

SOME INTERROGATIVE AND LUDIC DIMENSIONS OF A RIDDLING SESSION

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Numerous questions about riddlers, riddling, and riddles emerged from the following riddling session. But, like the proverbial blind men probing the giant shape of the elephant, I will concentrate on some of the more apparent and salient aspects of this session in an exploration of "interrogative" and "ludic" dimensions, viz.: ratification of the session qua session; ratification or testing of the collector by the children; exploration of the scatological or tabooed; means of access to the floor; and the telling of jokes versus riddles.

The analysis of riddling in this session proceeds from the premise that "no routine is complete until the solution has been provided or acknowledged by riddler" (McDowell 1979:125). "Interrogative ludic routine" is McDowell's term for the riddle, framing a speech event that requires one person to pose the riddle question and another to provide a satisfactory and ratified solution. If the "routine" can include various stages between the initial interrogative proposition and ratified solution, then the following session may be viewed in two ways: (1) in terms of the interrogative and ludic forms of discourse that comprise the session; (2) in terms of the riddles proper (i.e., true riddles) embedded in the session. The one sense of routine is viewed as encompassing the session as a whole, within which frame other more clearly bounded ludic forms and interrogative propositions occur. That is, the session is framed as ludic in its atmosphere of play (Bateson 1972) and exploration and interrogative in its forms of discourse. In addition to the four true riddles in this session, there are other forms of questioning, ranging from "Will a story do?" to "This has got bad words in it" (i.e., may I tell it?) to "Hey, can I go now?" to some of the stories them-

selves in their performance. Questions pervade the discourse and meaning of the session and permit us to view the whole session itself as an interrogative ludic routine. Indeed, the session qua routine is validated by the fact that the session begins with a riddle question that is not answered until the end.

All of the children who participated in this session did so at the request of their supervisor, the program director of a local youth group agency. The children, all boys, were asked to provide riddles and the director, who was not present during the session, pointed out quasi-examples of riddles from the general chatter (e.g., one boy addressed another, Max, as "maxipad"). The director would interject from time to time, "Now that's a riddle," thereby encouraging a "state of talk" as well as quasi-scatological talk. Although the director used the term "riddle" loosely, all the children seemed to know what a riddle was and that the form was not especially appealing to them. The riddle questions proposed during the session were offered upon request. One response was, "I know one, but a whole lot of people knows it," a response that indicates the lack of interest. In only two instances did one riddle trigger others. The preferred forms were stories and jokes, especially on tabooed subjects, despite my determined efforts to reorient the session to riddles.

The story frontier was opened up rather early in the session with the appropriate question "Will a story do?" The exploration of tabooed subjects, and less tangibly, of the collector, by means of asking for permission and telling seemed to be the natural inclination. The posing of riddles proper was induced and somewhat contrived and disquieting.

I have listed below the names of ten children as informants, although the number of participants fluctuated. All participated in the session to some extent, but only a few were able to capture the floor; most participated as audience-hecklers, laughers, and co-promoters of jokes and riddles.

TRANSCRIPT

[Informants: Joey (age 11), Timothy (11), Tony (11), Jimey (11), Daniel (11), Billy (11), J.D. (10), Chon T'ae-son (pseud.; 12), Max (?), Jason (?)--all white except one Asian. I=interviewer.]

Due to the length of the session, some portions have been omitted. Narrative material remains complete as transcribed, in addition to floor battle discourse and other significant speech referred to in the analysis. Nothing edited from the transcript challenges the analysis.

Billy: Ok, I've got one. There's three guys in a boat, and they got three matches. How did they manage to smoke?

I: Three men in a boat...

Billy: ...no, four cigarettes, no matches.

I: How are they going to smoke?

Someone: I know...[pause]

I: Well, they can wait until they get to shore and get matches then.

Billy: Nope.

Max: Is it all right if I tell one?...It was [unclear]...

Billy: Wrong.

I: What was your answer? [to Max]

Max: [unintelligible]... No, I'd better not.

I: Well, give it a try.

Max: [again unintelligible, has a mouth full of cookies]... there's bad words in it.

I: Well, I don't care.

Max: You don't?

I: No. [lots of giggling]

Max: [again unintelligible; others laugh]

I: Now what was that? I didn't quite hear it. [laughter] Well, how about one from...[to Max] How about posing a riddle for us?

Max: This one I can't. It's a little story.

I: Well, that's even better.

Jason: Oh, I know. I know one. What's the boxer's favorite bird?

Someone: A boxer bird.

Jason: Want me to tell the answer?

Everyone: Yeah.

Jason: A duck. [turning to Max, who is eating all the cookies] No, you don't get any more.

J.D.: ...I know one, but I'll get in trouble for it.

I: That's ok. No one else will hear it but us.

J.D.: There's this guy. This is like a story. Will a story do?

I: I guess so [positively].

J.D.: There's this guy, and [he] ain't no fag...

I: Wait a minute [to someone else]. Go ahead [to J.D.] do your story.

J.D.: There's this guy, and he ain't no fag, and he's walking down the street and there's a fag bar over here. And he wanted to go and get him a drink of beer. And he went in there, and this guy asked him does he know how to play football. And he says, "Yeah, let's play it." "Run in the other room and pull down your pants and fart." And he said, "Ok, that's easy." Then the fag went in there and pulled down his pants, and farted, and got several coins. And he came back in there, and he said, "It's your turn." And he went in there and he fart and fart and he couldn't. [giggling] Finally that other dude came in there and put his weenie up his butt and said, "Block that, kid!" [laughter]

Max: Ok. I got one. There was two pollocks and a smart Kentuckian in an airplane. They went over the cabin room [?]. And the two [sic] smart Kentuckians asked the pollock to jump out to see how deep it is. He jumped out. Ankle deep. Then the two other Kentuckians [laughter] jumped in, and it went all the way up to their neck. "I thought you said ankle deep." "When you land in head first." [some chuckles]

Max: I got another one. It's a little bad.

J.D.: Hey, you guys know the one about the bird and the mama? I don't know all of it.

Jason: Oh, the three sons...?

J.D.: Yeah.

Jason: Ok...

J.D.: ...that ought to give you a chance to do one.

Jason: Ok, there's three sons and their mama, their mother, had a [unintelligible], and so they got her a parrot. And she told those guys to go out and learn it some words. First guy, he was cruising down the road, speeding, and a cop pulled him over. The cop pulled him over...[Jason is distracted] So the cop pulled him over and said, "You've been speeding. I got to [unintelligible]." "No I wasn't." Cop goes, "God dang liar." Parrot goes, "Craaaw. God dang liar, craaaw." And he takes him home. Then the second broth...son takes him out. And then he was riding his cycle [sikl], and he was going down there, and he sees a low branch. And he ducks; the parrot ducks. And then he comes back up and goes, "Craaaw, if I hadn't a ducked, the God darn thing would have hit me, craaaw." And then the third...son was out in the woods, and the parrot heard this guy go, "Kick her in the butt, she'll get up." And the parrot goes, "Craaaw, kick her in the

butt, she'll get up." And they all brought it back, and the mother took it to church the next day...

Someone: Uh oh.

Jason: ...and the preacher walks out with this Bible in his hand, and he goes, "God loves ya!" and the parrot goes, "Craaaw, god dang liar, craaaw, god dang liar, craaaw" [laughter]. And then he throws the Bible at him [the parrot]. And then he goes, "Craaaw, if I hadn't ducked, the god darn thing would have hit me, craaaw." And it hit some old lady, and she falls on the floor. And he goes, "Craaaw, kick her in the butt, she'll get up, craaaw." [laughter]

Tony: I got one, I got one!

I: Why don't you go next then.

Tony: Let's see. This kid, uh, his teacher told him that he had to write an essay, and...umm, I think you guys know this one. ...and so he had to write three words...

Someone: Quit it! [referring to the pounding on the table.]

Tony: ...three words that he heard that night. So... He, he... I can't remember... Jason, do you remember?

Jason: No.

Max: I got a good...

Someone: ...so do I.

Tony: ...and the kid goes, uh...

Someone: Shutup! [to another kid].

Tony: Oh...go on to someone else.

Another kid: Ok. [responding to Tony]

I: [pointing to Jimey at the end of the table, by himself. Previously someone had put him up to the task, but the floor was taken by another. Now several people are calling out for their turn] Why don't we give... Do you want to do it?

Jimey: [now shakes his head to indicate no]

Timothy: I'll show you one. I'll tell you one.

Jason: Ok, there's this little kid, there's this little kid. This has got bad words in it.

I: As long they aren't too bad.

Jason: Oh. [as if disappointed; short pause] I don't know if this is too bad.

Someone: Quit it Daniel...

I: Well, go ahead. We'll tell you after it's over [laughter].

Jason: Ok...there's this...//

Someone: //Quit it [to another].

Someone else: Shut up!

Jason: //one kid, and this guy goes, "Come over here son. You want to learn some words?" And the kid goes, "Yeah." And then he walks over, and that guy teaches him, "Ok, this is your word: I'm a bad motherfucker from across the street [laughter], takes another bad mother-

fucker to knock me off my feet."

Someone: [referring to the above] Oh, I love that word...

Jason: And the boy goes home, and he goes, "Mom, mom. I know a new word." And she goes, "What is it son?" And she goes, and he goes, "I'm a bad motherfucker [Jason laughs] from across the street, takes another bad motherfucker to knock me off my feet." And then she does something, and he keeps saying that and saying that, and then he goes up to heaven. They shoot him, and he goes up to heaven. And God already knows his name, but he just wants to see if he knows it. And God goes, "What's your name son?" And he goes, "I'm a bad motherfucker from across the street, takes another bad motherfucker [giggling] to knock me off my feet." And then, he, God, sends him straight down to the devil. And the devil goes, "What's your name son?" [in a low, raspy voice, imitating the devil] And the boy goes, "I'm a bad motherfucker from across the street, takes another bad motherfucker to knock me off my feet." The devil goes, "I'm a real motherfucker from down below, takes...gonna burn your ass from head to toe." [normal voice, loud whisper from "burn..."] [others laugh]

Max: [right after Jason] I got one about do you fuck her faster than... [unintelligible; great laughter]

Someone: ...mean motherfucker...

I: Now wait a minute. Let's not get too dirty here. You guys, you guys have been telling jokes. What about some riddles. You, you [pointing to Billy] told a good riddle. We didn't hear the answer to that//

J.D.: //I know one, but a whole lot of people knows it.

I: Well, let's see. Maybe I don't.

J.D.: Oh, all right. Do you know what kind of dog don't have no tail. Hot dog.

Several: A hot dog. Right.

Several: Oh, I got one, I got one [etc.].

I: Ok, how about you. [pointing to Tony]

Tony: What... Let's see, this is [unintelligible]. What's black and white and red all over?

J.D.: Big Red, oh.

I: A skunk with a heat rash.

Someone: A zebra with a sunburn.

Tony: What?

I: A skunk with a heat rash.

Tony: Nope.

Someone: ...a sunburn...

I: A newspaper.

Tony: Huh?

Someone else: A newspaper.

Tony: No.

I: No?

Tony: No. A zebra with a diaper rash.

I: Oh, good.

Max: Ok, I got one. Ok. There was a truck driver. Ok, all, all of the babies go out of the room.

I: Hey, calm down, you guys.

Max: There was a truck driver. He loved to run over black people, but there was a skinny one. He ran over it. Well, that wasn't too good. Then he saw a preacher. He was hitchhiking. Then he saw this great big old fat nigger...//

Someone: //got me you fatso!...

Max: Shut up! Then he said...[too loud to hear]

I: You've got to be quiet. Or else we can't hear it.

Someone: Everybody be quiet. [into tape recorder]

Max: You might as well turn it off. [tape recorder; said to me]

Jason: No don't Max! [lots of noise]

I: Be quiet you guys! [pause] Ok, keep going [to Max].

Max: Ok...and then he saw a preacher who was hitchhiking, and he picked him up. Then he saw this great big old fat nigger. And he said, acting like he was falling asleep at the wheel. And all of a sudden, splaat! And the preacher says, "You missed him, but I got him with my door." Get it?

Someone: Oh, I heard that.

I: [to Jimey] How about you, you've got a riddle, don't you?

Jimey: [again shakes his head to indicate no]

Tony: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Listen, just listen. Wait a minute, here's this one. There's this guy. [kids are still rallying, and I'm still communicating with Jimey] There's this guy going down the street, these two guys going down the street and the tire pops...//

Another kid: [to Joey]//Should I tell him about the parrot?

Tony: //they pull...they pull off the road, and they go check to see someone for it [other conversation in progress, report of a joke (below); Tony is having obvious trouble capturing the floor]...get their tire fixed. They get their tire fixed...//

Another: //I have one in a minute.

Tony: ...they get their tire fixed, and when they come back there's these pollocks throwing these bowling balls against the walls. And those guys go, "What are you doing?" [louder voice] And the pollocks go, "Busting these nigger eggs before they hatch." [laughter]

Someone: I got one.

I: Wait, why don't you go. You haven't had a chance yet [to Jimey, now seated to my right].

Jimey: Ok. Once there was this parrot who lived in this bathroom. And this boy had to use this bathroom real, real bad. He went in to use the bathroom, and he pulled down his pants, and the parrot said, "I see your hiney, all black and shiney. If you don't hide it, I'm going to bite it." He said, "Shut up parrot." Well, the next day he came in to use the bathroom, and there was that parrot, and he said... He pulled down his pants and the parrot said, "I see your hiney, all black and shiney. If you don't hide it, I'm going to bite it." Well, he said, "Shut up parrot. Next time you say that I'm going to throw you down the toilet stool." Well, he went out, and the next day he came in, pulled down his pants, and the parrot said, "I see your hiney, all black and shiney. If you don't hide it, I'm going to bite it." He said, "Shut up parrot! That's it." So he threw him down the toilet stool, and about five minutes later he said [unintelligible]

I: I didn't here that? What was it?

Jimey: [singing]...floatin' down the river on a chocolate bar.

Someone: I got one. [group begins to scatter]

Tony: I got one. This one guy, he was a...Ok, he uh...Oh yeah. He was a, this one guy, he was...uh, talking to these pollocks.

Someone: Can we leave now?

I: Not yet. You haven't told one yet.

Tony: ...see there was a blind man, a pollock, and a nigger. And see, these guys, they were all walking...they were all walking and... See, it was just like a race, and they had to stop when the guy said stop, and there was this one deaf guy in there. And see, what it was, is they were racing up a giant's arm [demonstrates]. And see, the bottom side [of arm] so it tickled...aaah.

I: Keep going, keep going.

Tony: ...and, uh, shoot, then...they're racing up this guy's arm, and all of a sudden, the guy goes, "Stop!" And everyone stops. And the blind guy stops, and he falls into his armpit. And the armpit, uh,... The giant never knows until the next day. And the blind guy, he's still walking...the deaf guy...'cause he didn't see...hear. So he keeps walking. He goes around this way, and he starts down the other arm, and he falls off the fingertip... so that he was gone. And the guy in the guy's armpit, he was strolling around there for a few days, and pretty soon it got kind of slippery. The guy started doing jumping jacks, but he could never get his arms going down. Pretty soon the guy started sweatin', and it was just like a waterfall, and this little guy there...sliding down...

I: Come on, keep going. Don't forget it.
 Someone: Now I got something.
 Tony: Well, that's all I can remember.
 Max: I got a good one. This one's got a lot of nasty words in it...[edited out]
 Tony: Ok, now I remember this one. Ok. I won't mess up this time. Let's see.
 Someone: [shouting] Yours are too long!
 Tony: No, just a minute... These kids came to school, and the teacher said... They came to school late, and the teacher goes, "Why are you guys late?"
 Timothy: [mimicking] Why you guys late?
 Tony: ..."I've been on top of blueberry hill."
 Timothy: "I've been on top of blueberry hill."
 Tony: ..Ok. And the other guy walks in and he goes...Oh, jeez, you'll smack me for this one. But, uh, anyhow, tell me if this is too bad. Then he comes in, and he says, "I've been on top of blueberry hill." And then this girl walks in, and she [teacher] goes, "I suppose you've been on top of blueberry hill." And he goes, she goes, she goes, "No, I am blueberry hill." [someone groans]
 Tony: Oh.What's this? [kneads Jason's head with his fingers]
 I: It's a spider in his hair?
 Tony: Nope. A brain eater starving to death.
 Someone: Hey, can I go now?
 I: [to Billy] Hey, we never heard the answer to your riddle...about the lifeboat, no matches?
 Billy: Which one? Oh. They throw one cigarette overboard to make it one cigarette lighter.
 I: That's a good one. Do you know any more?
 Billy: No.
 Someone: Max is ugly.
 Someone else: Maxi-pad!
 Timothy: Ask me my name.
 I: Well, what's your name?
 Timothy: Huckleberry whore hound, if you ask me again, I'll knock you down.
 Jason: Ok, ask me my name.
 I: Ok, what's your name?
 Jason: Shuck taim [?]. If you ask me again, I'll tell you the same.

Between the beginning and end of the session, signaled by the initial riddle question, and its completion--the answer--which allowed this riddle out of the session, many things happened. Bit by bit, new frontiers opened up. The story frontier opened rather early in the session, maintaining congruence in a functional respect

to the frame of interrogative ludic routine. Consider the following sequence:

Jason: Ok, there's this little kid, there's this little kid. This has got bad words in it.

I: As long as they aren't too bad.

Jason: Oh [as if disappointed] I don't know if this is too bad. [brief pause]

I: Well, go ahead. We'll tell you when you've finished.

Jason: Ok, there's this little...

Jason's statement, "this has got bad words in it," is effectively a question, for he looked to me and paused as if to receive permission to proceed with his story. My response, holding judgment in abeyance, produced a sense of uncertainty as evidenced in Jason's response, "Oh." For lack of a clear signal to proceed with his story, Jason has to decide whether or not to tell the story, for here the performing is the questioning. In addition to direct questions, questioning took the form of performing.

The interrogative implication of performance, however, impinged upon scatology, which had its precedent. Up to this point in the session the few jokes involved more mild or acceptable forms of scatology. Jason's story, however, seizes explicitly on the developing issue. It provides a meta-commentary on the in situ issue: a boy learns obscene words, tests them on authority figures--mother, God, the devil--is punished each time but continues to use these words until finally beaten in his challenge by the devil. If Jason's story can be viewed as opening up the session explicitly to the question of scatology, then Max's garbled speech at the very beginning of the session might be interpreted as deliberate or strategic: everyone seemed to understand him but me, even though I suspected the use of obscenity. Moreover, if such was the case, Max's comment would have been at least nominally appropriate as he was playing within the frame of the particular riddle routine: his comment may have been construed as a playful or witty "answer" to Billy's riddle question.

In the frame of the larger routine, the session as a whole, the initial routine posed "How did they manage to smoke?" was abandoned and then only artificially completed later by

my asking Billy what the answer was when he asked to be excused from the session. This artificial closure makes Billy accountable for ratifying the session, for completing the routine. Although the other riddles posed during the session constituted completed routines in that there were acknowledged closures before another proposition was advanced, these completed routines, occurring midway in the session and at the end, had to be induced by the interviewer. . They resulted from attempts to reorient the session to riddle routines and to inject authoritarianism tacitly into a sort of subverted interrogation. Although the initial riddle is formally abandoned, other forms and traits of the "ludic" and "interrogative" persist, subverting the riddle form into functional extensions designed to explore the present situation. These children formed a relatively stable group; they knew each other, met regularly, and had never before seen me in this context. Perhaps the overarching question of this session, following Goffman (1974), was "What is it that is going on here?" The preference for stories and jokes as vehicles for the kinds of exploration discussed above would seem to account for the apparent lack of interest in the riddle proper, although age may be a factor as well.

The lack of a clear definition of roles and only marginal group control places authority in precarious balance. It invites challenges, in this case concerning the degree to which scatology is permitted. It also invites competitiveness, evidenced in floor battles (Pratt 1977:101-102). Not everyone competed, but a relatively stable corps regularly vied for the floor. When the first riddle was posed, responses were more likely of the sort, "I've got one," rather than attempts to answer the riddle already in the arena. Perhaps the best example of competition for access to the floor may be seen in Tony's speech. His speech is studded with repetitions, false starts, and other such devices intended either to bait me and others into encouraging him or simply to allow no "dead air" for a would-be challenger. Note, too, in Tony's technique, as with some of the other boys, not merely the repetition of "I got one" but the repetition of the first line of the story itself. Tony

occasionally relinquished the floor after he had gained it, sometimes, apparently, because he sensed he was losing his audience and perhaps expected me to sanction his performance. Tony also forgot the punch lines or endings, and one story consequently is incoherent. It is no surprise that one of his peers comments that his stories are too long. In the narrative about a giant, he becomes confused, abandons the floor, and succeeds in regaining it by claiming that he has remembered. What follows, however, is a different story ending than the one anticipated. In short, he is rather successful at gaining the floor without possessing the means to keep it--to tell either a well crafted story or one relevant to the general topic. When he gains the floor, he is uncertain of what he is going to say, and in his stalling (e.g., "Let's see...") he seems to be composing his thoughts, trying to remember or create something relevant.

Jason, on the other hand, is a more skillful narrator and meets few challenges to his performance; in fact, in one instance, a peer defers to Jason's narrative skills. More than a skillful narrator, he is a skillful negotiator. He happens to be the spokesman for the group when the issue of explicitly scatological language is raised, and since this is an issue that most of the groups seemed to be interested in, he has a captive audience.

I have viewed the entire session as an interrogative ludic routine within which are various forms of interrogative ludic routines, including riddles in the conversational sense of the term. As a whole, the session comprises a sort of scatological symposium tacitly designed to explore the limits of my tolerance as a nominal authority figure (Roberts, Arth, and Bush 1954). We can also view each form as an isolated unit, complete or otherwise. When compared in terms of content, the riddles do not compose any apparent symposium.

- (1) There's three guys in a boat, and they got three cigarettes, no matches. How did they manage to smoke? Answer: They throw one cigarette overboard to make it one cigarette lighter.
- (2) What's the boxer's favorite bird? Answer: a duck.

(3) Do you know what kind of a dog don't have no tail?
Answer: a hot dog.

(4) What's black and white and red/read all over? Answers:
A zebra with a diaper rash. [others that fit but not accepted by riddler]: A skunk with a heat rash. A zebra with a sunburn. A newspaper. [infelicitous answer]: Big Red.

Visual Riddles:

(5) [holding hand out with fingers sticking up] What's this? Answer: a dead one of these [hand with fingers facing down--omitted from transcript].

(6) [one boy kneads another's head with his fingers] What's this? Answer: a brain eater starving to death.

Inverse Riddles:

(7) Ask my name. What's your name? Answer: Huckleberry whore hound, if you ask me again, I'll knock you down.

(8) Ask my name. Ok, what's your name? Answer: Shuck taim [?], if you ask me again I'll tell you the same.

The first two riddles followed one another at the beginning of the session, the second one answered by the riddler himself with an immediacy that contrasts sharply with the first. The next two riddles occurred somewhere midway in the session, preceded and followed by jokes, and the last four, riddles of a different sort, occurred at the end and marked a clear shift in the structure of the session. The fourth riddle was an exemplary routine, including numerous answers, all of which except one logically fit the question. The acceptance of only one answer is the riddler's prerogative. This prerogative and the way it was handled here conveyed the message that the riddler was in charge. He was exploiting his authority as riddler in a situation where authority may have been perceived to be ambiguous.

The two inverse riddles occurred at the end of the session, signaled by Billy's request to be excused. I was the victim of these victimization routines, forced to ask a question without having authority over its solution. Throughout the session I was only nominally in charge, even though the riddlers had temporary authority during a routine. When I publically excused one member

from the session, I thereby declared the session terminated and lost my provisional status. It was then that the remaining children reasserted their status, and by effectively inverting the authority structure, achieved their own closure to the session.

If this session is viewed as a seminar on scatology and authority, then the riddles in it are not as arbitrary as they may seem, at least in terms of function. In terms of content, at least in the true riddles, there is nothing of the scatological. However, as with any riddle, the riddler has some authority and the potential riddlees have a great deal of latitude within the routine to attempt an answer. We can view Max's speech at the opening in the answer role of the riddle in progress as congruent with the rules of riddling, although the stories that follow explicitly develop the scatological seminar. The point is, that scatology is here a means of testing authority as are, formally, riddles; the former in terms of subject matter, the latter in terms of riddling grammar and etiquette. I suspect that the exploration of tabooed subjects, in this case swearing, finds a more appropriate and accessible vehicle in stories and jokes than in riddles. That is to say, scatology appears to be a concern and an issue in the verbal strategies of children this age, and riddles do not effectively afford one the opportunity to explore this subject. Functionally, riddles and profane stories both play with authority roles and question their boundaries: Jason questions by means of performing; Tony questions in a less tangible manner by his captivation techniques; Jimmy merely waited and observed quietly until repeated requests on my part brought forth a joke. Other traits of discourse as well as extralinguistic factors acquire interrogative implications in the frame of play.

Are riddles limited in respect to the subjects with which they can deal? In a conventional sense they would seem to be, although they need not (Köngäs-Maranda 1971). True riddles form the elementary stage--the more apparent forms of verbal play prescribed in form by convention--in the development of verbal and social skills for participating in more broadly prescribed and sophisticated interrogative ludic routines

(Singer 1984). The broader interpretation of interrogative ludic routine in this session is relevant in so far as this session was unequivocally designated a riddling session; the participants clearly demonstrated that they knew what a riddle was as distinct from a story or joke. In this session the purpose of riddling quite naturally suggested and led to other forms of interrogative and ludic routines. If, as Abrahams claimed, "The roles played in play genres are as traditional as the pieces performed and therefore as stylized," (1976:202), then in our functional extension of riddling into uncharted and situation bound frontiers, it is no surprise that roles are questioned and negotiated.