characterizing the organization of (at least part of) a Nanti discursive ecology crucially depends on explicitly identifying the REFERENTIALITY, INDEXICALITY and INTERPENETRATION among discrete utterances across time and space. This notion of interpenetration in itself is not novel; in fact, it has been elaborated in great detail first under the names of heteroglossia and dialogism, and later under the name of intertextuality ((Bakhtin 1981, 1984, 1986), (Hanks 1987, 1989, 1997, 2000), (Kristeva 1980)). Duranti has pithily summarized what intertextuality is about, pointing out that

> even the apparently most homogeneous or self-contained text exhibits, at close analysis, elements
> that link it to other texts, with different contexts, different norms, and different voices...In all
> kinds of social situations, verbal and kinesic conventions interpenetrate one another to form
> complex messages, with multiple points of view and different voices. (Duranti 1994:5-6)

From here forward, I will use the term intertextuality to indicate this interpenetration between any set of TEXTS – including the text constituted by that which is understood and remembered by participants in any sort of verbal interaction – in line with Hanks' (1989) characterization:

> When used as a mass noun, as in "text is composed of interconnected sentences," *text* can by
> taken (heuristically) to designate any configuration of signs that is coherently interpretable by
> some community of users. (Hanks 1989: 95)

I have chosen not to use the term heteroglossia because it tends to decenter the analytical focus from the achievement of situated communication to the infinite possibilities permitted only by CONTEXT$_2$-free interpretations.

    Perhaps because of the greater ease of identifying and recognizing highly marked forms of discourse, many studies of discourse are organized around more marked forms of discourse and treat less marked everyday interactions as a relatively undifferentiated, amorphous ground against which the figure of marked ways of speaking are set. My goal in looking at Nanti communicative activity is to reverse this orientation and instead to trace the intertextuality found in instances of everyday communication through which distinguishable speech styles and genres – particularly *karintaa* – are deployed as resources in quotidian interactions.

1.7   Context

As many before me have pointed out – including Duranti and Goodwin (1992) and Hanks (1997) – the notion of context is so multi-faceted and broad as to practically be indefinable. And yet none of these scholars has chosen jettison this term, because it nonetheless does the work of indexing a set of related phenomena for which no better term nor conceptualization yet exists. It would seem that the only realistic approach to discussing context is to articulate and use a local definition. However, given the overwhelming 'heteroglossia' of this single term, I consider it wise not to rely on 'context' in my analysis of Nanti discourse, but rather to indicate the ways in which prior discussions of context are relevant to the concept of discursive ecology.

    Among the most apt characterizations of context, in terms of the concept of discourse ecology, is given by Goodwin and Duranti in *Rethinking Context,* an edited volume dedicated entirely to studies of context across multiple disciplines and across diverse cultural settings:

> A relationship between two orders of phenomena that mutually inform each other to comprise a
> larger whole is absolutely central to the notion of context...From this perspective the relationship
> between focal event and context is much like that between "organism" and "environment" in
> cybernetic theory... (Goodwin and Duranti in Duranti & Goodwin 1992: 2)

In discussing the relevance of context to studies of social situations and structures, Duranti and Goodwin further note:

> Of particular relevance ... is the capacity of human beings to dynamically reshape the context that
> provides organization for their actions within the interaction itself. Indeed, the dynamic, socially

> constitutive properties of context are inescapable since each additional move within the
> interaction modifies the existing context while creating a new arena for subsequent interaction.
> (Goodwin and Duranti in Duranti & Goodwin 1992: 5)

In these introductory remarks, Goodwin and Duranti offer some incisive insights into the challenges that the student of context faces. These challenges, unfortunately, are easier to identify than to meet. Most studies that discuss context do not successfully capture the ways in which the relationship between 'focal event' and 'context' are mutually-informing; a notable exception is Duranti's work on the use of LANGUAGE₁ in Samoa (Duranti 1992, 1994). Instead, the ways in which 'context' informs 'focal event' are explicated, while the ways that particular 'focal event' simultaneously shapes and informs its 'context' are underexplicated. In my view, this conceptualization of focal event and context is itself misleading, because it irretrievably biases the analyst to "focus" more attention on one of the "two orders of phenomena" at the expense of the other. The notion of 'focal event' makes most sense when restricted to the relatively small set of identifiable features to which interactants are attending from one moment to the next.

A less slanted, if not problem-free, set of terms for the two orders of phenomena that are relevant to the notion of discourse ecology are TEXT and CONTEXT₂, providing we take the wide definition of text that I offered in section 1.6 *and* that we assume that any given utterance or interaction can be simultaneously a 'text' as well as a 'context' for other texts. But most studies of text and context have primarily focused on the relation of specific TOKENS of text to their immediate linguistic surroundings; or of specific tokens to broader – but relatively static – aspects of social context. My goal in looking at Nanti utterances as 'text' and 'context' is to add to the existing body of work on context by approaching multiple tokens of Nanti discourse as contexts for each other, both within their immediate interactional surroundings and across different interactions over time. It is my hope that by demonstrating the links between multiple TEXTS from related interactions in Nanti discourse I will succeed in conveying the dynamicity of text/context relations that I have previously observed across Nanti interactions.

1.8   Frames, keys, framing, and keying

Erving Goffman's work on human social interaction is at once among the most unabashedly unsystematic and outstandingly thorough bodies of analysis I am acquainted with. Random STRIPS of human communicative activity, drawn from a variety of media, are the empirical data about which Goffman makes incisive observations and upon which he builds admirably ROBUST 'grounded' theories (see section 2.4 of Question 2) of the organization of human experience. The level of specificity and detail with which he constructs his analytical categories makes a number of them very useful in building my own analysis of the patterning of Nanti communicative activity. Below, I will discuss the four analytical concepts that Goffman proposes that are most relevant to Nanti interactions.

First among these are the concepts of the FRAME and frame analysis. Goffman states:

> I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization
> which govern [social] events...and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to
> refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. My phrase "frame analysis" is a
> slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience. (Goffman
> 1981: 10-11)

This perspective at once captures the relationship between the empirical domain that the analyst inhabits and the experiential domain that the participants in a given situation inhabit *and* captures the tension between the observable 'governing principles' of a particular system of organization and the 'subjective involvement' of the participants – including the observing analyst. Frames, as experienced, are the various contingent possibilities for the definitions of an experiential situation; and frames, in the hands of the analyst, represent a meaningful level of COMPLEX ORGANIZATION in a SYSTEM of human activity. While I hope that my analysis of Nanti communicative practice will be less casual than Goffman's treatment of his own data, I also hope that I will be able competently to capture in my data the level of organization characterized by Goffman as a frame.

Of similar analytical utility in examining Nanti *karintaa* interactions are Goffman's concepts of KEY and KEYING. A key is "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (Goffman 1981: 44) and keying is (partially summarized here):

> A systematic transformation ... across materials already meaningful in accordance with a schema of interpretation and without which the keying would be meaningless ... Participants in the activity are meant to know and to openly acknowledge that a systematic alteration is involved, one that will radically reconstitute what it is for them that is going on ... (Goffman 1981: 45)

The concept of keying very accurately characterizes several aspects the of the 'systematic transformation' I have observed between *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* interactions, including contrastive features of the form as well as contrastive elements of their content. Furthermore, the notion of keying incorporates several of the elements that I have identified in positing a Nanti discursive ecology: 'transformations across materials' are systematic *and* only meaningful in relation to other 'schema of interpretation.' If the data set Goffman grounds his theories and analyses is reproachably random, it nonetheless strongly supports a set of analytical concepts that have emerged from my own data and thinking on Nanti discursive ecology and *karintaa* interactions.

1.9   A practice-centered approach to discourse
To see a discursive ecology as a DYNAMIC SYSTEM of communicative practices – that is, a system that is characterized by change over time – it is essential that I be able to characterize the nature and mechanisms of change. And in as much as the constituent elements of a discursive ecology are INDIVIDUAL$_1$ instances of communicative activity, it is essential that I be able to characterize the relationship between those individual instances of activity, the INDIVIDUAL$_2$ ACTORS who ANIMATE them, and the supra-INDIVIDUAL$_2$ STRUCTURES that CONSTRAIN them. I find the body of work in practice theory to be the best and most appropriate framework for this task.

The body of work in practice theory that guides my analyses of the relationships between specific instances of Nanti discourse – and between specific *karintaa* performances and other discourse in particular – encompasses specific theoretical formulations of human AGENCY$_1$, individuality, and COMMUNITY ((Ahearn, 1998), (Ahearn, 2001), (Bourdieu, 1977), (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991), (Giddens, 1979), (Giddens, 1984), (Hanks, 1987), (Hanks, 2000), (Ortner, 1989)). Practice theory is "a theory of the relationship between the structures of society and culture on the one hand, and the nature of human action on the other" which strives to understand "how persons and human activity can be constituted through the social process, while at the same

time society and history can be constituted through meaningful human activity." (Ortner 1989:11). I am particularly drawn to theories of practice because they strive to account for empirical phenomena that often seem contradictory on the surface: durable social, cultural, and historical structures that perpetuate across time on the one hand and the facts of change and novel, creative INDIVIDUAL$_{1\&2}$ actions on the other.

One of the analytical concepts to emerge from recent scholarship in practice theory to which I am strongly drawn is Laura Ahearn's *practice theory of meaning constraint,* which directly addresses the inevitable INDETERMINACY which confronts insiders and outsiders alike in assigning significance to communicative activity. Ahearn suggests,

> ...instead of searching for definitive interpretations, we should look for *constraints* on the type and number of meanings that might emerge from an event...We must acknowledge the inevitability of a certain degree of interpretive indeterminacy while also recognizing that indeterminacy is not limitless. (Ahearn 1998: 61)

Every communicating INDIVIDUAL$_2$ deals with this sort of indeterminacy in every lived moment of communication, whether they stop to ponder it or not; Ahearn articulates the wisdom of allowing for and OPERATIONALIZING this indeterminacy in our scholarly work in general, and in our analytical process in particular.

In examining contemporary relationships among Nanti individuals and residence groups that take place in their recently-formed villages, I have proposed that performing *karintaa* provides a unique opportunity for Nantis to verbally integrate novel experiences into existing patterns of social understanding (Beier 2001). In my dissertation research I will draw on this set of theoretic traditions to refine my preliminary analyses of the relationship between *karintaa* as a localizable instance of individual creative expression and the dynamic, dialogic sociocultural and spatiotemporal matrix in which these instances are embedded.

1.10   *Discourse and Levels of Organization*

Edwin Hutchins' work on distributed COGNITION makes several key observations that are foundational to my understanding of discursive ecology.

First, COMPLEX SYSTEMS – such as speech communities – have properties that are different from the properties of their constituent members. In his introduction to *Cognition in the Wild*, Hutchins observes that "the ideational definition of culture prevents us seeing that systems of socially distributed cognition may have interesting properties of their own." (Hutchins 1995: xiii) He proceeds to demonstrate, using data on surface ship navigation, that the accomplishment of a joint task – tasks such as piloting a vessel, for example, or having a village-wide feast – results from the *interaction* among structures of the material world, the knowledge and capabilities of individual participants in the joint activity, and communicative utterances and their UPTAKES.

Second, constituent members of a complex system have differential access to knowledge within and about that system, and active cooperation by constituent members is required to coordinate the activities of the system. Hutchins likens the phenomenon of differential access to the phenomenon of division of labor in social anthropology (Hutchins 1995: 175); just as individuals or sub-groups specialize in economic tasks, they also specialize in forms of knowledge and communication. The organization of a society depends on the ways in which these different forms are brought into cooperative activity. Similarly, a discursive ecology encompasses the diverse set of communicative phenomena together with the ways in which this diversity is meaningfully organized in practice.

Hutchins is interested in naturally occurring cognition for many of the same reasons that discourse-centered researchers are interested in naturally occurring discourse. He observes that "it is in real practice that culture is produced and reproduced. In practice we see the connection between history and the future..." (Hutchins 1995: xiv). Furthermore, for Hutchins the "metaphor" of "cognition in the wild" is meant to invoke "a sense of an ecology of thinking in which human cognition interacts with an environment rich in organizing resources." (1995: xiv). At several points in his discussion, he relies on the notion of a "cognitive ecology" as "a system of mutually adaptive computational parts" and finally characterizes the concept of cognitive ecology thus:

> an organization has many parts, and the operation of the whole emerges from the interactions of those parts. Each part may simultaneously provide constraints on the behavior of other parts and be constrained by the behavior of other parts. (Hutchins 1995: 346)

Though Hutchins' attention to discourse and communication situates these phenomena as 'tools' used in systems of distributed cognition, I feel many of his observations about complex dynamic systems apply to discourse and communication as phenomena unto themselves.

1.11   The limits of grammar

I perceive Hutchins' discussion of the properties of a distributed cognitive system to be directly conceptually linked to the fundamental principles that govern linguistics as the 'science of language.' Indeed, Hutchins' concept of cognitive ecology, my concept of DISCURSIVE ECOLOGY, and a basic definition of GRAMMAR[2] – as 'a systematic description of the elementary principles of a given complex communicative system and the relationships among these principles' – are all to a large degree attempting to achieve the same goal: the scientific description of the primitive elements or principles at given levels of organization in a complex system and the systematic relations among these elements or principles. In this section, I will discuss how I see certain principles of formal linguistics as essential to the process – and hopefully, the eventual success – of my analyses of Nanti communicative practice.

A number of concepts and analytical tools that are fundamental to my work on Nanti communicative practices I have taken directly from the formal linguistic toolkit. First, central among these is the method of DESCRIBING and COMPARING FEATURES of communicative phenomena (which I discuss at greater length in Question 2, particularly in sections 2.5 and 2.6) using a principle of minimal contrastiveness that is fundamental to phonology. Second, my understanding of the notion of constituents and the dependent relations among them is based on principles in morphosyntax that describe how a single parsable message is constituted by smaller units, each of which only has meaning in relation to other units. I do not mean to do a disservice to these principles of formal linguistics by taking them so far 'out of context;' rather, I hope to demonstrate that these fundamental principles of linguistic science are applicable in wider domains of linguistic phenomena than has generally been recognized.

If the conceptual principles of linguistics are among those best suited to describe LANGUAGE₁ as a human activity, nonetheless a significant gap exists between GRAMMAR in its conceptual or theoretical sense and the grammars that linguistics as an academic discipline has by and large produced. Thus far, linguistics has been most successful in generating descriptions at the level of mental representations and conceptual structures. It has been less successful in generating

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[2] I thank Lev for pushing me to consider the weaknesses as well as the strengths of this overlap

scientific descriptions at the levels of principled organization across domains of language use and between 'grammar' in the traditional sense and language use. A noteworthy model of the latter is Alessandro Duranti's work on the interface between grammar and language use in Samoa, in which he succeeds in bringing together his research on Samoan grammar, in the traditional linguistic sense, with his research on Samoan political discourse, in order to identify how these two domains of speaker activity are "intrinsically tied" (1994: 2) to each other. His work demonstrates the necessity and fruitfulness of 'tacking back and forth' between distinct levels of organization in communicative activity – here, formal grammatical analysis and analysis of political discourse – in order to discover the RELATIONALITY and INTERDEPENDENCIES between them. As such, his methods and insights are directly relevant to the work I will do to discover the relationalities and interdependencies in form, content, and function, among Nanti WAYS OF SPEAKING, and between these ways of speaking, particularly *karintaa*, and their observable social effects.

I hope that my work on Nanti discursive ecology will push the envelope of understanding within the field of linguistics on how human LANGUAGE$_2$ is organized at multiple levels of complexity by pushing beyond the individual speaker, and beyond the individual token or type of discourse$_2$, to the discover the systematicity in the relations among individuals, tokens, and types. In addition to phonology, morphology, morphosyntax, syntax, and semantics, what other levels of the organization of 'human language' come to encompass?

I would like my doctoral research to make a contribution to the shared goal, among anthropologists, linguists, and cognitive scientists alike, to better understand *how* human beings generate UNDERSTANDINGS of the shared world of experience and *how* these understandings both AFFORD and CONSTRAIN human social activity.

1.12   Concluding remarks

In summary, my understanding of *karintaa* as contextually embedded and historically situated verbal art co-created by performer and receptor/audience is shaped by theories of performance ((Bauman, 1977), (Briggs, 1988)); framing ((Bateson, 2000 [1972]), (Goffman 1974)); genre ((Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Briggs and Bauman, 1992), (Hanks, 1987), (Hanks, 1996)); text and context ((Duranti and Goodwin, 1992), (Hanks, 1989), (Hanks, 2000), (Silverstein and Urban, 1996)), talk-in-interaction ((Goodwin and Heritage, 1990), (Kendon, 1997), (Nofsinger, 1999 [1991]), (Sacks et al., 1974), (Schegloff and Sacks, 1984)); ethnopoetics ((Hymes, 1981), (Jakobson, 1960), (Sherzer and Woodbury, 1987), (Tedlock, 1983)); ethnomusicology ((Blacking, 1973), (Blacking, 1995), (Feld, 1974), (Feld, 1990 [1982]), (Feld and Fox, 1994), (Seeger, 1979), (Seeger, 1987)); semiotics ((Silverstein, 1976), (Turino, 1999), (Urban, 1991); and distributed cognitive systems (Hutchins 1995). By seeking to describe a Nanti discursive ecology, I intend to describe an *additional* level of organization and patterning beyond the levels of formal features, genres, and ways of speaking. Invoking the notion of ecology foregrounds the ways in which these different levels of organization are interlinked and interdependent with one another.