
Analyzing talk at work: an introduction

PAUL DREW and JOHN HERITAGE

1 Overview

This book is a collection of studies of social interaction and language use in a variety of institutional contexts. The interactions that are analyzed here are basically task-related and they involve at least one participant who represents a formal organization of some kind. The tasks of these interactions – ranging from the examination of a witness in court to a health check in a new mother's home – are primarily accomplished through the exchange of talk between professionals and lay persons. So the title of this volume, *Talk at Work*, refers to this: that talk-in-interaction is the principal means through which lay persons pursue various practical goals and the central medium through which the daily working activities of many professionals and organizational representatives are conducted. We will use the term “institutional interaction” to refer to talk of this kind.¹

Institutional interactions may take place face to face or over the telephone. They may occur within a designated physical setting, for example a hospital, courtroom, or educational establishment, but they are by no means restricted to such settings. Just as people in a workplace may talk together about matters unconnected with their work, so too places not usually considered “institutional,” for example a private home, may become the settings for work-related interactions. Thus the institutionality of an interaction is not determined by its setting. Rather, interaction is institutional insofar as

We would like to thank Max Atkinson, Steven Clayman, Charles Goodwin, David Greatbatch, Per Linell, Doug Maynard, and Manny Schegloff for their comments on an earlier draft of this Introduction.

21. It was just really a coat at all, was it?
 22. Well, it is sort of a coat, dress and I thought it with trousers, as a trouser suit.
 23. That is it, down there isn't it, the red one?
 24. Yes.
25. If we call that a dress, if we call that a dress, you had it at all had you?
 26. No.
 27. And this is funny. It was quite a cold night.
 28. Yes it was cold actually.
- M: I said within myself "You know, you don't matter so what are you talking to me for? And the other one was I let."
29. Who said the sentence? "You don't matter?"
 M: I think I don't talk directly to you.
 E: You said some words like, "You don't matter."
 M: Yes. This is what I said to myself!
 E: I know. Can you say it again, "You don't matter?"
 M: Yes. You don't matter.
 E: Say it again.
 M: You don't matter at all.
 E: Say it again.
 M: You don't matter at all.
 E: Say it to a few more people.
 M: You don't, you don't really!

30. Did you see that week's *Newsweek*?
 B: Yes, I did.
 A: Did you read that part of it?
 B: I'm not sure whether I did or not.

talk

at WORK

31. You've got all the papers that are being reviewed, is that right?
 A: I haven't been looking at the papers of the committee. I have the requirements which I've sent to the President.
32. I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
33. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
34. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
35. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
36. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
37. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
38. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
39. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
40. You've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.
 A: I've got the requirements that you've sent to the President.

Interaction in institutional settings

**EDITED BY
 PAUL DREW & JOHN HERITAGE**

participants' institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged. The studies in this volume seek to describe the institutional nature of the tasks and relevances that inform conduct in a variety of work settings. They examine how these relevances are established and how specific tasks are discharged through such conduct. And they depict the consequences which both may have for the character of the interaction and its outcomes.

This collection is unusual in at least two respects. First, the contributions are not studies of the same institutional domain. Whereas it has been usual in the literature to focus on one particular type of institutional setting (e.g. doctor-patient interaction [Fisher and Todd 1983; Heath 1986; Silverman 1987] or courtroom language [Atkinson and Drew 1979; Maynard 1984; Levi and Walker 1990]), this volume contains studies of a wide variety of different institutional contexts. We believe that this diversity encourages a comparative perspective from which it is possible to develop a range of analytical and thematic connections. And this may encourage a greater degree of theoretical coherence and cumulativeness in research than has previously obtained in this field.

The other respect in which this collection is distinctive also relates to the hope of developing a coherent, cumulative research perspective. All the studies here arise from a single research tradition, that of conversation analysis (henceforth CA).² It may perhaps seem surprising that a perspective which, as its very name suggests, is associated with the analysis of ordinary conversation between peers in everyday contexts should be applied to interactions which are evidently not "ordinary conversation" in quite this sense. Yet the data and research enterprises of CA have never been exclusively focused on ordinary conversation. On the contrary, CA research has been developed in relation to a wide range of data corpora.³ Indeed it is for this reason that the term "talk-in-interaction" (Schegloff 1987a) has come to be generally used, in preference to "conversation," to refer to the object of CA research. There is nothing about the perspective and techniques associated with the sequential analysis of ordinary conversation which is inimical to the analysis of institutional talk. Part of our purpose in this chapter is to outline how it is that CA has generated the kind of studies exemplified in this collection, and how the distinctiveness of CA's

identities are somehow
h they are engaged. The
stitutional nature of the
t in a variety of work
ces are established and
such conduct. And they
ave for the character of

two respects. First, the
e institutional domain.
to focus on one particu-
ctor-patient interaction
[verman 1987] or court-
'9; Maynard 1984; Levi
studies of a wide variety
elieve that this diversity
m which it is possible to
tic connections. And this
ical coherence and cumu-
obtained in this field.
ection is distinctive also
rent, cumulative research
om a single research tra-
enceforth CA).² It may
e which, as its very name
of ordinary conversation
uld be applied to interac-
conversation" in quite this
ses of CA have never been
tion. On the contrary, CA
1 to a wide range of data
t the term "talk-in-interac-
e generally used, in prefer-
ject of CA research. There
niques associated with the
tion which is inimical to the
r purpose in this chapter is
erated the kind of studies
the distinctiveness of CA's

approach may yield special insights into how persons conduct their affairs in institutional contexts. Our hope is that this collection may help to consolidate a specifically conversation-analytical approach to the analysis of institutional interaction.

The contributions to this volume focus on conduct that is in various ways shaped or constrained by the participants' orientations to social institutions either as their representatives or, in various senses, as their "clients." These orientations have traditionally been researched in a variety of ways: through questionnaires and unstructured interviews, through ethnographic observation and participants' commentary to researchers in workplace contexts, and through self-reports and diary studies. By these procedures, sociologists have attempted to get inside the "black box" of social institutions to gain access to their interior processes and practices.

In contrast to such methods, the studies collected here attempt to gain access to institutional processes and the outlooks that inform them by analyzing audio and video records of specific occupational interactions. The objective is to describe how particular institutions are enacted and lived through as accountable patterns of meaning, inference, and action. The direct focus on recorded conduct has the advantage that it cuts across basic problems associated with the gap between beliefs and action and between what people say and what they do (Deutscher 1973; Stimson and Webb 1975; Abell and Gilbert 1983; Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). At the same time, this form of research may be regarded as a complement to more traditional observational and participant ethnographic methods of dealing with the same problems.⁴ Insofar as recorded data from institutional settings can be subjected to repeated inspection which can enhance analytic treatments ranging from the interpretative to basic forms of quantification, an opportunity exists to bring new insights to traditional sociological analyses of institutional settings with additional data and with new and powerful investigative techniques.

In what follows, we sketch the position of CA as an approach to institutional talk within a more general set of approaches to action and interaction, outline the methodological and analytical framework represented in this approach, and describe the major growing points of research in the field. Readers who wish to proceed directly

to an outline of the contents of this volume should turn to section 8 of this "Introduction" (p. 53).

2 Convergences in the development of research on institutional interaction

The analytic outlooks expressed in this volume emerge in part from distinctive, but converging, lines of investigation in sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. There are two central tendencies in this convergence: (a) the development of sociolinguistic approaches to language that address the contextual sensitivity of language use; and (b) the emergence of analytic frameworks that recognize the nature of language as action and which handle the dynamic features of social action and interaction.

2.1 Context in talk: sociolinguistic perspectives

Sociolinguistic research into discourse and social interaction emerged in a context of competition with linguistic traditions that treat the constituent units and levels of organization of speech as if they were isolated both from one another and the interactional contexts in which they might occur. Banished from the ideal order of *langue* to the disorderly domain of *parole* where, Chomskian orthodoxy had it, little that was systematic was to be found: the sociolinguistic study of interaction initially seemed to have little to recommend it.⁵

Early indications from sociolinguistics that the world of *parole* might be more orderly than expected emerged in empirical studies of linguistic phenomena below the level of a sentence, for example the phoneme (Labov 1966) or address terms (Ervin-Tripp 1969). In his study of English in New York, for example, Labov (1966) found it necessary to take account of the dialogic contexts in which his data occurred. In noting the change from the unpronounced (r)s in *fourth floor* when a salesperson was first asked directions, to the voiced (r) in response to a request to repeat the direction, Labov connected a systematic phonetic variation to a change from a "casual" to a "careful" speech context. This was an important early step in the recognition that "purely" linguistic phenomena – here, the phonetics of speech – are not autonomous from their dialogic context in interaction.⁶

should turn to section 8

Research on institutional

Volume emerge in part from investigation in sociology, and central tendencies in this sociolinguistic approaches to the variability of language use; works that recognize the underlying dynamic features

Objectives

and social interaction in linguistic traditions that organization of speech as if other and the interactional shifted from the ideal order *parole* where, Chomskian paradigmatic was to be found: the socially seemed to have little to

cases that the world of *parole* merged in empirical studies of a sentence, for example terms (Ervin-Tripp 1969). In example, Labov (1966) found dialogic contexts in which his on the unpronounced (r)s in first asked directions, to the repeat the direction, Labov variation to a change from a text. This was an important "relatively" linguistic phenomena – not autonomous from their

Thus, when linguists, in part, perhaps, stimulated by the results of CA within sociology, began in the 1970s to take seriously the collection and analysis of data which were not contrived but naturally occurring, and which were not limited to single sentences but included sequences of discourse, they were not just responding to the recognition that levels of linguistic structure and organization are interrelated. They also acknowledged that fundamental linguistic phenomena are significantly influenced by the interactive or textual context in which they are produced (Brown and Yule 1983; Stubbs 1983). With the developing acknowledgment of naturally occurring talk as appropriate data for linguistic analysis (Labov 1972), it became apparent that conceptions of sociolinguistic context had also to be modified. Apart from categorizing speech situations as either formal (status-marked) or informal, sociolinguistics had initially treated context in terms of the social attributes speakers bring to talk – for example, age, class, ethnicity, gender, geographical region, kinship, and other relationships. The impact of these attributes was treated as somewhat monolithic, drawn, as Goffman memorably remarked, "directly and simply from chi squaredness" (1964: 134). However, studies of data from natural social settings soon showed that the relevance of these attributes depended upon the particular setting in which the talk occurred – that is, whether the talk was conversational, took place in school, in courts, in business negotiations, and so on – and also upon the particular speech activities or tasks speakers were engaged in within those settings. In some cases, it was found, the nature of the social setting heightened the relevance of speakers' social attributes (e.g. Cazden 1970); in others, however, the activities in which persons were engaged influenced the talk in ways that overwhelmed the relevance of their social attributes (Goffman 1964).

A second major impetus to connect linguistic structure with social context derives from anthropological linguistics which, from Malinowski (1923) onwards, has stressed the sociocultural context of utterance as central to meaning and action (Duranti 1988; Goodwin and Duranti 1992). This perspective gained prominence with the emergence of the ethnography of speaking (Hymes 1964) within anthropology. Hymes's development of the concept of communicative competence (Hymes 1972b; see also Hymes 1972a, 1974) expressed the growing confidence and sophistication with

which the contextualization of speech and language was being treated within anthropology and his 'SPEAKING' (1972a) model systematized the major growing points in the analysis of that contextualization. At the same time, a key collection of papers, *Directions in Sociolinguistics* (Gumperz and Hymes 1972), contained a range of studies that gave empirical substance to these connections.

In this context, a particular debt is owed to the work of Gumperz and his collaborators, who stimulated a reassessment of the dynamic nature of social contexts and the importance of linguistic details in evoking them. Gumperz (1982) demonstrated that any aspect of linguistic behavior – lexical, prosodic, phonological, and syntactic choices together with the use of particular codes, dialects, or styles⁷ – may function as a *contextualization cue*, indicating those aspects of the context which are relevant in interpreting what a speaker means (1982: 162). By signaling interpretively significant aspects of the social context, they enable interactants to make inferences about one another's communicative intentions and goals. Using data from a wide variety of social contexts, Gumperz (1982) indicated the complex ways in which, in interethnic interactions, inferences from linguistic behavior are miscued through ambiguities and mismatches in these cues. The notion of "contextualization cues" thus offered an important analytic opening to grasp the relationship between language use and speakers' orientations to context and inference making. It embodied a more complex and dynamic view of context than hitherto, and suggested that a wide range of linguistic detail might be implicated in the contextualization process.

There is a significant convergence between the linguistic concept of "contextualisation cues" as outlined by Gumperz, and the sociological concept of "frame" developed by Goffman (1974; see also Bateson 1972). Goffman's notion of "frame" focuses on the definition which participants give to their current social activity – to what is going on, what the situation is, and the roles which the interactants adopt within it. In this analysis, behavior, including speech, is interpreted in the context of participants' current understandings of what frame they are in. His related notion of "footing" (Goffman 1981) addresses the reflexive and fluctuating character of frames, together with the moment-by-moment reassessments and realignments which participants may make in moving from one

and language was being
 'SPEAKING' (1972a) model
 the analysis of that con-
 collection of papers, *Direct-*
 ymes 1972), contained a
 nce to these connections.
 red to the work of Gum-
 ed a reassessment of the
 e importance of linguistic
) demonstrated that any
 osodic, phonological, and
 particular codes, dialects,
realization cue, indicating
 evant in interpreting what
 g interpretively significant
 interactants to make infer-
 tive intentions and goals.
 contexts, Gumperz (1982)
 in interethnic interactions,
 miscued through ambigui-
 tion of "contextualization
 ic opening to grasp the re-
 akers' orientations to con-
 d a more complex and dy-
 and suggested that a wide
 icated in the contextualiza-

tween the linguistic concept
 by Gumperz, and the socio-
 by Goffman (1974; see also
 'frame' focuses on the defi-
 current social activity - to
 is, and the roles which the
 nalysis, behavior, including
 participants' current under-
 s related notion of "footing"
 e and fluctuating character of
 -moment reassessments and
 make in moving from one

frame to another.⁸ These are sociological concepts that focus on the social organisation of individuals' experience of the situation or "context" which informs their own conduct and their interpretations of the conduct of others. They are, however, linguistically relevant in so far as participants negotiate frames and communicate changes in footing through "cues and markers" in speech (Goffman 1981c: 157). Tannen and Wallat (1987), for example, have usefully analyzed how a pediatrician selects and shifts between different linguistic registers according to whether she is speaking to a child or to the mother, and according to her particular activity (i.e. whether she is examining the child, explaining to the mother, recording her diagnosis, etc.). They further show that certain detailed aspects of the pediatrician's speech can be understood as the products of her managing the demands of two competing frames, the frame of consultation and that of examination (1987: 212).⁹

Goffman's frame theory has contributed to an increasingly sophisticated and dynamic approach to the analysis of social context. Instead of treating context as unitary and invariant, he has suggested a conceptual framework which captures the changing activity frames with their associated systems of relevance that can emerge within a given setting. In studies such as that by Tannen and Wallat, Goffman's sociological insights are combined with linguistic analysis to show the ways in which the details of language use are related to specific activities within an institutional setting.

Gumperz's notion of "contextualizing" and Goffman's conception of "frame" both relate specific linguistic options to the social activity for which language is being engaged. In combination, they have done much to advance and develop a more complex and dynamic analysis of the "context" of interaction. Their analyses of the relation of linguistic choice to context are resonant with Garfinkel's (1967) discussion of the indexical and reflexive characteristics of talk and behavior, with the precepts of "context analysis" (Kendon 1990), and with the conversation-analytic notion of "recipient design" (Schegloff 1972).

Overarching these particular gains, these studies and the wider "ethnography of speaking" framework with which they articulate have consolidated a key sense both of the contribution of cultural contextualization to the understanding of language and, more generally, of the relationship between language and the socio-

cultural order. The record is less clear-cut, however, in the analysis of action. Hymes (1972a) invoked the conception of speech acts to handle this, observing that "the level of speech acts mediates immediately between the usual levels of grammar and the rest of a speech event or situation" (1972a; 57). But while many studies in the ethnography of speaking show how actions are shaped by the cultural contextualization of utterances, there has not been an equivalent emphasis on the organization of social action *per se*. Rather, the nature of social action and its sequential organization have been explored more extensively from other perspectives, to which we now turn.

2.2 *Talk in context: speech acts and discourse analysis*

Perhaps the most vivid point of convergence between language and social organization arises at the level of *speech acts*. In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin (1962) developed the view that in the production of an utterance a speaker performs an action, and aspects of his analysis were developed in a more systematic and technical way by Searle (1969).¹⁰ Searle's speech-act theory, with its focus on the rules and conditions through which a sentence is understood as a particular kind of action, involves a more restricted focus than the "activity" or "speech-event" domain addressed by the work of Gumperz and his colleagues. However, because activities or speech events are built out of particular component actions, speech acts are arguably central to the analysis of all forms of interaction. And, since analysis of the organization of social action has always been a central focus of sociological research, the emergence of speech-act theory was a promising development for sociology. It held out the prospect of a real and empirically grounded interface between linguistics and sociology that could, in turn, contribute to the emerging body of work on discourse and social interaction.

Labov and Fanshel's (1977) study of a psychotherapeutic interview represented a major effort to apply speech-act analysis to institutional discourse. The study was motivated by two distinct objectives. The first was to demonstrate that, in the way they perform their actions, therapist and patient give expression to their proper roles in therapy. This goal involved detailed interpretative

, however, in the analysis of speech acts to of speech acts mediates grammar and the rest of a but while many studies in actions are shaped by the , there has not been an n of social action *per se*. ts sequential organization om other perspectives, to

Discourse analysis

ence between language and *speech acts*. In *How to Do* eloped the view that in the : performs an action, and l in a more systematic and le's speech-act theory, with hrough which a sentence is n, involves a more restricted vent" domain addressed by es. However, because activi- articular component actions, he analysis of all forms of organization of social action iological research, the emer- ising development for socio- al and empirically grounded ology that could, in turn, con- on discourse and social inter-

of a psychotherapeutic inter- apply speech-act analysis to as motivated by two distinct ate that, in the way they per- tient give expression to their involved detailed interpretative

analysis; for example, Labov and Fanshel demonstrated the ways in which the patient, in making an evaluation, uses language which specifically displays her adherence to the therapeutic objective that patients should "be in touch with their emotions and be aware of what they are feeling" and gain insight into these feelings, including feelings of guilt (1977: 138 and 185; also Wootton 1977).

Labov and Fanshel's second, and more fundamental, objective is a theoretical one. It arises from their observation that coherence in discourse is not primarily a product of either the surface structure or the content of utterances. Rather, it is achieved in the connections between the actions which particular linguistic expressions perform (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 69-70). As Labov and Fanshel saw it, the production of discourse involves two distinct processes: (a) the speaker's analysis of a surface form as a given speech action; and (b) an analysis of its connections to other actions. Their objective, therefore, was to account for discourse coherence (a) in terms of rules which "translate" what is actually spoken into the speech act thereby performed and (b) in terms of rules that provide for linkages between actions. Both sets of rules are necessary to show how surface form, often through very indirect means, achieves a given speech action.¹¹

The conjunction of these two objectives in a context of interaction which is, by common consent, often veiled and highly indirect led to a number of interlocking difficulties in Labov and Fanshel's analysis. First, in addressing the pervasively indirect character of much of the dialog, they were obliged to get from the surface form of utterances to their character as actions by means of contextually triggered "translation rules" (Gordon and Lakoff 1975). Yet, as Levinson (1980, 1981a, 1981b, 1983) notes, an indefinitely large number of such rules are apparently required to achieve this goal, which is consequently unattainable.¹² Moreover, the utterances in Labov and Fanshel's corpus can function as actions which can be understood differently at a number of different levels. The researchers made considerable efforts to formulate rules which account for different understandings of an utterance. But, as Taylor and Cameron (1987: 49ff.) observe, it was often difficult for Labov and Fanshel to determine how a particular utterance was actually understood by the participants and how the recipient's understanding of the utterance squared with the speaker's intention in

producing it. As a result, it was difficult to validate the empirical applicability of any particular analytical rule. Here Labov and Fanshel often had recourse to the speaker's intentions in producing some utterance, and commonly supported their reading of them by reference to talk occurring much later in the session. But this procedure is vitiated by the fact that the later "validating" utterances emerged in their own interactional contexts. Often, it appears, Labov and Fanshel were reduced to "reading history backwards" in an attempt to secure an interpretative foundation for their analyses. And this methodology is no less questionable in the study of interaction than it is in the study of historical events.

The problems of Labov and Fanshel's analysis reflect deeper and more enduring difficulties inherited from the Searlian speech-act paradigm. These difficulties made speech-act theory an unlikely complement to the new context-sensitive forms of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. In an unfortunate parallel with Chomskian linguistics, speech-act pragmatics was developed from considerations of idealized sentences – originally construed as occurring in a "null context" (Searle 1969)¹³ – and resulted in attempts to model the pragmatic presuppositions or extra syntactic knowledge and conventions which must function if a sentence is to be not only well formed but also "meaningful."

In thus viewing meaning as fundamentally emergent from the sentence or utterance, this approach is drastically decontextualized. There can, by now, be no serious doubt that sentences and utterances are designed and shaped to occur in particular sequential and social contexts and that their sense as actions derives, at least in part, from such contexts (Schegloff 1984). In particular, utterances are interpreted in terms of whether, or to what extent, they conform to or depart from the expectations that are attached to the "slots" in which they occur. These expectations are of two types. First, there are expectations which are "perlocutionarily" established by a previous turn at talk (Sacks 1964–72; Schegloff 1972, 1984; Grice 1975). Thus a question establishes the relevance of an answer, a greeting expects a reply and so on. The obvious importance of these expectations may be glossed by noting that they can make silences – which are *prima facie* meaningless because no spoken action is undertaken – into highly significant events. The second type of expectation derives from the more general context of

to validate the empirical
 le. Here Labov and Fanshel's
 intentions in producing
 their reading of them by
 the session. But this pro-
 r "validating" utterances
 texts. Often, it appears,
 ing history backwards" in
 ndation for their analyses.
 able in the study of inter-
 events.

analysis reflect deeper and
 n the Searlean speech-act
 ch-act theory an unlikely
 e forms of sociolinguistics
 e parallel with Chomskian
 developed from consider-
 construed as occurring in a
 ulted in attempts to model
 syntactic knowledge and
 tence is to be not only well

entally emergent from the
 rastically decontextualized.
 ot that sentences and utter-
 in particular sequential and
 actions derives, at least in
 14). In particular, utterances
 r to what extent, they con-
 ons that are attached to the
 pectations are of two types.
 re "perlocutionarily" estab-
 s 1964-72; Schegloff 1972,
 establishes the relevance of an
 l so on. The obvious import-
 ssed by noting that they can
 icie meaningless because no
 ighly significant events. The
 m the more general context of

the interaction, the social identities of the participants, and the assumptions about the scope of conduct that conventionally attach to such events as a casual conversation, a news interview, or a medical consultation. It is these expectations which can make an *oh*, for example, something to be avoided in a news interview (Heritage 1985) or a medical consultation (ten Have 1991), and correspondingly noticeable in such contexts when it occurs.

No analysis that begins from the isolated sentence and undertakes to "translate" it from a hypothetical "null context" meaning into a social action has any real chance of grasping even these elementary phenomena. Indeed, the lesson that should properly be taken from Labov and Fanshel's study is that, rather than starting from sentence meanings, analysis should begin from the study of sequences of actions and the ways in which context forms a resource in their interpretation. Any other approach is liable to misconstrue what is at stake in the analysis of situated social interaction.

A speech-act-based approach that was more directly focused on the sequential organization of action was developed by the Birmingham discourse analysis group, which examined classroom and medical interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Coulthard 1977; Coulthard and Montgomery 1981; Stubbs 1983). Like Labov and Fanshel, the Birmingham group focus on discourse coherence, viewing it in essentially "grammatical" terms (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). Just as well-formed sentences can be treated as the products of the rules of syntax, so coherent and meaningful discourse can be generated by a syntax of action specified, in Sinclair and Coulthard's model, in terms of hierarchically organized sets of acts, moves, exchanges, and transactions. In their analysis of classroom interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975), interactional coherence is most extensively treated at the level of the exchange structures, the most cited of which is the initiation-response-feedback (I-R-F) exchange.¹⁴ The Birmingham studies represented a move towards a more dialogic analysis of language in institutional settings. Interaction is specified through descriptions of sequential patterns – the sequences of moves making up exchanges that are characteristic of particular settings such as the classroom – and the predictions or expectations that these patterns engender. Three-part structures similar to those discussed by Sinclair and Coulthard

have also been identified by others working on classroom discourse (notably Mehan 1979: Ch. 2; also Drew 1981).

Despite the analytical advance represented by the Birmingham approach, it is vulnerable to a number of basic criticisms. Conceptually, the Birmingham authors' attempt to develop a formal analysis of the utterance-action relationship through "translation rules" appears to be vulnerable to the same criticisms that Levinson (1981a, 1981b, 1983) levels against the Labov and Fanshel approach. Moreover, in the wake of Grice's (1975) discussion of conversational implicature, the notion that sequences of discourse can be abstractly specified in terms of well- or ill-formedness is no longer defensible (Levinson 1981b, 1983; Taylor and Cameron 1987: 76-9). Goffman (1981b: 68-72), for example, playfully illustrates the difficulties of specifying rules for a determinate well-formed discourse with two pages of possible responses to the utterance *Do you have the time?* And, in a different way, Garfinkel's (1967: 76-103) analysis of his "student-counselling experiment" illustrates the adroitness with which some contextual element can be invoked to give sense to an apparently bizarre interactional contribution.

With respect to empirical analysis, the focus of the Birmingham group on institutional discourse was less advantageous than may at first appear. There is an important sense in which the I-R-F analysis depends for its cogency on the constraints of the classroom and medical contexts it models. It is doubtful that such a model would have been attempted for more free-flowing conversational interaction, where participants have a greater range of opportunities to act and options among alternative courses of action. Moreover, the socially constrained context of classroom interaction may have encouraged hopes for a relatively simple formalism which could be, in turn, extended to other social contexts without too much difficulty.

These formalistic hopes were, in retrospect, distracting. In their preoccupation with the rules for discursive action within a context, the Birmingham group tended to ignore the task of analyzing how mutual understandings are achieved by the participants - thereby mirroring a central weakness of Parsonian normative sociology (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984a). This engendered a related failure to specify in their model how participants show their orientations

ing on classroom discourse
(1981).

presented by the Birmingham
of basic criticisms. Concept
to develop a formal analy-
through "translation rules"
the criticisms that Levinson
the Labov and Fanshel
Trice's (1975) discussion of
that sequences of discourse
well- or ill-formedness is no
1983; Taylor and Cameron
72), for example, playfully
rules for a determinate well-
possible responses to the utter-
a different way, Garfinkel's
"parent-counselling experiment"
some contextual element can
apparently bizarre interactional

the focus of the Birmingham
is less advantageous than may at
first seem in which the I-R-F analy-
straints of the classroom and
difficult that such a model would
allowing conversational interac-
a range of opportunities to act
in these contexts. Moreover, the
classroom interaction may have
multiple formalism which could be,
texts without too much diffi-

retrospect, distracting. In their
descriptive action within a context,
more the task of analyzing how
done by the participants - thereby
Marsonian normative sociology
this engendered a related failure
participants show their orientations

to the particular institutional context in which they are interacting. For example, because the investigators did not look at question-answer-feedback sequences in a variety of settings (see Levinson, this volume ch. 2; Heritage 1984a: 280-90), their analysis failed to disclose the ways in which successive elements of the I-R-F sequence constitute its "instructional" character.¹⁵ There was thus a deep incompatibility between the Birmingham investigators' underlying assumption of an association between a fixed social context and a formal syntax of action, on the one hand, and the active context-cueing approach embodied in Gumperz and Goffman's analyses, in the more general tradition of "context analysis" (Kendon 1979, 1982, 1990) and indeed in the then emerging perspective of conversation analysis on the other.

These various difficulties came to a head in two related analytic failures. First, although the I-R-F model was originally developed specifically to render formal descriptions of sequences of "exam" questions in classroom interaction, its fundamental analytic categories were fatally general and imprecise. This generality permitted the extension of the model to other institutional domains, such as doctor-patient interaction, but without serious attention being given to how these various settings are differentiated. As a result, notwithstanding their very real social differences, the two settings could not be differentiated in formal terms.

Second, the I-R-F model tended to obscure the social relations of the environments it described. The classroom context that Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) deal with, for example, is one that most educators would describe as "traditional" (McHoul 1978; Taylor and Cameron 1987). In their pursuit of a formal model to describe interaction in this context, the Birmingham group specified, as features of "coherence" in discourse, behaviors that might preferably be viewed in terms of a regime of conduct underpinned by a particular pedagogical theory and enforced, if need be, by threat. There was, in short, a tendency to conflate linguistic rules and social relations. And, in an analysis that was apt to slip between descriptive and prescriptive views of rules (Taylor and Cameron 1987: 74-80), to treat conduct that is clearly informed by considerations of task and teaching philosophy as something that could be treated in exclusively linguistic terms.

In sum, the last two decades have witnessed a broad range of

conceptual innovation in the study of dialog. The impact of the ethnography of speaking and of speech-act models of dialog on the analysis of social interaction may be summarized as follows. The ethnographic studies, with their background in cultural anthropology, have created a richly textured sense of the role of sociocultural context in ordinary understandings of utterances and events. They have contributed to a broader and more detailed sense of how context structures and shifts the meaning of utterances and is itself structured and shifted by them. However, with their primary emphasis on the cultural background of language use, the ethnographers of communication generally have not developed analyses that combine a focus on the organization of specific sequences in social interaction with a treatment of the understandings and practical reasoning that inform these sequences and are engendered by them.

The speech-act theorists, on the other hand, recognize the importance of sequence in interaction and have worked to establish formal models of the linkages between one spoken action and the next. Yet the effort to develop analyses of these linkages using linguistic frameworks and metaphors that denied the relevance of contextual considerations has resulted in flawed conceptual tools and empirical analyses. In particular, analytical formalism was bought at the cost of empirical purchase on the detailed fabric of the social world of interaction.

Contemporary with both of these analytic frameworks, CA emerged with an approach to sequence in social interaction that avoided the sterile formalism that has constricted speech-act approaches to dialog. At the same time, in its analysis of specific organizations of social actions, CA has from the outset found ways of admitting the enriched sense of context in utterance that ethnographic approaches have insistently advocated. In what follows, we sketch the nature of the CA approach to interaction as a prelude to focusing on its application to institutional talk.

3 Conversation analysis: a brief overview

Conversation analysis combines a concern with the contextual sensitivity of language use with a focus on talk as a vehicle for social action. With its grounding in the study of ordinary talk between persons in a wide variety of social relations and contexts, CA has

dialog. The impact of the act models of dialog on the summarized as follows. The found in cultural anthropology of the role of sociocultural utterances and events. They more detailed sense of how ng of utterances and is itself wever, with their primary language use, the ethnogra-not developed analyses that f specific sequences in social nderstandings and practical and are engendered by them. her hand, recognize the im-d have worked to establish n one spoken action and the uses of these linkages using that denied the relevance of d in flawed conceptual tools r, analytical formalism was ase on the detailed fabric of

e analytic frameworks, CA rice in social interaction that has constricted speech-act me, in its analysis of specific is from the outset found ways ntext in utterance that ethno- dvocated. In what follows, we to interaction as a prelude to onal talk.

view

ncern with the contextual sen-on talk as a vehicle for social udy of ordinary talk between elations and contexts, CA has

been in a particularly strong position to develop analytic tools for the study of talk-in-context. Indeed, as Schegloff (ch. 3) notes, CA represents a consistent effort to develop an empirical analysis of the nature of context. Here, we briefly summarize four major features of the CA perspective which have a particular relevance for the analysis of talk in institutional settings.

3.1 *The activity focus of conversation analysis*

The decisive feature that distinguishes the CA treatment of interaction and language use from others that are current in the field is what may be termed its *activity focus*. In contrast to perspectives that begin, at one pole of the analytic enterprise, with a treatment of culture or social identity or, at the other pole, with linguistic variables such as phonological variation, word selection, syntax, etc., CA begins from a consideration of the *interactional accomplishment of particular social activities*. These activities are embodied in specific social actions and sequences of social actions. Thus the initial and overriding CA focus is on the particular actions that occur in some context, their underlying social organization, and the alternative means by which these actions and the activities they compose can be realized.¹⁶

3.2 *Sequential analysis: an interactional approach to the units of discourse*

The activity focus described above emerged directly from the core interests of CA in "structures of social action" (Atkinson and Heritage 1984). These interests embodied an ethnomethodologically inspired concern to investigate the procedures and resources by which actors can engage in mutually intelligible social interaction whose organization is assured through an architecture of intersubjectivity and moral accountability (Heritage 1984a). These investigations could only be pursued through intensive analysis of particular interactional events because the data of CA – ordinary conversational actions in everyday contexts – proved quite resistant to treatment in terms of normal sociolinguistic variables and indeed to premature quantification more generally (Schegloff in press).

The emerging CA perspective developed through detailed quali-

tative analysis of naturally occurring data. Its analyses rapidly led to the conclusion that the sense of an utterance *as an action* is an interactive product of what was projected by a previous turn or turns at talk and what the speaker actually does. This analytic integration of what linguists would terms the "illocutionary" dimension of a current utterance with the "perlocutionary" dimension of its prior has been a hallmark of CA data analysis from its inception. It represents a wholesale departure from the analytic outlook of speech-act analysis as presently practised and it further required a focus on units that were larger than the individual sentence or utterance. These units were conceived as *sequences of activity* and their component unit turns as turns-within-sequences.

3.3 *The conception of context*

The interactional framework of CA also embodies a particular analytic attitude towards the notion of context in interaction. Within this framework, as Heritage (1984a) summarized it, utterances – and the social actions they embody – are treated as doubly contextual. First, utterances and actions are *context shaped*. Their contributions to an ongoing sequence of actions cannot be adequately understood except by reference to the context in which they participate. The term "context" is here used to refer both to the immediately local configuration of preceding activity in which an utterance occurs, and also to the "larger" environment of activity within which that configuration is recognized to occur. This contextual aspect of utterances is significant both because speakers routinely draw upon it as a resource in designing their utterances and also because, correspondingly, hearers must also draw upon the local contexts of utterances in order to make adequate sense of what is said. Second, utterances and actions are *context renewing*. Since every current utterance will itself form the immediate context for some next action in a sequence, it will inevitably contribute to the contextual framework in terms of which the next action will be understood. In this sense, the interactional context is continually being developed with each successive action. Moreover each current action will, by the same token, function to renew (i.e. maintain, adjust, or alter) any broader or more generally prevailing sense of context which is the object of the participants' orientations and actions.

ta. Its analyses rapidly led to the view that utterance *as an action* is an action, not just a description of what is actually done. This analytic view is based on the terms the "illocutionary" and the "perlocutionary" dimensions of speech. CA data analysis from its inception has departed from the analytic view of conversation that was initially practised and it further developed a view that is larger than the individual utterance, conceived as *sequences of actions* or *turns-within-sequences*.

CA also embodies a particular view of context in interaction. Heritage (1984a) summarized it, utterances and actions – are treated as doubly *context shaped*. Their sequence of actions cannot be addressed in isolation to the context in which they occur. The term *context* is here used to refer both to the local context of preceding activity in which the action occurs and the "larger" environment of social interaction in which it is recognized to occur. This view is significant both because speakers in designing their utterances must also draw upon the context to make adequate sense of their actions and *context renewing*. The local context will inevitably contribute to the design of the next action. Moreover each utterance functions to renew (i.e. maintain or restore) the generally prevailing sense of participants' orientations and

Entailed in this view of context is the abandonment of what may be termed the "bucket" theory of context in which some preestablished social framework is viewed as "containing" the participants' actions.¹⁷ Instead, the CA perspective embodies a dynamic approach in which "context" is treated as both the project and product of the participants' own actions and therefore as inherently locally produced and transformable at any moment. Thus the methodological constraints raised by Schegloff (ch. 3) concerning the relevance of particular social identities and the procedural consequentiality of context are generic to CA approaches to the analysis of social interaction. The study of institutional interaction cannot by any means be exempted from this constraint (Heritage 1984a: 280–90).¹⁸ It is this abandonment of the "bucket" theory of context that marks an important point of contrast between CA and the perspective of the Birmingham school of discourse analysis.

3.4 Comparative analysis

CA research has, in part, been inspired by the realization that ordinary conversation is the predominant medium of interaction in the social world. It is also the primary form of interaction to which, with whatever simplifications, the child is initially exposed and through which socialization proceeds. Thus the basic forms of mundane talk constitute a kind of benchmark against which other more formal or "institutional" types of interaction are recognized and experienced. Explicit within this perspective is the view that other "institutional" forms of interaction will show systematic variations and restrictions on activities and their design relative to ordinary conversation (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974: 629; Atkinson and Drew 1979; Atkinson 1982; Heritage 1984a). The study of ordinary conversation, preferably casual conversation between peers, may thus offer a principled approach to determining what is distinctive about interactions involving, for example, the specialisms of the school or the hospital or the asymmetries of status, gender, ethnicity, etc. A clear implication is that comparative analysis that treats institutional interaction in contrast to normal and/or normative procedures of interaction in ordinary conversation will present at least one important avenue of theoretical and empirical advance. This comparative focus is manifest in a number of the contributions to this volume.

4 Analyzing institutional talk; methodological aspects

In analyzing specific features of interaction in social institutions, most of the contributors to this volume begin from the perspective expressed by Schegloff (ch. 3) concerning the interrelationship of interaction and social organization, of talk and social structure. As Schegloff observes, most students of interactional data readily acquire an intuitive sense of the particular social identities or attributes (e.g. gender, ethnicity, status, occupational role, power, etc.) which the parties treat as significant in the course of their interaction. And, as Atkinson (1982) points out, this sense can be overwhelming in institutional talk.¹⁹ The question that Schegloff raises, however, is how are these institutions to be translated into empirically warranted findings? In this context, he observes, following Sacks's (1972a) discussion, that persons can be correctly described in numerous different ways. This raises what he terms the issue of "relevance": given that mere "factual correctness" cannot motivate the analytic use of one particular description over another, the analyst is faced with the task of finding some other warrant for some specific description of the parties. Like Schegloff, the contributors to this volume do not look for solutions which Schegloff terms "positivistic." Rather they are concerned to show that analytically relevant characterizations of social interactants are grounded in empirical observations that show that the *participants themselves* are demonstrably oriented to the identities or attributes in question.

In the context of institutional talk, this means that empirical analysis must first accomplish the normal CA tasks of analyzing the conduct of the participants including their orientations to specific local identities and the underlying organization of their activities. Additionally, however, analysis will normally be concerned to show that the participants' conduct and its organization embody orientations which are specifically institutional or which are, at the least, responsive to constraints which are institutional in character or origin. This additional task is by no means a straightforward one. Although it is easy enough, on an intuitive basis, to identify a variety of ways in which activities seem to be "done differently" in institutional settings, it is much more difficult to specify these differences precisely and to demonstrate their underlying insti-

ological aspects

tion in social institutions, begin from the perspective of the interrelationship of talk and social structure. As interactional data readily reveal (e.g. social identities or attributional role, power, etc.) in the course of their interaction, this sense can be over-estimated that Schegloff raises, to be translated into empirical text, he observes, following as can be correctly described as what he terms the issue of "correctness" cannot motivate a description over another, the finding some other warrant for it. Like Schegloff, the contributors solutions which Schegloff is concerned to show that analytical interactants are grounded in that the *participants themselves* the identities or attributes in

work, this means that empirical analysis of CA tasks of analyzing the participants' orientations to specific activities and their organization of their activities. Analysts normally be concerned to describe the organization and its organization embody institutional or which are, at the moment, are institutional in character. This does not mean a straightforward analysis on an intuitive basis, to identify a way to be "done differently" in a more difficult to specify these strategies and their underlying insti-

tutional moorings. These difficulties are further compounded by the fact that, as noted above, CA works with an elaborate and complex approach to the analysis of social context. Given the abandonment of the "bucket" concept of context in favor of a more dynamic "context renewing" one, CA researchers cannot take "context" for granted nor may they treat it as determined in advance and independent of the participants own activities. Instead, "context" and identity have to be treated as inherently locally produced, incrementally developed and, by extension, as transformable at any moment. Given these constraints, analysts who wish to depict the distinctly "institutional" character of some stretch of talk cannot be satisfied with showing that institutional talk exhibits aggregates and/or distributions of actions that are distinctive from ordinary conversation. They must, rather, demonstrate that the participants constructed their conduct over its course – turn by responsive turn – so as progressively to constitute and hence jointly and collaboratively to realize the occasion of their talk, together with their own social roles in it, as having some distinctively institutional character. Although there is, it appears, no single "royal road" to such demonstrations because the character of institutional interaction varies widely across different institutional tasks and settings, a major resource in such demonstrations is comparative analysis, to which we now turn.

5 Institutional talk and ordinary conversation: activities, goals, constraints, and inferences

In the following discussion, we will address some aspects of interaction which are often cited when analysts seek to distinguish "institutional talk" from "ordinary conversation." We stress that we do not accept that there is necessarily a hard and fast distinction to be made between the two in all instances of interactional events, nor even at all points in a single interactional event. Nor do we intend to offer a definition of "institutional talk," nor to make any attempt at synoptic description. Rather, our aim here is to point to some features that may contribute to family resemblances among cases of institutional talk that are predominantly addressed in the chapters that follow.

In his contribution to this volume, Levinson (ch. 2) develops an

analysis of some basic features of what he terms "activity types" in social interaction. Although his conception of activity types is broader in scope than our present concern with institutional interaction, it forms a valuable point of departure. Arising from Levinson's discussion, although construing the issues he raises within the terms of the *participants' orientations* to institutional context, we propose that:

- 1 Institutional interaction involves an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question. In short, institutional talk is normally informed by *goal orientations* of a relatively restricted conventional form.
- 2 Institutional interaction may often involve *special and particular constraints* on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand.
- 3 Institutional talk may be associated with *inferential frameworks* and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts.

In what follows we will briefly elaborate on each of these points.

5.1 Institutional talk is goal-oriented in institutionally relevant ways

It is abundantly clear in the studies presented in this volume that the participants organize their conduct by reference to general features of the tasks or functions of particular social institutions as they understand them within either a vernacular or technical competence. Whether in a medical consultation, or an emergency call to the police, in a job interview or a cross-examination in court, both lay and professional participants generally show an orientation to institutional tasks or functions in the design of their conduct, most obviously by the kinds of goals they pursue.²⁰

In this context however, it is useful to note the range of variation in the kinds of goal orientation that are evident in the interactions described in this volume. (a) Zimmerman's analysis (ch. 13) of emergency calls to the police, for example, deals with interactions whose manifest purposes – the request and dispatch of emergency assistance – are for the most part clearly and definitely oriented to

the terms "activity types" in relation of activity types is concerned with institutional interstructure. Arising from Levinson's issues he raises within the institutional context, we

show an orientation by at least one goal, task or identity (or related with the institution in which it is normally informed by a restricted conventional form. These often involve *special and specific* or both of the participants' contributions to the business at hand. These are associated with *inferential* contributions that are particular to specific

concern on each of these points.

Contributions institutionally relevant

As presented in this volume that the reference to general features of social institutions as they pertain to macular or technical communication, or an emergency call to a cross-examination in court, both typically show an orientation to the design of their conduct, most notably in the lawsuit.²⁰

It is to note the range of variation that is evident in the interactions examined in Levinson's analysis (ch. 13) of courtroom example, deals with interactions of the arrest and dispatch of emergency services and is clearly and definitely oriented to

by the participants from the outset to the completion of the call. In contrast, Heritage and Sefi (ch. 12) discuss nurse visits to new mothers whose tasks are various and generally ill-defined. In the emergency calls, the participants appear to operate with a pre-defined "top-down" conception of the interaction. In the community-nurse visits, by contrast, the participants seem to negotiate their way in "bottom-up" fashion towards a sense of what the interaction will be about. Moreover, (b) the contributions to this volume show that, even where the participants share a stable understanding of the general tasks or goals of their interaction, the specifics of their implementation may fluctuate in the local contingencies of interaction and that this is so regardless of whether the goals are presumptively cooperative (as in a visit to a doctor) or conflictual (as in a courtroom cross-examination). Additionally (c) we may note virtually inevitable differences in the goals pursued by lay and institutional participants. The latter's conduct, in particular, is shaped by organizational and professional constraints and accountabilities which may be only vaguely known or entirely opaque to lay participants.

5.2 Institutional talk: constraints on contributions

A central theme of Levinson's discussion concerns the ways in which conduct in institutional settings may be shaped by reference to constraints that are goal-oriented or functional in character. In papers dealing with several kinds of institutional contexts, most notably courtroom conduct (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Drew, this volume, ch. 14) and news-interview interaction (Heritage 1985; Clayman 1988; Greatbatch 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991), it has been shown that the participants shape their conduct by reference to powerful and legally enforceable constraints which impart a distinctly "formal" character to the interaction (Atkinson 1982). By contrast, in other institutional settings, for example nurse-mother or doctor-patient interaction, the participants are often oriented to more local and negotiable understandings about the ways in which the tasks or other institutional aspects of their activities may limit allowable contributions to the business at hand. In such contexts, the understandings (and the constraints on conduct that are associated with them) are often quite variable from

interaction to interaction and from phase to phase (or task to task) in any given interaction (Heath 1986; Heritage and Sefi, this volume, ch. 12).

A number of chapters in this volume detail the ways in which institutional contexts are manifested in, and in turn shape, the particular actions of both professional and lay interactants. These chapters go some way towards meeting Schegloff's (ch. 3) injunction that researchers document the "procedural consequentiality" of the participants' orientation to an institutional context by showing how this orientation has consequences for the "shape, form, trajectory, content or character of the interaction that the parties conduct" (111). As is noted in what follows, such consequentiality may be "positive" in the sense that certain actions, which might be inhibited in a conversational context, may be promoted in institutional contexts. Or, alternatively, it may be "negative" in the reverse sense that certain conversational actions may be strongly avoided in particular institutional contexts.

5.3 The special character of inference in institutional contexts

In a context where particular institutional goals may be the object of the participants' orientations and where the participants' conduct departs in various ways from ordinary conversational conduct, Levinson argues, there will also tend to be special – "institutional" – aspects of the reasoning, inferences, and implicatures that are developed in institutional interaction. For example, a number of kinds of institutional interaction (including legal, medical, and news-interview environments – see the contributions by Atkinson, Button, and Clayman to this volume) embody a constraint on the "professional" to withhold expressions of surprise, sympathy, agreement, or affiliation in response to lay participants' describings, claims, etc. Such withholdings would be interpreted as disaffiliative in a conversational context, but often are not clearly so interpreted in these professional encounters. Similarly, comparatively "innocuous" conversational remarks may be interpreted as threatening in an institutional context (Heritage and Sefi, ch. 12). In each case, considerations of social identity and task reconfigure the interpretive "valence" that may be attached to particular actions in institutional contexts by comparison to how they are normally

to phase (or task to task)
5; Heritage and Sefi, this

detail the ways in which
n, and in turn shape, the
and lay interactants. These
3; Schegloff's (ch. 3) injunc-
"procedural consequentiality"
institutional context by show-
nces for the "shape, form,
interaction that the parties
flows, such consequentiality
ain actions, which might be
may be promoted in insti-
may be "negative" in the
ial actions may be strongly
exts.

in institutional contexts

onal goals may be the object
where the participants' con-
rdinary conversational con-
tend to be special – "insti-
inferences, and implicatures
interaction. For example, a
action (including legal, medi-
s – see the contributions by
his volume) embody a con-
hold expressions of surprise,
response to lay participants'
dings would be interpreted as
xt, but often are not clearly so
ounters. Similarly, compara-
marks may be interpreted as
(Heritage and Sefi, ch. 12). In
ntity and task reconfigure the
atched to particular actions in
n to how they are normally

understood in ordinary conversation. Still more tangled and com-
plex interpretative issues arise in interactions, such as those de-
scribed by Gumperz (ch. 10), where the participants to an insti-
tutional interaction (a job interview) do not share common cultural
or linguistic resources.

In sum, these three dimensions of interaction – (a) orientations
to institutional tasks and functions; (b) restrictions on the kinds of
contributions to the talk that are, or can be, made; and (c) distinc-
tive features of interactional inferences – are the primary features of
talk that are focused upon here as evidencing distinctively insti-
tutional orientations in talk at work. Their analysis will very often
involve an element of (explicit or tacit) comparison with the con-
duct and organization of ordinary conversation.²¹ In what follows,
we begin by distinguishing two main avenues of comparative
research in this area.

6 Approaches to the analysis of institutional interaction

6.1 Formal settings

Among published studies that have focused on institutional talk,
several of the more significant and influential have dealt with data
in which the institutional character of the interaction is embodied
first and foremost in its *form* – most notably in turn-taking systems
which depart substantially from the way in which turn taking is
managed in conversation and which are perceivedly "formal" in
character. Following Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) initia-
tive, interactions in courtrooms (Atkinson and Drew 1979), class-
rooms (McHoul 1978), and news interviews (Greatbatch 1988)
have been shown to exhibit systematically distinctive forms of turn
taking which powerfully structure many aspects of conduct in these
settings.

The studies which have reported these findings have been
influential for two reasons. First, turn-taking organizations –
whether for conversation or institutional contexts such as court-
room interaction – are a fundamental and generic aspect of the
organization of interaction. They are organizations whose features
are implemented recurrently over the course of interactional events.
This characteristic gives them a special methodological interest for

students of institutional talk. For if it can be shown that the participants in a vernacularly characterized institutional setting such as a courtroom pervasively organize their turn taking in a way that is distinctive from ordinary conversation, it can be proposed that they are organizing their conduct so as to display and realize its "institutional" character over its course and that they are doing so *recurrently and pervasively*. The "problem of relevance" raised by Schegloff (ch. 3) is thus resolved – at least at the grossest level – at a single stroke.

The second source of interest in institutional turn-taking systems also derives from their generic and pervasive character. To the extent that the participants' talk is conducted within the constraints of a specialized turn-taking system, other systematic differences from ordinary conversation tend to emerge. These differences commonly involve specific *reductions* of the range of options and opportunities for action that are characteristic in conversation and they often involve *specializations* and *respecifications* of the interactional functions of the activities that remain. The ensemble of these variations from conversational practice may contribute to a unique "fingerprint" for each institutional form of interaction – the "fingerprint" being comprised of a set of interactional practices differentiating each form both from other institutional forms and from the baseline of mundane conversational interaction itself. Both severally and collectively, the members of each ensemble of practices may contribute to what Garfinkel (Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingston 1981) has termed the "identifying details" of institutional activities.

These institutionalized reductions and specializations of the available set of conversational options are, it should be stressed, *conventional* in character. They are culturally variable; they are sometimes subject to legal constraints; they are always vulnerable to processes of social change; they are discursively justifiable and are often justified by reference to considerations of task, efficiency, fairness, and so on in ways that the practices making up the conversational "bedrock" manifestly are not. Associated with these various institutional conventions are differing participation frameworks (Goffman 1981c) with their associated rights and obligations, different footings (*ibid.*) and different patternings of opportunities to initiate and sanction interactional activities. The

in be shown that the partici-
stitutional setting such as a
turn taking in a way that is
it can be proposed that they
display and realize its "insti-
that they are doing so *recur-*
of relevance" raised by Scheg-
the grossest level – at a single

itutional turn-taking systems
pervasive character. To the
ducted within the constraints
other systematic differences
merge. These differences com-
f the range of options and
acteristic in conversation and
l *respecifications* of the inter-
at remain. The ensemble of
practice may contribute to a
onal form of interaction – the
set of interactional practices
other institutional forms and
ersational interaction itself.
members of each ensemble of
rfinkel (Garfinkel, Lynch, and
'identifying details" of insti-

is and specializations of the
ons are, it should be stressed,
e culturally variable; they are
its; they are always vulnerable
are discursively justifiable and
nsiderations of task, efficiency,
ractices making up the conver-
ot. Associated with these vari-
differing participation frame-
their associated rights and
l.) and different patternings of
on interactional activities. The

special character of these conventions is also associated with sub-
jective sentiments. Those elements of "formal" institutional inter-
action which are experienced as unusual, irksome, or discomforting
are experienced as such against a tacitly assumed background
which is supplied by the workings of ordinary conversation (Atkin-
son 1982).

In several of these "formal" forms of institutional interaction –
most notably "formal" classroom interaction, courtroom interac-
tion, and news interviews – turn taking is strongly constrained
within quite sharply defined procedures. Departures from these
procedures systematically attract overt sanctions. The pattern of
turn taking in these settings is uniform and exhibits overwhelming
compliance with these procedures. In the case of courtroom and
news interview interaction, for example, it can sometimes be diffi-
cult to locate the "deviant cases" with which to exhibit the norma-
tivity of the procedures under investigation.²² It is notable that
these settings all involve the production of "talk for an overhearing
audience." In two of the settings (courtrooms and classrooms), the
audience is copresent and the turn-taking system is designed, at
least in part, to control or curtail the nature of audience partici-
pation in any ongoing exchange (McHoul 1978; Atkinson 1979,
1982; Mehan 1979). In all three settings, the presence of an
audience whose members may assess the moral character of the
focal participants may help to limit the extent to which the latter
depart from formal turn-taking procedures. In contrast, there are
other types of institutional interaction where neither turn-taking
organization nor other aspects of the talk exhibit the qualities of
formality and uniformity so far described and it is to these that we
briefly turn.

6.2 *Non-formal settings*

In a variety of less formal forms of institutional interaction – com-
monly occurring in medical, psychiatric, social-service, business,
and related environments – patterns of interaction exhibit consider-
ably less uniformity. Although they may show distributional asym-
metries in the patterning of activities between role incumbents (e.g.
as between doctors and patients in the asking, and answering, of
questions in private consultations [Byrne and Long 1976; West

1984; Frankel 1990]), these asymmetries are apparently not the products of turn-taking procedures that are normatively sanctionable. These interactions, for the most part, take place in private rather than public contexts. There is room within them for considerable negotiation and/or stylistic variation as to how they will come to be managed (Byrne and Long 1976; Heritage and Sefi, this volume, ch. 12). In many cases, although the talk in these settings is clearly institutional in that official task-based or role-based activities occur at least some of the time, turn-taking procedures may approximate conversational or at least "quasi-conversational" modes.²³ When considered in turn-taking terms at least, the boundaries between these forms of institutional talk and ordinary conversation can appear permeable and uncertain.²⁴

These characteristics have the following methodological consequence. It is unlikely that a single recursive procedure (such as is found in special turn-taking procedures) can be found that would pinpoint the participants' turn-by-turn instantiation of institutional role-based identities at a single stroke. Accordingly, the participants' orientation to the institutional task- or role-based character of their talk will be located in a complex of non-recursive interactional practices that may vary in their form and frequency. Systematic aspects of the organization of sequences (and of turn design within sequences) having to do with such matters as the opening and closing of encounters, with the ways in which information is requested, delivered, and received, with the design of referring expressions, etc. are now beginning to emerge as facets of the ways in which the "institutionality" of such encounters are managed (Maynard 1984, 1991; Heritage 1985; Whalen and Zimmerman 1987; Clayman 1989; Watson 1990; Boden forthcoming; and in this volume, Atkinson, ch. 6; Bergman, ch. 4; Heath, ch. 8; Maynard, ch. 11). Other studies deal with activities that are more particularly tied to specific institutional contexts – the physical examination in a medical consultation (Heath 1986: 99–137; 1988) is a case in point.

In what follows, and in a spirit of exploration rather than *ex cathedra* pronouncement, we outline five major dimensions of interactional conduct that seem to us to constitute foci of research into institutional talk at the present. These are: (a) lexical choice; (b) turn design; (c) sequence organization; (d) overall structural

ies are apparently not the t are normatively sanction-part, take place in private room within them for con-riation as to how they will 976; Heritage and Sefi, this h the talk in these settings is -based or role-based activi-urn-taking procedures may ast "quasi-conversational" ng terms at least, the bound-al talk and ordinary conver-tain.²⁴

wing methodological conse-ursive procedure (such as is s) can be found that would instanciation of institutional e. Accordingly, the partici-task- or role-based character lex of non-recursive interac-form and frequency. System-quences (and of turn design such matters as the opening ways in which information is th the design of referring ex-nerge as facets of the ways in icounters are managed (May-alen and Zimmerman 1987; en forthcoming; and in this h. 4; Heath, ch. 8; Maynard, ties that are more particularly the physical examination in a 99-137; 1988) is a case in

of exploration rather than ex-ic five major dimensions of ; to constitute foci of research These are: (a) lexical choice; ization; (d) overall structural

organization; and (e) social epistemology and social relations. In considering these themes, we will discuss a range of research drawn from CA and the cognate traditions of research outlined earlier.

7 The organization of talk in institutions: dimensions of research

7.1 Lexical choice

Lexical choice is a significant way through which speakers evoke and orient to the institutional context of their talk. Numerous studies have documented the incidence of "lay" and "technical" vocabularies in such areas as law and medicine, and it is clear that the use of such vocabularies can embody definite claims to specialized knowledge and institutional identities (Korsch and Negrete 1972; Meehan 1981; Waitzkin 1985).²⁵ The following extract is from the Heritage and Sefi health-visitor corpus and occurs during the first visit to the home of a two-week-old infant by a type of community nurse known in Britain as a health visitor. Here, a mother's description of the birth of her first child contains enough technical terminology to claim considerable medical expertise:

(1) [HV:3A1:2]

- 1 M: And I was able to push her out on my own,=
 2 HV: =Goo:d.
 3 M: And um (0.6) I didn't have an episiotomy so,
 4 (0.3)
 5 HV: Q::h s u:per.
 6 M: I had a (0.3) tiny little tear it wasn't a
 7 perineal one (0.2) it was a (sort of)=
 8 HV: =Mm
 9 M: And um (1.5) but otherwise everything was fine (.) and
 10 the epidural made it lovely at the end because I was
 11 able to push still 'hhh but I had no pain and it was
 12 (.) super, it was lovely,

The relevance of lexical choice to institutional contexts is, however, far more wide-ranging than the use of technical jargon. Choices among descriptive terms are almost universally context-sensitive. For example, the choice between *cop* and *police* is, as Jefferson (1974) and Sacks (1979) have both noted, a consequential one for a variety of contexts including court proceedings (Jefferson 1974), though neither term is, of course, a technical one.

In noticing issues to do with lexical choice, many studies document how speakers select descriptive terms which are fitted to their roles within an institutional setting. A clear illustration, noted by Sacks (1992 [fall 1967]: lecture 11), is that when speaking as a member of an organization, persons may refer to themselves as *we*, rather than *I*. Examples of this phenomenon are ubiquitous. Those that follow are cases of two-party interaction where organizational representatives refer to themselves as *we*. The first is from a study of household interviews for the US General Social Survey and National Health Interview Survey (Suchman and Jordan 1990).

(2) [Suchman and Jordan 1990:238](I = interviewer, Mrs = householder)

- 1 Mrs: Uh huh. I guess the problem I'm having with the
 2 question is, when you say cut down his activities
 3 does that mean that, that he really, you know,
 4 wasn't:: doing things actively or that he wasn't
 5 doing what he would normally do::
 6 I: → Well we, uh, we take the thing that the person would
 7 normally do. . .

And in the next datum – a call to the emergency services for paramedic assistance (J. Whalen, Zimmerman, and Whalen 1988: 344) – both parties use *we* as a medium of self-reference.

(3) [Whalen et al 1988: 344](D = desk, C = caller)

- 1 D: Hello? What's thuh problem?
 2 C: → We have an unconscious, uh:, diabetic
 3 D: Are they insiduv a building?
 4 C: Yes they are:
 5 D: What building is it
 6 C: It's thuh adult bookstore
 7 D: → We'll get somebody there right away

In instances such as these, speakers use the self-referring *we* to invoke an institutional over a personal identity, thereby indicating that they are speaking as representatives, or on behalf, of an organization.²⁶ The last instance, from an emergency-services call, is interesting in this respect. The emergency services are called up by members of the public, who may themselves not have any institutional identity relevant to their calling. However, here the caller self-refers with “we” (line 2): it turns out that for this caller *his* institutional identity – a shop assistant – *is* relevant to the matter of how he comes to be calling. The person for whom assistance is

choice, many studies document which are fitted to their clear illustration, noted by us that when speaking as a *we* refer to themselves as *we*, *we* are ubiquitous. Those action where organizational *we*. The first is from a study of General Social Survey and Human and Jordan 1990).

viewer, Mrs = householder)
 am I'm having with the
 cut down his activities
 ie really, you know,
 vely or that he wasn't
 nally do:
 thing that the person would

emergency services for paranan, and Whalen 1988: 344) self-reference.

aller)
 lem?
 , uh:, diabetic
 ng?

re right away

use the self-referring *we* to al identity, thereby indicating ves, or on behalf, of an organ-an emergency-services call, is gency services are called up by hemselves not have any instilling. However, here the caller ns out that for this caller *his* nt - is relevant to the matter of erson for whom assistance is

sought is not connected to the caller other than that he has lost consciousness in the shop at which the caller works ("It's thuh adult book store"). Notice as well that the emergency-services desk operator also uses the institutional *we*.

These observations, in turn, open up a rich vein of analysis which can focus on the use of *we* and *I* by incumbents of institutional roles (see Maynard 1984; Silverman 1987; West 1990); for example, in the following a doctor is recommending a test to the parents of a child with a heart condition:

(4) [Silverman 1987:58]

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | Dr: | Hm (2.0) the the reason for doing the test |
| 2 | → | is, I mean I'm 99 per cent certain that all |
| 3 | | she's got is a ductus |
| 4 | F: | Hm hm |
| 5 | M: | I see |
| 6 | Dr: | → However the time to find out that we're |
| 7 | | wrong is not when she's on the operating |
| 8 | | table |

Here the switch from *I* to *we* is significant not merely as a shift from a more to a less "democratic" referring expression (Silverman 1987: ch. 3), but also as a means for the doctor to avoid saying *the time to find out when I'm wrong is not ...*, which would overtly raise the possibility of his being personally responsible for a clinical error.²⁷

Temporal references are a further illustration of the ways in which lexical choices can formulate context (Schegloff 1972). There can be differences between what is an appropriate descriptive term in conversation, on the one hand, and some institutional context on the other; for example, Mishler cites this extract as an instance of conflict between doctor and patient about how appropriately to describe "how long."

(5) [Mishler 1984:165]

- | | | |
|---|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Dr: | How long have you been drinking that |
| 2 | | heavily? |
| 3 | Pt: | Since I've been married |
| 4 | Dr: | How long is that? |
| 5 | Pt: | (giggle) Four years |

The two versions of "how long" which the patient gives arise from different pragmatic formulations of time, the first being biographi-

cal or "personal" time, the latter being "calendar" time (Sacks 1992 [spring 1972]: lecture 5). In ordinary conversation, recollecting when or how long ago something happened may involve placing that in relation to the events of one's own biography or experience (Button 1990). But in more "formal" contexts, time is often more appropriately formulated in terms of a universalistic or "objective" measure. The patient in the extract above first responds in terms of her biographical time ("Since I've been married"), which, of course, may simultaneously offer an account for *why* she started drinking heavily. The doctor's redoing of the question treats her "conversational" version as not appropriate to the norms of the clinical setting and, by her revised answer, she acquiesces in this treatment. The conflict between "conversational" and "institutional" formulations of time here is also the carrier for the participants' very different agendas for this encounter. While the patient apparently seeks to raise complainable aspects of her life circumstances, the doctor declines their elaboration.²⁸ Studies of courtroom interaction are similarly replete with examples of conflicts between biographic and calendar formulations of time and with the tangles that witnesses get into when required to translate between the two.

In the present volume, Bergmann's (ch. 4) analysis of questioning in psychiatric intake interviews includes a sustained discussion of a particular reference form ("litotes") as a means of accomplishing a particular institutional task tactfully or "discreetly." Drew (ch. 14) also discusses the use of lexical formulations through which descriptions are designed to be heard as "competing" with one another as a witness' strategy in contesting evidence in the restricted context of cross-examination in the courts. In several of the other contributions, discussions of lexical choice are embedded within analyses of the closely related issue of turn design.

7.2 *Turn design*

The analysis of turn design addresses two distinct phenomena: (a) the selection of an activity that a turn is designed to perform; and (b) the details of the verbal construction through which the turn's activity is accomplished.

An
7.2
A
to
the
me
qu
(6)
1
2
2
4
5
6
7
W
no
tai
"I-
vis
he
cat
be
wh
fat
des
lar
alt
rel
an
the
inf
cat
tha
an
bili
pat
ger
oth

g “calendar” time (Sacks inary conversation, recolng happened may involve f one’s own biography or “formal” contexts, time is terms of a universalistic or xtract above first responds ince I’ve been married”), fer an account for *why* she doing of the question treats opriate to the norms of the wer, she acquiesces in this nversational” and “insti-also the carrier for the parthis encounter. While the lainable aspects of her life r elaboration.²⁸ Studies of lete with examples of conformulations of time and when required to translate

ch. 4) analysis of questionudes a sustained discussion) as a means of accomplishully or “discreetly.” Drew ical formulations through heard as “competing” with contesting evidence in the in the courts. In several of exical choice are embedded ue of turn design.

wo distinct phenomena: (a) is designed to perform; and n through which the turn’s

7.2.1 *Selecting an action*

A crucial feature of turn design concerns the selection of the activity to be accomplished in a turn at talk. The following extract is from the Heritage and Sefi health-visitor corpus. In it, a father and mother respond to a remark from the health visitor by performing quite different actions:

- (6) [HV:4A1:1]
 1 HV: He’s enjoying that [isn’t he.
 2 F: → [°Yes, he certainly is=°
 2 M: → =He’s not hungry ’cuz (h)he’s ju(h)st (h)had
 4 → ’iz bo:ttle ’hhh
 5 (0.5)
 6 HV: You’re feeding him on (.) Cow and Gate
 7 Premium.

When the visitor remarks “He’s enjoying that,” she is presumably noticing the baby sucking or chewing on something. This is certainly the gloss which the mother gives to *enjoy* when she responds “He’s not hungry . . .” In replying that way, she treats the health visitor’s remark as implying that the baby is “enjoying” whatever he is sucking or chewing because he might be hungry – an implication which she rebuts with the account that the baby has just been fed. The mother’s response is a *defense* against something which she treats as implied in the health visitor’s remark. The father, by contrast, simply *agrees* with the health visitor. Thus, in designing their responses differently (quite apart from the particular design of their turns), the mother and father elect to perform alternative activities. Both activities, of course, have a “logic” as relevant next actions: the father treats the health visitor’s remark as an innocent “conversational” one; the mother, who is oriented to the health visitor’s advisory tasks in the visit, employs a different inferential schema (Levinson, ch. 2) and finds a more pointed implication regarding the proper care of her baby. Her response is one that is oriented both to the institutional role of the health visitor as an observer and an evaluator of baby care and to her own responsibility and accountability for that care. It may be added that the parents’ different responses also reflect an underlying conventional gender-based family division of labor, together with sensitivities to other institutional orders that cannot be further elaborated here.

7.2.2. *Selecting the verbal shape of an action*

In designing a turn, a selection is made between alternative ways of saying something or performing the same action. In extract (6) we saw that a mother and father performed very different actions in response to a health visitor's observation. In another instance later in the same visit, they perform broadly the same action, agreeing with the health visitor, but design their agreements quite differently.

(7) [HV:4A1:2] (HV is a health visitor; M the mother and F the father)

- 1 HV: It's amazing, there's no stopping him now,
 2 you'll be amazed at all the different things=
 3 F: [(hnh hn)
 4 HV: =he'll start doing.
 5 (1.0)
 6 M: Yeh. They learn so quickly don't they.
 7 F: [We have noticed hav'n't w-
 8 HV: That's right.
 9 F: We have noticed (0.8) making a grab for your
 10 bottles.
 11 (1.0)
 12 F: Hm [:::
 13 HV: [Does he: (.) How often does he go between
 14 his feeds?

Here the health visitor has been asking the parents whether the baby has begun to look around and "fix" on them and they confirm that he has. At lines 6 and 7 in this extract, the mother and father each produce an utterance designed to agree with the health visitor's suggestion that they will be "amazed" at the child's progress and they do so nearly simultaneously. However, the mother's agreement refers to the development of children in general ("They learn so quickly don't they"), while the father refers to their experience of their own child's progress ("We have noticed hav'n't w-"). The fact that the parents perform the same action somewhat independently of one another is evidence for the intersubjective relevance of that action in that slot.²⁹ The differences in the design of the two agreements point to the fact that these actions can be fashioned in alternative ways.³⁰

The alternatives that may be involved in turn design are rarely as exposed as they are in extract (7), where different speakers employ

A
 di
 ch
 de
 pt
 of
 hc
 th
 of
 (8:
 1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 W
 th
 at
 cl:
 sa
 at
 di:
 by
 th
 lit
 w:
 es!

tion

tween alternative ways of action. In extract (6) we very different actions in In another instance later the same action, agreeing agreements quite differ-

ther and F the father)
ing him now,
fferent things=
(hnh hn)

lon't they.
hav'n't w-

g a grab for your

oes he go between

the parents whether the on them and they confirm ct, the mother and father gree with the health visi- d" at the child's progress

However, the mother's children in general ("They ther refers to their experi- ave noticed hav'n't w-"). ie action somewhat inde- r the intersubjective rel- ifferences in the design of at these actions can be

n turn design are rarely as different speakers employ

different designs to achieve the same broad end. More usually, the choices involved in turn design can be teased out by looking at the details of a turn's components and determining their interactional purpose or import. In the following datum, AC is an attendance-office clerk at an American high school. Part of her job is to call the homes of children who have missed classes at school and who are therefore suspected of being truants. The following is the first part of one such call.

(8) [Medeiros 5] (AC is the attendance clerk; M his mother, F is father)

- 1 AC: Hello this is Miss B from W
2 High School calling
3 M: Uh hu:h
4 AC: Was Charlie home from school ill today?
5 (0.3)
6 M: 'h h h h
7 (0.8)
8 M: ((off phone)) Charlie wasn't home ill today
9 was he?
10 (0.4)
11 F: ((off phone)) Not at all.
12 M: No:.
13 (.)
14 AC: N o?
15 M: 'No he wasn't
16 AC: 'h h h (.) Well he wz reported absent from his
17 thir:d an' his fifth period classes tihday.
18 M: Ah ha:h,
19 AC: 'h h h A:n' we need him t' come in t'the office
20 in the morning t' clear this up

When, after checking with the father, the mother confirms that their son has not been home ill that day (lines 12 and 15), the attendance clerk informs her of the boy's absences from certain classes (lines 16–17). Here it is noticeable that the clerk does not say *he was absent from his* ... Instead, she says "he wz reported absent from ..." and thereby evokes an "official" or bureaucratic dimension to the transfer of information she describes. Moreover, by including "reported" the clerk cites an (unspecified) source for the information she is relaying and this imparts a certain equivocality to that information (Pomerantz 1984b). Had she said simply *he was absent from* ..., the clerk would be heard to announce an established, known fact. Since "reports" need to be confirmed

before becoming "facts," the equivocality to be found in "reported" suggests that the information has yet to be checked and confirmed. Hence the selection and inclusion of "reported" in line 16 introduces an equivocality, the interactional import of which is to announce a suspicion of absence. The determination of the full facts of his absence awaits further investigation (Pomerantz 1990/1).

The way in which the clerk refers to this investigation (in lines 19–20) is also consistent with the cautiousness which "reported" lent to her announcement of the absence. In saying "we need him" to come into the office, the clerk describes the organization's bureaucratic procedure for dealing with such cases. Alternative possible forms such as *he needs to*, *he should*, or *you should send him* might have more plainly implied the child's responsibility in remedying a shortcoming in his conduct. Similarly "t'clear this up" avoids presupposing the child's guilt. It is a neutral way of referring to the inquiry relative to such alternative forms as *to explain why*, which would treat his absence or truancy as established fact. Thus the clerk consistently uses expressions which convey the equivocality or still-to-be-determined status of the nature and extent of the child's absence, together with the child's culpability in the matter.

In sum, our second dimension of turn design arises from the fact that, because there is always a range of alternative ways of saying something, a speaker's selection of a particular formulation will, unavoidably, tend to be heard as "motivated" and perhaps chosen.³¹ The syntactic, lexical, and other (e.g. prosodic) selections by a speaker are aspects of a turn's *design*. When, for instance, the clerk includes "reported" in announcing the child's absence from school, she designs that announcement to be cautious about the facts of the case. Thus turn design can articulate with the performance of organizational tasks (see below).

Turn design, then, embodies both an action selection and a selection of how the action is to be realized in words. Issues of turn design are often highly sensitive to issues of institutional incumbency. Chapters in this volume that have a particularly explicit or systematic focus on these topics include those by Clayman (ch. 5), Greatbatch (ch. 9), and Drew (ch. 14), but the topic has a centrality that renders it a major subtext in almost all the chapters in this collection.

locality to be found in
 has yet to be checked and
 usion of "reported" in line
 ractional import of which
 . The determination of the
 r investigation (Pomerantz

o this investigation (in lines
 ousness which "reported"
 e. In saying "we need him"
 ribes the organization's bu-
 such cases. Alternative pos-
uld, or *you should send him*

child's responsibility in rem-
 Similarly "t'clear this up"
 is a neutral way of referring
 ve forms as *to explain why*,
 icy as established fact. Thus
 which convey the equivoca-
 the nature and extent of the
 's culpability in the matter.

rn design arises from the fact
 of alternative ways of saying
 particular formulation will,
 "motivated" and perhaps
 ther (e.g. prosodic) selections
sign. When, for instance, the
 ing the child's absence from
 nt to be cautious about the
 articulate with the perform-
 w).

h an action selection and a
 alized in words. Issues of turn
 ssues of institutional incum-
 ave a particularly explicit or
 ide those by Clayman (ch. 5),
 , but the topic has a centrality
 Most all the chapters in this

7.3 Sequence organization

All analyses of institutional interaction – from ethnographic to sociolinguistic – connect talk to its institutional context by citing extracts of interaction in order to exhibit features of action and social relations that are characteristic of particular settings. In these analyses, whether CA-oriented or not, it is apparent that the phenomena through which the institutionality of the talk is substantiated are most often *sequential* phenomena. For example, in an investigation of a cleft-palate clinic, Silverman (1987) discusses a doctor's attempt to determine whether a young patient wants to undergo further surgery. He focuses on the misunderstandings that can arise in this process by reference to the following:

(9) [Silverman (1987:165)] (C = consultant, D = 12 year old male patient)

- 1 C: Now then. This has got rather an ugly scar line
 2 hasn't it? It's rather (1.0) rather a lot of stitch
 3 marks.
 4 (1.0)
 5 C: Isn't terribly handsome, is it? What do you think
 6 about your looks, Barry?
 7 (3.0)
 8 D: I don't know.
 9 C: You ((laughs)) Doesn't worry you a lot. You don't
 10 lie awake at night worrying about it or anything?
 11 D: No
 12 C: No, no. It could be improved er because I think
 13 that scar line isn't brilliant (1.0) but it's,
 14 you're the customer, if you're happy with things the
 15 way they are then that's
 16 D: Well I hope to have it done
 17 C: Oh you would oh. All right well (0.5) we'll see
 18 about that (shortly). Now what about this nose of
 19 yours...

Silverman's analysis focuses on the misunderstanding by the consultant (C) of the child's (D) "noncommittal" answer "I don't know" (line 8), which C mistakenly interprets as meaning that D is "happy with things the way they are" (14–15). In order to correct this, D "has to resort to an interruption ... in order to convey his real wishes" (line 16). After this point, "the discursive format of the interview is re-asserted by the doctor's exercise of his interviewer's rights to control the agenda by means of closing the topic and

beginning another" (Silverman 1987: 168) – the new topic being D's nose (lines 18–19). Three "institutional" properties of talk are thus taken to be evident in the data: (a) the misunderstandings which can arise from the consultant trying to find out the patient's preference indirectly (lines 5–6) rather than directly asking him if he wanted a further operation; (b) the difficulties created for the patient by the discursive format of the consultation which limits his rights and opportunities to speak; and (c) the doctor's control over the agenda of talk. Each of these is identified through an ordinary conversational phenomenon, namely a *misunderstanding* (which becomes apparent through a *repair* of that misunderstanding in the next turn), an *overlap/interruption*, and a *topic change*.

This summary does not do justice to Silverman's analysis of this extract to show how "[Clinical] discourse . . . can create uncertainty about the space available for the patient's speech" (1987: 168). But it does illustrate the way in which analysis commonly draws upon basic conversational phenomena in identifying patterns of talk that are institutional in character.³² Our point in raising this issue (and of the list in note 32) is to underscore our earlier suggestion that the study of institutional interaction very often involves an explicit or implicit comparative dimension. Basic conversational organizations (in this case centering on repair, interruption, topic shift, and the rest) are used by the participants in institutional settings to manage particular role-specific activities. Here nonspecialized or conversational organizations are being fitted or adapted to specialized interactional tasks in institutional contexts. Significant light can be shed on institutional data by showing, for example, *how* nonspecialized conversational procedures are being thus adapted; how they might be altered in some respects as compared with their use in conversation; whether or how they are being used to novel effect in a specialized setting; and how such conversational forms are otherwise being systematically and recurrently mobilized to perform some specialized role-related or "strategic" task in that setting.

This comparative perspective is not always sufficiently acknowledged in the CA literature. Nor perhaps does it play a sufficiently explicit role in non-CA discussions of research methodology.³³ However, it is fundamental for two reasons: first, whether overtly or tacitly, comparative judgments shape analytic interpretations of

168) – the new topic being institutional” properties of talk are (a) the misunderstandings arising to find out the patient’s than directly asking him if the difficulties created for the consultation which limits his (c) the doctor’s control over identified through an ordinary a *misunderstanding* (which that misunderstanding in the d a *topic change*.

Silverman’s analysis of this use . . . can create uncertainty t’s speech” (1987: 168). But analysis commonly draws upon identifying patterns of talk that int in raising this issue (and ur earlier suggestion that the often involves an explicit or conversational organizations ruption, topic shift, and the titutional settings to manage e nonspecialized or converl or adapted to specialized exts. Significant light can be for example, *how* nonspecialing thus adapted; how they compared with their use in e being used to novel effect h conversational forms are currently mobilized to per- “strategic” task in that set-

always sufficiently acknowlps does it play a sufficiently of research methodology.³³ reasons: first, whether overtly e analytic interpretations of

how nonspecialized interactional procedures function in specialized institutional settings; second, the more specialized elements of institutional conduct which are often referred to in the literature in this area can themselves only be fully understood in a comparative context.

CA, with its body of findings about the sequential organization of ordinary conversation, has the potential to develop explicitly comparative studies of institutional talk. As noted earlier, many of these studies have so far focused on formal, public forms of interaction. They have dealt with the features of specialized institutional turn-taking systems, with the ways in which these systems are at least partially constitutive of, and fitted to the external constraints of, the activities they shape as “legal” or “broadcast talk” or “educational,” and with the impact which these systems inevitably have on the design of actions and sequences of action (McHoul 1978; Atkinson and Drew 1979; Mehan 1979; Heritage 1985; Clayman 1988, 1989, 1991; Greatbatch 1988; Garcia 1991; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991). All of these studies focus on turn-taking systems which, in their different ways, are organized through the preallocation (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Atkinson and Drew 1979) of questions and answers – most often to the institutional and lay participants respectively.

Although question–answer sequences in many other institutional settings are not so formally organized, they are often a dominant form within which interaction proceeds. In a study of medical consultations, for example, Frankel (1990: 239) notes that fewer than 1 percent of the patients’ utterances were initiatory in character – a figure which is highly comparable with statistics for more formal environments such as court proceedings (Adelsward *et al.* 1987; Linell, Gustavsson, and Juvonen 1988). Thus the normative outlooks and the local organization of doctor–patient interaction – a somewhat “nonformal” type of interaction – may generate skewed distributions of activities with quite the same efficacy as rules of formal turn taking in a legal setting.

These specialized but nonformal interactions often involve discernable transitions from a more “conversational” mode into a series of questions and answers. This is nicely illustrated in Erickson and Shultz’s (1982: 77ff.) study of counseling interviews. Although there is no formal stipulation that these events be or-

ganized through question–answer sequences, the authors show clear junctures at which the shift from introductory conversation to the questioning part of the interview, as well as transitions from one kind of questioning to another, are concertedly managed by the participants. Similar transitions are reported for doctor–patient interaction by Heath (1981), for survey interviews by Suchman and Jordan (1990), and for health-visitor–mother interaction by Sorjonen and Heritage (1991).³⁴ Closely related to turn-taking restrictions also are the special opening (Turner 1972; Whalen and Zimmerman 1987; Levinson, this volume ch. 2) and closing (Clark and French 1981; Greatbatch 1988; Clayman 1989) procedures that are commonly associated with institutional talk.

Turn taking and the restriction of participants within a question–answer framework are only the starting point for a consideration of the sequential organizations that are particular to various forms of institutional talk. A useful point of entry into this domain can be found in the variations in the third turns of three-part sequences that emerge in many institutional environments.

During the instructional phase of classroom lessons, for instance, teaching is managed through question–answer sequences in which the third turn is often partly occupied with some kind of evaluation. A prototypical case is the following:

(10) [Sinclair and Coulthard 1975:21]

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | T: | Can you tell me why do you eat all that food |
| 2 | | Yes |
| 3 | S: | To keep you strong |
| 4 | T: | To keep you strong. Yes. To keep you strong. |
| 5 | | Why do you want to be strong... |

Here the evaluation consists of a repeat of the answer to confirm its correctness, together with an accepting “Yes.” The teacher then initiates a new question–answer sequence with “Why do you want to be strong?” Classroom instruction can thus consist of a recursive chain or progression of such three-part sequences. This distinctive sequential pattern is characteristic of talk in classrooms because it is associated with the core activity in that setting, namely instruction. We here underscore an important point: the three-part sequence is characteristic of the setting (classroom) *only* because it is generated out of the management of the activity (instruction) which is the institutionalized and recurrent activity in the setting. Thus, where

ences, the authors show introductory conversation to as well as transitions from concertedly managed by the reported for doctor-patient interviews by Suchman and other interaction by Sorjotated to turn-taking restrictioner 1972; Whalen and Zimmerman, 2) and closing (Clark and nan 1989) procedures that anal talk.

of participants within a he starting point for a conions that are particular to eful point of entry into this in the third turns of three-titutional environments.

of classroom lessons, for question-answer sequences occupied with some kind of ollowing:

ou eat all that food

To keep you strong.
rong...

t of the answer to confirm its ng "Yes." The teacher then nce with "Why do you want an thus consist of a recursive rt sequences. This distinctive alk in classrooms because it is it setting, namely instruction. nt: the three-part sequence is 1) *only* because it is generated ty (instruction) which is the y in the setting. Thus, where

the same activity is performed in other and possibly noninstitutionalized settings, as when parents instruct their children in the home, there also may be found similar three-part sequence structures (see Drew 1981). The sequence structure is the instrument through which the activity is accomplished on any given occasion (Heritage 1984a: 280-90).

Underlying this argument is a comparative point. Although it is not uncommon for an answer to be acknowledged by the questioner in conversation, it would be somewhat unusual, bizarre even, if the questioner were subsequently to evaluate the correctness of the recipient's answer, in the way that teachers ordinarily do in the classroom. Teachers, with certain institutionalized claims to superior knowledge (Mehan 1985), generally ask questions to which they already know the answers to test or extend students' knowledge.³⁵ Their evaluations of students' answers repeatedly reaffirm both the claim to superior knowledge and their role as testers of students. In conversation, by contrast, where questioners normally seek information which the recipient has to give, no such claim is in point.

The distinctiveness of conversational questions emerges clearly in such responses to question-answer sequences as *oh*. *Oh* is a common way in which speakers may indicate that they have been informed about something by what another has said. Heritage (1984b) terms *oh* a "change-of-state token," a resource through which speakers indicate that they have undergone a change in their locally current state of knowledge of awareness (see also Schiffrin 1987). *Oh* is often used to indicate receipt of information or of "news" of some kind, and contrasts with acknowledgments such as *that's right* that specifically avoid such indications (see Heritage and Sefi, ch. 12). Heritage also reports (1985: 96-101) that *oh* is very largely absent from talk in such institutionalized settings as radio or television news interviews, or classroom or courtroom interaction. This absence arises from the dual role of *oh* in conversation, where it indicates both that what the other has just said is news to the speaker and, in virtue of this, accepts the truth or adequacy of that news.³⁶ However, in news interviews and courtrooms, for example, the questioners - that is, interviewers and lawyers respectively - are briefed beforehand and are expected to have a broad grasp of what the interviewees' or witnesses' answers

are likely to be. For these questioners, answers are not and should not properly be "news." Furthermore, the primary recipients of the answers are the radio or television audience, or the jury: it is *they* who are to be informed, not the questioner. In such contexts, *oh* receipts are withheld and questioners therefore define themselves as the elicitors of talk, but not its recipients (Heritage 1985).

In sum, something of the distinctiveness of talk in classrooms as compared with conversation, and compared also to news interviews and courtroom examination, is visible in the different patterns of question-answer sequences in each setting. And this further underscores the value of comparative sequence analysis as a means of investigating the identifying characteristics of the activities associated with different institutional settings.

A number of the contributions to this volume discuss departures from routine conversational sequences in institutional settings. For example, Atkinson (ch. 6) shows that in Small Claims Courts, arbitrators respond to what plaintiffs say in such a way as to avoid affiliating or disaffiliating with them, thereby sustaining a neutral stance towards the evidence while it is being given. Similarly, Button observes (ch. 7) that job interviewers, by withholding response to interviewee's answers, avoid giving any indication as to their assessment of them. Maynard (ch. 11) details a questioning procedure which is particularly fitted to the telling of bad news in medical settings. Heath's chapter on the medical encounter (ch. 8) shows that patients are unresponsive to diagnostic information to an extent that would be remarkable in a conversational context. Greatbatch's chapter (ch. 9), perhaps the most explicitly comparative of all of the contributions to this volume, shows the ways in which departures from a specialized turn-taking system for news interviews which move the talk towards a conversational mode represent a method of escalating disagreement which is nonetheless generally "safe" in the context of the news-interview framework as a whole. Finally, Heritage and Sefi (ch. 12) outline the quite unusual ways in which advice is initiated by health visitors in comparison with its initiation in ordinary conversation (Jefferson and Lee, ch. 15), and argue that the advice is acknowledged and resisted in ways that are consistent with the social relations of the encounter.

answers are not and should be the primary recipients of the licence, or the jury: it is *they* who are the questioner. In such contexts, *oh* therefore defines themselves as participants (Heritage 1985).

The difference in the seriousness of talk in classrooms as compared also to news interviews is visible in the different patterns in each setting. And this difference is apparent in a comparative sequence analysis as a characteristic of the activity in different settings.

This volume discusses departures from the standard in institutional settings. For example, in Small Claims Courts, speakers may say in such a way as to avoid the issue, thereby sustaining a neutral stance. It is being given. Similarly, in news interviews, by withholding relevant information, thereby giving any indication as to the nature of the news (ch. 11) details a questioning strategy in the telling of bad news in the medical encounter (ch. 8) which is used to elicit diagnostic information to use in a conversational context. The most explicitly comparative volume, shows the ways in which the turn-taking system for news interviews varies towards a conversational mode in news interviews. The agreement which is nonetheless a characteristic of the news-interview framework as outlined in (ch. 12) outline the quite different ways in which initiated by health visitors in community conversation (Jefferson and Drew 1990) is acknowledged and resisted in the social relations of the

7.4 Overall structural organization

A further level at which the institutionality of an interaction may manifest itself is in its overall structural organization. Many kinds of institutional encounters are characteristically organized into a standard "shape" or order of phases. Conversations, by contrast, are not. With the exception of the opening and closing stages of conversations, which are often shaped through a standard series of sequences, it does not appear that conversations ordinarily progress through some overarching set of stages. The locally contingent management of "next moves" in conversation, and the options available to speakers have even within particular sequences or activities, ensure that there is no "standard pattern" for the overall organization of conversations. The activities conducted in many kinds of institutional interactions, by contrast, are often implemented through a task-related standard shape. In some instances that order may be prescribed, for instance, by a written schedule or formal agenda of points which an inquirer may be required to answer when requesting a service (Frankel 1989). But equally, the order may be the product of locally managed routines (Zimmerman, ch. 13).

The impact of task orientation on the overall structural organization of an encounter is perhaps clearest in the 9-1-1 calls for police or emergency assistance discussed by Zimmerman (ch. 13). Here every aspect of the call – from the specialized opening (Whalen and Zimmerman 1987) onwards – is geared to the earliest possible completion of the task. Zimmerman points out that, regardless of the extent to which callers are questioned about their emergencies and the contingencies that the questioning raises, such calls are based on a single adjacency pair – a request for help from the caller and response from the emergency center (see also Schegloff 1990). The task focus of these calls is intense and precise: for example, the provision of a response is treated by the caller as the closing of the call.

Related arguments can be made for other task-oriented interactions, such as medical consultations and other institutional encounters that are characterized by functionally oriented phases. Some notable examples of the characteristic overall organizations which can be discerned in specific institutional interactions are provided by Erickson and Shultz (1982) for student-counsellor

interviews, Byrne and Long (1976) and Davis (1988) for doctor-patient consultations, Mehan (1979) for classroom lessons, J. Whalen, Zimmerman, and Whalen (1988) for calls to an emergency-services agency, and Maynard (1984) for courtroom plea-bargaining.

One of the most comprehensive accounts of the overall organization of a form of institutional interaction is Byrne and Long's ordered sequence of six phases in family practice doctor-patient consultations (1976: ch. 3). In contrast to the kind of "invariant sequence" which Erickson and Shultz (1982: 22, 60) found in student-counsellor interviews, the Byrne and Long model is an idealized one. The six-stage sequence rarely appears in full and in its canonical order because certain stages are optional and the overall structure may be disordered by a range of contingencies. So, while the overall pattern - with its functional and dysfunctional elements - is discernible for all consultations, the optionality of particular stages accommodates the diversity of circumstances in which patients visit doctors.

Here, then, is some indication of the kinds of functionally related standard sequences which are beginning to be found to characterize certain institutional interactions, and which give them the kinds of overall structure which conversations generally do not have.³⁷ As Zimmerman stresses, the production of such overall organizations, the relevance of a given phase, and the move from one phase to a next are locally managed by participants in a given interaction. Nevertheless, the recurrence of such organizations across ranges of instances, persons, etc. indicates the extent to which participants may be jointly oriented towards an overall structural organization in their encounters.³⁸

The existence of these standard patterns in institutional encounters is likely to owe much to the direction and initiative of the institutional professional. The professional may participate in many such interactions in a day, the client perhaps only one in a lifetime. In this context, professionals tend to develop, for better or worse, standard practices for managing the tasks of their routine encounters (Byrne and Long 1987; Emerson 1981). The progression of the interaction through a standard series of sequences certainly requires the collaboration of noninstitutional participants, who may, of course, also resist that progression. Nevertheless, the

Davis (1988) for doctor-for classroom lessons, J. 88) for calls to an emerg-984) for courtroom plea-

nts of the overall organization is Byrne and Long's ly practice doctor-patient to the kind of "invariant (1982: 22, 60) found in ne and Long model is an rely appears in full and in ges are optional and the range of contingencies. So, ictional and dysfunctional tations, the optionality of ersity of circumstances in

inds of functionally related to be found to characterize rich give them the kinds of enerally do not have.³⁷ As such overall organizations, move from one phase to a nts in a given interaction. anizations across ranges of tent to which participants rral structural organization

patterns in institutional e direction and initiative of essional may participate in ient perhaps only one in a nd to develop, for better or g the tasks of their routine erson 1981). The progres-ard series of sequences cer-minstitutional participants, gression. Nevertheless, the

overall organization of such sequences into the kinds of standard patterns described above tend to be shaped primarily by the professional. Here an individual client may be confronted with an organization's routine for processing cases in a context where the routine itself emerges in and through the professional's ability to direct the talk (see below). Professional control here manifests itself as a pattern of sequences through which clients may find themselves being led.

7.5 Social epistemology and social relations

With this last category we mean to raise themes and issues that are often generally distributed across broad ranges of conduct in institutional settings and manifest themselves in and through the features of institutional interaction addressed above. These themes are not necessarily attached to any specific sequence of action; rather, they may emerge in any or all sequences. We begin with an illustration that evokes several contributions to this volume.

7.5.1 Professional "cautiousness" in interaction

Earlier in this chapter we discussed datum (8) below, and it emerged from that discussion that the school-attendance officer designed her turns in ways that were cautious.

(8) [Medeiros 5] (AC is the attendance clerk; M his mother, F is father)

- 1 AC: Hello this is Miss B from W
- 2 High School calling
- 3 M: Uh hu:h
- 4 AC: Was Charlie home fron. school ill today?
- 5 (0.3)
- 6 M: 'hhh
- 7 (0.8)
- 8 M: ((off phone)) Charlie wasn't home ill today
- 9 was he?
- 10 (0.4)
- 11 F: ((off phone)) Not at all.
- 12 M: No:.
- 13 (.)
- 14 AC: N o?
- 15 M: [No he wasn't
- 16 AC: 'hhh (.) Well he wz reported absent from his

- 17 thi:d an' his fifth period classes t^hday.
 18 M: Ah ha:h,
 19 AC: 'hhh A:n' we need hⁱm t' come in t' the office
 20 in the morning t' clear this up

This cautiousness emerges in a number of ways. First, the child's absence from school is introduced in a most indirect way (Pomerantz 1988). Rather than asserting that the child has not been at school, the attendance clerk asks "Was Charlie home from school ill today?" (line 4), thus avoiding stating outright that the child is absent. Further, the clerk's inquiry offers the most normal (Sacks 1984b; Pomerantz 1988) and legitimate account for the child's absence. The clerk's utterance is thus triply cautious. (a) The inquiry avoids stating outright that the child is not at school. The mother is permitted, even invited, to *infer* that her child has not been at school but the clerk's inquiry remains compatible with the possibility that the child is at school but has not been recorded as such. (b) If the child is ill, it permits the mother to establish that through an affirmative utterance that "confirms" the clerk's inquiry rather than through a sequentially "defensive" excuse or account. (c) Even if the child is, in fact, a truant, the inquiry specifically avoids drawing any conclusions about the child's absence from school and, in particular avoids any accusation of truancy.

This cautiousness is sustained at line 16, after the mother has confirmed that child was not at home. Here, as we have noted, instead of asserting that the child had been absent from school that day, the clerk announced to the mother that "he wz reported absent," the element of equivocation in her statement conveying the possibility, rather than a direct accusation, of truancy and leaving its determination, and its full extent, to subsequent investigation. Finally, in lines 19–20, where the clerk moves to propose how the absence should be dealt with, she preserves (with the words "t' clear this up") the possibility that there may yet be a legitimate explanation for the child's absence. This cautiousness, then, is something that inhabits the attendance clerk's orientation to her institutional tasks in all the details of this call. Lexical choice, turn design, and sequence organization are all here harnessed to the same end.

It is not only in these calls that professional cautiousness appears to be a feature of institutional talk. Many of the chapters of this collection suggest that the professional participants in institutional

sses tihday.

me in t'the office
p

of ways. First, the child's most indirect way (Pomerthe child has not been at Charlie home from school g outright that the child is rs the most normal (Sacks te account for the child's s triply cautious. (a) The child is not at school. The nfer that her child has not mains compatible with the it has not been recorded as he mother to establish that onfirms" the clerk's inquiry fensive" excuse or account. ant, the inquiry specifically t the child's absence from usation of truancy. ie 16, after the mother has e. Here, as we have noted, een absent from school that ther that "he wz reported her statement conveying the tion, of truancy and leaving to subsequent investigation. k moves to propose how the rves (with the words "t'clear yet be a legitimate explanation, then, is something entation to her institutional ical choice, turn design, and nessed to the same end. sional cautiousness appears Many of the chapters of this l participants in institutional

interactions design their talk so as to maintain a cautiousness, or even a position of neutrality with respect to their co-participants.

In his study of news interviews, Clayman (ch. 5) identifies elements of question design which enable news interviewers to incorporate controversial or hostile opinions within the framework of their questions while avoiding any endorsement of those opinions. This design permits interviewers to ask challenging questions while nonetheless maintaining a "neutralistic" position (Heritage and Greatbatch 1991), remaining personally disengaged from the substance of the opinion being put to the interviewee. Atkinson, as noted above, shows (ch. 6) that, in the context of Small Claims Courts, arbitrators respond to claimants' statements in a distinctively neutral fashion. The chapters by Bergmann and Maynard provide further exemplification of professional cautiousness, respectively in the way psychiatrists design their questions in psychiatric intake interviews and by clinicians when interviewing parents of children who have tested positively for developmental disabilities. Zimmerman reports (ch. 13) a related kind of cautiousness in certain types of calls to the emergency services. Where callers wish to alert the police to events in which they are not directly involved, they may work to display the innocent and unmotivated way in which they have discovered the untoward event – this being but a facet of what Zimmerman terms the "practical epistemology" of these communications (see also M. Whalen and Zimmerman 1990).

7.5.2. *Interactional asymmetries in institutional settings*

A central theme in research on institutional interaction is that in contrast to the symmetrical relationships between speakers in ordinary conversation, institutional interactions are characteristically asymmetrical. Underlying this research is a widespread acceptance that ordinary conversation is premised on a standard of "equal participation" between speakers and that this standard is departed from in talk in institutional settings. And, while there are significant differences in the literature concerning how to relate the interactional asymmetries of institutional talk to social-structural relations (Maynard 1991), the documentation of the asymmetries themselves continues to develop apace.

Linell and Luckmann (1991) have cautioned, however, that this dichotomy between the symmetries of conversation and the asymmetries of institutional discourse oversimplifies the nature of asymmetry and overlooks the ways in which conversational participation may be asymmetric. As they observe: "if there were no asymmetries at all between people, i.e. if communicatively relevant inequalities of knowledge were non-existing, there would be little or no need for most kinds of communication!" (Linell and Luckmann 1991: 4). Viewed from a perspective that asks which persons participate in talk and to what effect, it is apparent that ordinary conversation can embody asymmetries that have several dimensions. Conversational asymmetry exists, however temporarily, between the speaker and the hearer of a turn at talk; between the initiator and respondent in a sequence of interaction; between those who, more broadly, are active in shaping topics and those who are not; and between those whose interventions are decisive for the outcomes of conversations and those who are not (Linell 1990; Linell and Luckmann 1991). From this standpoint, the contrast between the putative symmetry of ordinary conversation and the asymmetry of institutional discourse is indeed oversimplified: all social interaction must inevitably be asymmetric on a moment-to-moment basis and many interactions are likely to embody substantial asymmetry when moment-to-moment participation is aggregated over the course of an encounter or, indeed, many encounters.

Yet the claim that there is a fundamental distinction between the symmetry of ordinary conversation and the asymmetries of institutional interaction emerges as a significant one when we consider ordinary conversation as a normative institution; for it is clear that the rules of conversation operate in ways that are, in principle at least, independent of the extradiscursive identities of the participants. Notwithstanding the several studies that have, for example, reported an association between power and status and asymmetries in conversational turn-taking violations (Zimmerman and West 1975; West and Zimmerman 1983; West 1984; Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz 1985), it is clear that the turn-taking rules themselves operate in terms of locally constructed discourse statuses rather than, for example, position in a social hierarchy.³⁹ Indeed, if this were not the case, the reported asymmetries in the distribution of violations might not seem so flagrantly unjust.

mentioned, however, that this conversation and the asymmetry simplifies the nature of which conversational participants observe: "if there were no if communicatively relevant existing, there would be little participation!" (Linell and Luck-tive that asks which persons it is apparent that ordinary s that have several dimen-s, however temporarily, be a turn at talk; between the of interaction; between those ng topics and those who are entions are decisive for the who are not (Linell 1990; his standpoint, the contrast linary conversation and the s indeed oversimplified: all symmetric on a moment-to-re likely to embody substan-ent participation is aggre-r, indeed, many encounters. ental distinction between the id the asymmetries of insti-icant one when we consider nstitution; for it is clear that ays that are, in principle at ive identities of the partici-dies that have, for example, and status and asymmetries ns (Zimmerman and West West 1984; Kollock, Blum-r that the turn-taking rules y constructed discourse sta-ion in a social hierarchy.³⁹ reported asymmetries in the em so flagrantly unjust.

In many forms of institutional discourse, by contrast, there is a direct relationship between status and role, on the one hand, and discursive rights and obligations, on the other. As we have detailed, institutional interactions may be characterized by role-structured, institutionalized, and omnirelevant asymmetries between participants in terms of such matters as differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, access to conversational resources, and to participation in the interaction. In ordinary conversation between friends or acquaintances, by contrast, this is not normally the case. In a range of ways, patterns of institutional discourse indicate important asymmetries between professional and lay perspectives, and between professional and lay person's capacities to direct the interaction in desired and organizationally relevant ways. Here we briefly discuss asymmetries arising from restrictions on the participation rights of organizational and lay parties, asymmetries of knowledge and rights to knowledge, and asymmetries arising from differential access to organizational routines and procedures.

An important dimension of asymmetry between the participants in institutional interaction arises from the predominantly question-answer pattern of interaction that characterizes many of them. In such contexts, there may be little perceived opportunity for the lay person to take the initiative (Linell, Gustavsson, and Juvonen 1988; Frankel 1990) and professionals may gain a measure of control over the introduction of topics and hence of the "agenda" for the occasion. A common finding in this literature is that institutional incumbents (doctors, teachers, interviewers, family social workers, etc.) may strategically direct the talk through such means as their capacity to change topics and their selective formulations, in their "next questions," of the salient points in the prior answers (Heritage 1985: 101-4; Tannen and Wallat 1987: 303-6). In both ways, professionals may prevent particular issues becoming topics in their own right. This is a common theme in the literature on medical consultations, where examples are frequently cited to demonstrate that doctors cut short patients' apparent attempts to talk about aspects of their experience which doctors regard as irrelevant to a strictly medical assessment of their problems (Byrne and Long 1976; Mishler 1984; Tannen and Wallat 1987). Doctor's use of questioning and other resources to control the initiative are also a means by which doctors maintain control over what topics

are deemed medically relevant, over what is talked about, and at what length (Byrne and Long 1976; West 1984; Davis 1988). Moreover, insofar as patients may be unaware of the purposes lying behind particular questions, they may not grasp the line of inquiry which the doctor is pursuing in questions about what might seem to be unconnected topics. Doctors' control over the initiation and shaping of topics, together with patients' lack of access to the "hidden agenda" of doctors' questioning, represent significant avenues of research into the asymmetry of participation in medical interaction (Shuy 1983; Fisher 1983; Silverman 1987: 184-5). Parallel asymmetries associated with "hidden agendas" have been reported for other institutional contexts, notably educational ones (Stubbs 1976).

A further dimension of professional-client asymmetry concerns the participants' differential states of knowledge. In conversation, the participants generally assume that, while they may not always be equally knowledgeable and informed about every topic, such asymmetries will be short-lived and will shift among the speakers from topic to topic; but in many professional-client interactions that assumption cannot be made. Once again, this kind of asymmetry is best documented for medical consultations. The literature shows that even where patients have considerable medical knowledge, they may orient to such knowledge as belonging to an authoritative professional (Strong 1979) by, for example, the tentative or uncertain use of medical terminology (Silverman 1987; Drew 1991; Maynard 1991). The literature frequently accounts for differences between doctors' and patients' perceptions and assessments of ailments in terms of the different bodies of knowledge that the parties bring to the encounter. Much of the misunderstanding and conflict which discourse researchers have identified in doctor-patient interaction may be attributable to differences between medical definitions of problems and patients' lay versions of their experience of these problems (Cicourel 1983; Mishler 1984; Silverman 1987; Tannen and Wallat 1987; Davis 1988; Frankel and West 1991).

A third asymmetrical property of interactions between institutional professionals and the lay public is worth mentioning, although it is given rather little attention in the literature. This arises from the difference, and often tension, between the organizational perspective that treats the individual as a "routine case,"

that is talked about, and at West 1984; Davis 1988). aware of the purposes lying ot grasp the line of inquiry s about what might seem to ol over the initiation and nts' lack of access to the ning, represent significant of participation in medical verman 1987: 184–5). Par-dden agendas" have been s, notably educational ones

–client asymmetry concerns onowledge. In conversation, while they may not always ed about every topic, such ill shift among the speakers fessional–client interactions ce again, this kind of asym-consultations. The literature on considerable medical knowl-ge as belonging to an author- for example, the tentative or Silverman 1987; Drew 1991; ntly accounts for differences tions and assessments of ail- of knowledge that the parties isunderstanding and conflict ified in doctor–patient inter-ences between medical defi-ersions of their experience of hler 1984; Silverman 1987; ; Frankel and West 1991). f interactions between insti-ublic is worth mentioning, ention in the literature. This tension, between the organiz-ividual as a "routine case,"

and the client, for whom his or her case is unique and personal. All agencies have procedures for the routine management of multiple cases, for "processing" cases by assigning them to routine categories, and so on. However, the clients – whose inquiries, troubles, illnesses, claims, and the like constitute an organization's routine cases – are not generally themselves aware of, or concerned with, the pattern into which their individual cases fit. The client's perspective often arises out of the particular circumstances which bring him or her into contact with the organization, perhaps for the first or only time, or at least not frequently enough to have developed a self-conception as a routine case.

A striking instance is Sudnow's ethnographic study of the routine management by hospital personnel of patients' deaths. Sudnow describes how the status of routine case is assigned to dying patients, what the interactional consequences are of being so assigned, and what communicational differences (and other differences in medical intervention) emerge when a dying patient is treated as a non-routine case (Sudnow 1967). Similarly, Sacks (1992 [April/May 1971]) shows that in calls to suicide-prevention agencies, the agency member's organizational need for "face sheet data" may influence the kind and order of questions and topics that may be raised in calls to the center. Whalen (1991) has similarly argued that, in 9–1–1 emergency calls, such contingencies as the current position of the cursor on a menu-driven computer screen can influence the pattern of the call.

These themes associated with asymmetry are evident in several contributions to this volume. Maynard's discussion of a particular procedure used by doctors prior to giving parents negative diagnoses about mental disability – a procedure that involves first asking the parents for their view of the child's disability – points to the ways in which an unquestionable disparity in medical authority can be exploited to prepare a parent for the worst. As Maynard shows, the procedure is initiated in the hope that the negative medical diagnosis can be done as an agreement with the parents' views. But the doctors risk inviting a view that may contradict their own, secure in the knowledge that it is the medical diagnosis that will prevail. In a different vein, Heritage and Sefi point to the unilateral ways in which health visitors may initiate advice giving to new mothers and the ways in which the latter display resistance to

the advice that is given. This resistance overwhelmingly takes a passive form rather than outright rejection, and is, Heritage and Sefi suggest, calibrated to and reflects the disparities in knowledge and power between the parties. Finally, Heath, as noted earlier, documents the striking finding that, at the point in the consultation when doctors announce their diagnoses, patients typically withhold responding, neither commenting upon nor questioning the diagnosis. Patients thereby orient to and preserve the asymmetry between their own lay opinion and the authoritative medical knowledge embodied in diagnosis. All three studies suggest the complex interplay between knowledge, interaction patterns, social relations, and power which constitute an important intersection between studies of language and of social relations.

The topics taken up in this section are, of course, just illustrations of what is probably a quite general kind of asymmetry in professional-client interactions. Space prevents further consideration of what in more particular circumstances may be special sources of asymmetry – notably those associated with the linguistic and interactional norms, and interpretative procedures, of different speech communities, especially racial or ethnic communities (Gumperz, this volume ch. 10). The misunderstandings or misperceptions which such asymmetries may generate in interethnic interaction are an increasing focus of research (Erikson and Shultz 1982; Gumperz 1982).

We have been able here to give only a truncated account of the character and consequences of interaction processes identified in the literature on institutional interaction. It is clear that an important theme in this area is that the overall balance which may usually obtain, at least in the aggregate, between co-participants in ordinary conversation, in terms of shared interpretive procedures, knowledge, access to action opportunities, etc. is simply not a feature of institutional interactions. Indeed, every substantive contribution to this volume documents some form of institutionalized asymmetry in conduct.

In keeping with Schegloff's remarks, however (ch. 3; see also Drew 1991; ten Have 1991; Maynard 1991), we would stress that it is not enough to rely on exogenous explanations – for example, professional authority over clients – as an automatic explanation for such asymmetries, nor to attribute in an *ad hoc* fashion a

...ice overwhelmingly takes a
...ction, and is, Heritage and
...the disparities in knowledge
...ly, Heath, as noted earlier,
...the point in the consultation
...s, patients typically withhold
...nor questioning the diag-
...preserve the asymmetry be-
...uthoritative medical knowl-
...studies suggest the complex
...ion patterns, social relations,
...ortant intersection between
...ons.

...n are, of course, just illus-
...eneral kind of asymmetry in
...e prevents further consider-
...cumstances may be special
...associated with the linguistic
...ative procedures, of different
...or ethnic communities (Gum-
...rstandings or misperceptions
...in interethnic interaction are
...n and Shultz 1982; Gumperz

...ly a truncated account of the
...ction processes identified in
...on. It is clear that an import-
...ll balance which may usually
...een co-participants in ordin-
...ed interpretive procedures,
...unities, etc. is simply not a
...Indeed, every substantive con-
...ome form of institutionalized

...ks, however (ch. 3; see also
...l 1991), we would stress that
...explanations – for example,
...as an automatic explanation
...ute in an *ad hoc* fashion a

...particular event in the talk to participants' asymmetrical relations.
...Research needs to show both the specific ways in which the partici-
...pants' talk is oriented to role-related asymmetries and the conse-
...quences of such orientations for talk-in-interaction and its out-
...comes. Alternatively, it should demonstrate, by thorough
...comparative analysis, that particular features of talk in institutional
...contexts embody systematic asymmetries that are not ordinarily
...found in mundane conversation. Given the ease with which asym-
...metries in conduct can be interpreted in terms of exogenous vari-
...ables, their analysis should properly begin by addressing those
...features of the interaction to which the participants' conduct is
...demonstrably oriented. Only when these considerations are
...exhausted should analysis turn to factors that are exogenous to the
...interaction. Analytic approaches that start with endogenous
...features of interaction have the additional advantage of treating
...institutional asymmetries in an analytic context that must neces-
...sarily embrace the broadest range of aspects of the talk. Maynard
...observes (1991: 486) that "the asymmetry of discourse in medical
...settings may have an institutional mooring, but it also has an inter-
...actional bedrock, and the latter needs sociological appreciation as
...much as the former." There will be gains in our understanding of
...asymmetries in institutional discourse when their particulars are
...grasped as embedded in the larger tasks and frameworks of the
...interaction order.

8 The organization of the present volume

...CA research has made a very substantial contribution to each of the
...themes reviewed in the previous section. Indeed, for some of those
...themes, its contribution has arguably been preeminent. This collec-
...tion brings together a range of original studies of interaction in
...institutional settings and reflects our view that CA offers an es-
...pecially powerful and coherent perspective from which to investi-
...gate the activities making up the life of social institutions. We
...believe that these studies offer new information about the ways in
...which a range of institutional activities are transacted in contem-
...porary society, and that they embody new analytic outlooks on
...how such transactions may be described and investigated reliably
...and reproducibly.

In keeping with our concern to display the application of a common methodology to a range of diverse institutional settings, we have organized the chapters analytically rather than in terms of institutional domain. In all the interactions analyzed in this volume, the talk between the participants is predominantly characterized by question-answer sequences in which the professionals largely ask the questions and the lay "clients" respond with answers. Accordingly, we have organized the empirical chapters into sections based on whether they focus primarily on the activities of the (professional) questioner, on the activities of the one answering questions, or on the interplay between questioner and recipient. We should emphasize that chapters have been included in particular sections only according to their *primary* focus. In no instance is a chapter's sole concern or focus captured by the title of the section in which it appears. But, although there may be an element of approximation in this organization, we are confident that it is informative about the substance of the constituent chapters.

We complete the present section of the collection, "Theoretical orientations," with a theoretical study by Levinson and a methodological one by Schegloff. Levinson's chapter (ch. 2) was the first of a series (see also Levinson 1980, 1981a, 1981b) dealing with the nature of speech as social action and with speech-act theory in particular. Here he addresses the essentialism of Searlian speech-act analyses of questions in the light of the very varied kinds of interactional work that questions can actually accomplish. This variety, which is evidenced in the contributions to this volume, raises the question of what analytical and inferential resources participants might use and rely upon to understand and produce question-answer sequences of various types. Levinson's analytic sketch of the issues, here developed through the notion of "activity types," is a most valuable starting point for anyone beginning to consider work in this area, and is justly regarded as a classic contribution.

Schegloff's chapter (ch. 3) deals with some of the major methodological constraints which need to be observed by researchers who want to venture empirically into the analytic terrain sketched by Levinson. In particular, he asserts the importance of demonstrating the local relevance for participants of their institutional contexts and identities. Schegloff matches this strongly "emic" approach with an equal insistence on empirical pay-off from analytical

splay the application of a
 iverse institutional settings,
 cally rather than in terms of
 ons analyzed in this volume,
 ominantly characterized by
 he professionals largely ask
 pond with answers. Accord-
 chapters into sections based
 the activities of the (pro-
 ies of the one answering
 questioner and recipient. We
 been included in particular
 ry focus. In no instance is a
 d by the title of the section in
 ay be an element of approxi-
 nfidant that it is informative
 chapters.

f the collection, "Theoretical
 y by Levinson and a method-
 chapter (ch. 2) was the first of
 31a, 1981b) dealing with the
 id with speech-act theory in
 rialism of Searlian speech-act
 e very varied kinds of interac-
 ally accomplish. This variety,
 ons to this volume, raises the
 erential resources participants
 stand and produce question-
 Levinson's analytic sketch of the
 notion of "activity types," is a
 ne beginning to consider work
 a classic contribution.

ith some of the major method-
 e observed by researchers who
 e analytic terrain sketched by
 e importance of demonstrating
 of their institutional contexts
 his strongly "emic" approach
 irical pay-off from analytical

decisions to characterize participants in "institutional" terms. Research should be able to show the impact of institutional contexts and identities in "procedurally consequential" terms – that is, in terms of institutionally distinctive conduct produced by the participants – and Schegloff sketches what such an analysis might look like with data from a news interview.

Turning to the empirical studies, part 2 focuses on the activities of the professional *questioner* and includes chapters by Bergmann, Clayman, Atkinson, and Button. Bergmann's chapter (ch. 4) analyzes questioning during psychiatric intake interviews. He shows that the design of questions through which psychiatrists explore the states of mind of interviewees displays a caution or indirectness which amounts to what he calls "discretion." This discretion emerges in relation to both lexical choice and turn design, which Bergmann demonstrates to have a striking symmetry. In a neo-Simmelian conclusion, Bergmann points to some of the ambiguities that inhabit this form of "discretion" in psychiatric conduct.

The theme of "caution" is also addressed in Clayman's study of news interviews (ch. 5). Clayman notes that interviewers may confront interviewees with controversial positions which are often directly contrary or hostile to those of interviewees. The interviewers' problem in engaging in this adversarial questioning is essentially that of avoiding the assertion of positions on their own behalf, thereby sustaining a formally neutral or "neutralistic" (Heritage and Greatbatch 1991) position. Clayman details a range of features of question design that permit interviewers to achieve this aim.

While Bergmann and Clayman both discuss aspects of the design of questions, the contributions by Atkinson and Button focus particularly on the ways questioners deal with responses to their prior questions (i.e. the third turns in sequences initiated by the questioners). However, both authors continue the theme of professional caution by describing practices through which questioners avoid taking up positions with respect to those answers. Both chapters involve an element of contrast with ordinary conversation. In conversation, where affiliative responses to answers-to-questions are commonplace, the kind of "neutral" conduct documented by Atkinson and Button would be regarded as odd or downright hostile (see Heritage 1985).

In his study of Small Claims Courts (ch. 6), Atkinson shows that

arbitrators acknowledge witnesses' statements using forms of receipt that avoid giving any indication about their assessment of what they have heard. In Button's chapter (ch. 7) the absence of affiliative responses to interviewees' answers is also documented, together with the avoidance even of clarification by the interviewers when it appears that the interviewee might have misunderstood the question. It is significant that the conduct documented in these two chapters is often justified by reference to fairness, impartiality, and objectivity. Yet the similarities in the conduct described (and its justification) should not be allowed to obscure the rather different roles which it plays in the two environments with their different tasks and inferential frameworks.

The chapters in part 3 focus principally on the tasks, constraints, and rationales of those *answering* questions. Heath's chapter (ch. 8) documents the remarkable fact that, in British general-practice medical consultations, patients systematically withhold responses to doctors' announcements of their diagnoses. Even when doctors offer their diagnoses in such a way as to invite patients to reply, for example in question format, patients appear reluctant, except under very specific circumstances, to do anything that would extend talk about the nature of the doctor's diagnosis. In consequence, patients tend to be less informed about their condition and less involved in treatment decisions than might otherwise be the case.

Greatbatch (ch. 9) examines the means through which news interviewees in panel interviews – interviews involving two or more persons who hold opposing positions about some issues – can escalate their disagreements with one another through aspects of the design and placement of their turns. Greatbatch has been in the forefront of those who have analyzed institutional talk in terms of very specific constraints on conduct that are distinctive from those applying to ordinary conversation. In this context, it is particularly interesting that he reverses perspective to focus on what, despite the rules and constraints, the participants can in fact get away with. But he also shows that, even where the participants break free of the question–answer framework of the news interview, this framework nonetheless tacitly underlies their freedom of maneuver.

Finally, in the context of interviews associated with a job-training program, Gumperz (ch. 10) shows that applicants from ethnic

statements using forms of
 about their assessment of
 chapter (ch. 7) the absence
 answers is also documented,
 ification by the interviewers
 ght have misunderstood the
 ct documented in these two
 o fairness, impartiality, and
 conduct described (and its
 obscure the rather different
 nments with their different

lly on the tasks, constraints,
 ions. Heath's chapter (ch. 8)
 in British general-practice
 atically withhold responses
 gnoses. Even when doctors
 o invite patients to reply, for
 s appear reluctant, except
 o do anything that would
 octor's diagnosis. In conse-
 ed about their condition and
 an might otherwise be the

means through which news
 views involving two or more
 s about some issues – can
 another through aspects of
 s. Greatbatch has been in the
 institutional talk in terms of
 at are distinctive from those
 this context, it is particularly
 to focus on what, despite the
 can in fact get away with. But
 articipants break free of the
 ws interview, this framework
 dom of maneuver.

s associated with a job-train-
 s that applicants from ethnic

minorities are disadvantaged in comparison with native English speakers by their apparently cryptic answers to questions. Gumperz traces the character of such answers, and of the misunderstandings which may arise between South Asian applicants and native English interviewers, to the culturally based differences in communication patterns between them. These differences appear in a wide range of contextualization cues, particularly those associated with prosody, which are important for the ways in which each makes inferences about what the other is asking or saying.

Part 4 of this volume consists of chapters which focus on the interplay between the activities of questioners and answerers. This is quite explicit in Maynard's analysis (ch. 11) of the "perspective display series" with which clinicians often preface their reports of diagnosed developmental disorders to parents of young children. Maynard identifies the perspective display series as one in which clinicians – instead of directly or straightforwardly revealing their diagnoses – first ask the parents for their observations about their child's difficulties and progress, and subsequently try to present the clinic's diagnosis so as to confirm and elaborate the parents' view. Thus clinicians elicit parents' views so as to, as Maynard puts it, "co-implicate" parents in an already completed diagnostic decision and thereby avoid the kinds of resistance that such diagnoses might otherwise engender.

There is some overlap of concern between Maynard's chapter and the one which follows it by Heritage and Sefi (ch. 12). The latter describe some of the ways in which community nurses manage the delivery of advice to first-time mothers about various aspects of baby care. Their chapter identifies a "stepwise" pattern in advice-giving sequences. Here, in the context of a "troubleshooting" series of questions, the nurses use the mothers' replies, and particularly any indication that problems might have arisen, as a warrant for the delivery of advice. Heritage and Sefi identify a range of dilemmas for both nurses and mothers, in which the identities of each are somewhat at stake, which inform the type and frequency of forms of advice delivery and the forms of response to it.

The chapter by Zimmerman (ch. 13) reports an investigation of calls to emergency dispatch centers for medical or other emergency assistance. He shows that the overall shape of the calls, the ways in

which such calls develop and are concluded, is the product of how the participants – both the call taker in the emergency center and the caller – manage the call-processing requirements and policies of the particular dispatch organization, and the variable circumstances and contingencies which are specific to each call. In such calls, callers may have very widely differing needs and callers and call takers have varying different relevances. Yet, notwithstanding this variety, emergency calls have an underlying range of organizational similarities which are locally achieved and managed. Zimmerman documents the achievement of alignment and collaboration through the phases of emergency calls through which these abstract but locally achieved patterns are realized.

The study by Drew of cross-examination of a witness in a criminal trial (ch. 14) focuses on the way in which the development of a line of questioning initiated by the questioner, here a lawyer, is contingent upon the answers given by the witness. But in this case, the interaction between them is far from collaborative. Indeed, one of the principal contingencies with which the lawyer has to deal is a series of attempts by the witness to forestall his hostile line of questioning. Drew identifies a sequentially managed device designed by the lawyer to undermine these attempts by the witness, and in turn to discredit her evidence.

The final chapter in this volume, by Jefferson and Lee, is rather different from previous chapters insofar as it deals primarily with ordinary conversation. In their analysis of troubles tellings in conversation, the authors show that troubles tellers are frequently offered advice by their recipients – advice which is systematically resisted or disputed by the troubles teller. They also note a divergence between troubles tellings and some service encounters. In the latter, the troubles teller is often seeking advice, and continues detailing their troubles only until the advice giver (i.e. some agency personnel) starts to deliver their advice. They suggest that there can be particular difficulties when official or quasi-official organizational representatives try to “humanize” the delivery of advice. This observation indirectly highlights the dilemmas discussed in the Heritage and Sefi chapter. In contexts such as social work and community nursing, where the professional may seek to establish a “befriending” relationship, the different styles of soliciting and delivering advice that are appropriate to “personal” and “pro-

uded, is the product of how
n the emergency center and
requirements and policies of
and the variable circum-
specific to each call. In such
fering needs and callers and
evances. Yet, notwithstand-
an underlying range of or-
ally achieved and managed,
nt of alignment and collab-
cy calls through which these
re realized.

ation of a witness in a crimi-
which the development of a
uestioner, here a lawyer, is
the witness. But in this case,
m collaborative. Indeed, one
ch the lawyer has to deal is a
forestall his hostile line of
quentially managed device
hese attempts by the witness,

7 Jefferson and Lee, is rather
far as it deals primarily with
is of troubles tellings in con-
oubles tellers are frequently
dvice which is systematically
dler. They also note a diver-
me service encounters. In the
eking advice, and continues
dvice giver (i.e. some agency
e. They suggest that there can
al or quasi-official organiz-
nize" the delivery of advice.
the dilemmas discussed in the
cts such as social work and
sional may seek to establish a
nt styles of soliciting and deli-
to "personal" and "pro-

fessional" interactions respectively may become fatally com-
pounded leaving, the participants interactionally discomforted and
unable to resolve their difficulties.

Here, then, are a range of attempts to map the details of insti-
tutional conduct and its underlying orientations. We believe that
they offer considerable insight into the ways that interaction is
conducted within organizations. They represent an important ave-
nue of contemporary development in the growing field of CA, and
one which holds a range of possibilities for social-scientific develop-
ment in the future. That future is an open one. Although the
methods employed in the present studies are not always readily
compatible with those of ethnography or survey research,⁴⁰ the
contributions to this volume sketch the kinds of possibilities that
can emerge when CA techniques of analysis are applied to insti-
tutional interaction. It is in a spirit of openness to these future
possibilities that the present volume is undertaken.

Notes

1. In keeping with the contents of this volume and with general usage as it has emerged within the conversation-analytic literature, we here restrict the term *institutional interaction* to interactions that are work- or task-oriented and "non-conversational" in ways that will be clarified over the course of this Introduction. Our use of the term does not extend to persons who engage in mundane conversation about everyday topics while they happen to be working, for example, on an assembly line or in a food-processing outlet. Notwithstanding the standard sociological usage within which the family is also a social institution, we will also avoid using the term to describe activities that would be glossed as family dinners, picnics, and the like. The term would, however, encompass activities that involve communication in complex, technologically mediated environments such as airports, experimental laboratories, subway systems, etc. This kind of communication is now the object of interesting and significant new research (Brun-Cottan 1990; Jordan 1990; Goodwin 1991; Goodwin and Goodwin forthcoming; Suchman forthcoming).
2. For summaries of the CA perspective, see Heritage (1984a: 233-92), Levinson (1983: 284-370), Zimmerman (1988).
3. It is worth recalling that the origins of CA go back, a little over twenty-five years ago, to Sacks's investigations into calls made to a suicide-prevention center. These calls were collected by the Los Angeles SPC as

part of a program of research designed to increase the effectiveness of the service (Litman 1972). These calls, together with recordings of group psychotherapy sessions, continued to be the principal source of data for Sacks's lectures for many years. It was from these materials that he developed CA's focus on the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction (Sacks 1989, 1992; Schegloff 1989). Data from institutional contexts have been similarly important to other pioneering work in CA – for instance, Jefferson's use of group-therapy data, and Schegloff's work on calls to a police department.

There is, moreover, a more general connection with ethnomethodological investigations of a range of work environments: for example, the study of jurors' deliberations in arriving at verdicts in criminal trials (Garfinkel 1967: 104–15) motivated further such studies as those by Zimmerman of bureaucratic procedures in a social-welfare office (Zimmerman 1969), by Pollner of traffic-court hearings (Pollner 1974, 1975, 1979), by Sudnow (1965) of plea-bargaining, and by Wieder (1974) of a "half-way" house for convicts. For a fuller account of these mutually informed developments in ethnomethodology and CA, see Heritage (1984a: esp. chs. 7–9).

4. We stress here the complementarity of the techniques involved; for while the analysis of recorded data presents opportunities for qualitative and quantitative rigor that may elude direct observational techniques, there are many aspects of organizations which cannot be directly or easily caught on tape but can only be grasped through ethnographic fieldwork.
5. See Sacks (1984a) and Garfinkel (1988) for some discussion of parallel sociological treatments of the everyday world of social action as inherently disorderly.
6. This perspective is now developing in a reevaluation of aspects of phonetic analysis (Kelly and Local 1989).
7. On aspects of style, see also Labov and Fanshel (1977: 35–7).
8. For a further discussion and elaboration of the implications of Goffman's notion of footing for linguistic analysis, particularly of deixis, see Levinson (1988) and especially Hanks (1990).
9. On a related sense of frame, as marking and establishing phases within classroom lessons, see also Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:22) and in therapeutic interviews, Labov and Fanshel (1977: 37).
10. For a comprehensive and critical overview, see Levinson (1983: 226–83) and the debates in Searle (1991).
11. For an assessment of these objectives, see Levinson (1983: 286–9, 294, and 352–3).
12. For a parallel discussion in relation to sociological analyses of the relationship between rules, contexts, and action, see Heritage (1984a: 103–34).
13. Though Searle (1979) later repudiated this view.

l to increase the effectiveness of
s, together with recordings of
ed to be the principal source of
rs. It was from these materials
quential organization of talk-in-
gloff 1989). Data from insti-
important to other pioneering
use of group-therapy data, and
partment.

connection with ethnomethodo-
rk environments: for example,
arriving at verdicts in criminal
ivated further such studies as
procedures in a social-welfare
of traffic-court hearings (Pollner
55) of plea-bargaining, and by
or convicts. For a fuller account
ents in ethnomethodology and
9).

of the techniques involved; for
resents opportunities for qualita-
clude direct observational tech-
ganizations which cannot be di-
can only be grasped through

3) for some discussion of parallel
/ world of social action as inher-

in a reevaluation of aspects of
39).

d Fanshel (1977: 35–7).

ion of the implications of Goff-
: analysis, particularly of deixis,
nks (1990).

ig and establishing phases within
nd Coulthard (1975:22) and in
shel (1977: 37).

:view, see Levinson (1983: 226–

es, see Levinson (1983: 286–9,

to sociological analyses of the
and action, see Heritage (1984a:

d this view.

14. In common with Labov and Fanshel, Sinclair and Coulthard are also interested in identifying the rules which translate surface linguistic form (e.g. a teacher's declarative *I can hear someone laughing* into a speech action (a command to stop laughing; 1975: 32–3). But from a discourse-analysis perspective, discourse is orderly through the more general moves which such acts constitute, and the regularly occurring patterns of moves that make up exchange structures.
15. The ambivalences of the model between an emic and etic stance and between a descriptive and prescriptive orientation have been widely noted in the literature (Levinson 1983; Taylor and Cameron 1987).
16. Thus the very first lecture by Harvey Sacks (1992 [1964]: lecture 1) deals with two alternative procedures by which a counselor at a crisis-intervention center can attempt to solicit the name of the caller.
17. This abandonment is strongly canvassed in Garfinkel's (1967) analytic writings. See also Heritage (1984a, 1987) for some explication of Garfinkel's arguments.
18. Several recent papers deal with dramatic breakdowns in the normal or routine ways that "institutional" interaction generally proceeds. In relation to the news interview, Schegloff (1988/9) and Clayman and Whalen (1988/9) discuss aspects of the breakdown of an encounter between CBS anchor Dan Rather and (then) Republican Vice-President George Bush from a "news interview" to a "confrontation." Similarly, J. Whalen, Zimmerman, and Whalen (1988) discuss a disastrous telephone call to an emergency hotline in Dallas, Texas, in which, as a result of an interactional breakdown, an ambulance was not sent to a dying patient. These studies illustrate the generic methodological point that a "context" of interaction – whether conversational or institutional – is something that is coconstructed by the participants to an encounter and that "routine" exchanges – whether conversational (Schegloff 1986) or institutional (Whalen and Zimmerman 1987) – must always be treated as the contingent outcomes of a collaborative achievement between the participants.
19. In a parallel discussion, Wilson (1991) addresses this same theme in his warning of the dangers of a too hastily assembled conclusion that particular "obviously relevant" institutional identities are informing courses of action.
20. The task agendas of many forms of institutional discourse became a theme in the CA literature almost as soon as institutional talk became an object of systematic analysis. (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Maynard 1984; Heritage 1985). Maynard's (1984: 11–12) observations on plea bargaining were particularly trenchant in this regard:

it is impossible to ignore that plea bargaining occurs in a particular institutional environment. Relatively unexplored in conversational analysis is how such an environment provides instrumental tasks to which members must attend by way of their talk and action . . . the setting of plea bargaining is more than an

incidental part of the discourse. It is a feature of the criminal-justice process that *results* – in the form of decisions about criminal defendants and their cases – must always be produced. This feature has consequences for the patterns of talk that emerge in plea bargaining ... organized aspects of the discourse are often occupied with meeting the participants' institutional mandate to process cases.

21. Analytically, these comparisons should ideally be explicit. However, the question of whether they model elements or processes of comparison which are in any sense "real" to the participants is a very complex topic. There are moments when, in their conduct (Heritage and Greatbatch 1991) or reports of it (Atkinson 1982), participants in institutional interaction directly appeal to the special character of the interactional framework in which they are participating and/or to some specific aspect of it which is "nonconversational" or different from conversation. In grasping the meaning of some utterance or action however, participants may simply see the action at a glance as "an-action-in-a-different-organization or system-of-relevances" (see Wieder 1974). Such a grasp could involve a "gestalt seeing" that involves no conscious or intentional (in a phenomenological sense) entertaining of comparisons.
22. Although it is sometimes difficult, illuminating "deviant cases" can almost always be found: for example, while it can be difficult to find departures from news-interview turn-taking rules in data with only one interviewee, the presence of two or more interviewees expands the range (and the motivation) of possibilities for departure as Greatbatch (ch. 9) shows.
23. Perakyla and Silverman (1991a, 1991b) document a range of comparatively exotic turn-taking procedures associated with such counseling methods as the *Milan School Family Systems Theory* (Perakyla 1991). Their data also indicate some of the difficulties of sustaining this turn-taking framework without relapsing into more "normal" conversational modes.
24. A fine ethnographic study of encounters between social workers and clients (Baldock and Prior 1981) evokes a wide-ranging permeability between a "conversation" and a task-oriented encounter as a general feature of social-worker-client interaction and notes a consequence of this permeability – a corresponding uncertainty, among many clients at least, about the purpose of the encounter.
25. Interestingly, Strong (1979) notes that medical professionals may comport themselves as lay people when attending pediatric clinics in a parental capacity. In such cases, the presentation of a lay self is, in part, managed by the avoidance of jargon.
26. This observation is dramatically illustrated in the following account, from *The Independent* in which a British resident of Beirut recounts how she was told – we now know, incorrectly – that her husband had been killed by hostage takers.

of the criminal-justice process that criminal defendants and their cases – consequences for the patterns of talk and aspects of the discourse are often institutional mandate to process cases.

could ideally be explicit. However, elements or processes of competence to the participants is a very phenomenon, in their conduct (Heritage and Atkinson 1982), participants in the special character of the role they are participating and/or are nonconversational” or different meaning of some utterance or only see the action at a glance as a “system-of-relevances” (see also “gestalt seeing” that is in a phenomenological sense)

identifying “deviant cases” can while it can be difficult to find taking rules in data with only more interviewees expands the possibilities for departure as Greatbatch

b) document a range of competencies associated with such counseling. *Systemic Theory* (Perakyla) of the difficulties of sustaining relationships elapsing into more “normal”

relationships between social workers and clients is a wide-ranging permeability oriented encounter as a general phenomenon and notes a consequence of uncertainty, among many clients and others.

medical professionals may come attending pediatric clinics in a representation of a lay self is, in a way.

related in the following account, a resident of Beirut recounts directly – that her husband had

He said to me: “You’re Mrs. Mann, aren’t you?” And when I said “yes,” he said, “I’m very sorry but I’ve got some very bad news for you.” I asked him what it was, and he said: “We have to tell you your husband is dead.” My knees were like jelly. I just sank down into a chair . . . It was only later that I realised the man had referred to “we” as if he was some kind of intermediary.

(*The Independent*, 9 September 1989)

27. This datum illustrates that incumbency of an institutional role may not preclude the use of a self-referring *I*, which may be used to invoke a stance or identity that is somewhat less “institutionally” weighted. In institutional contexts, the choice between a self-referring *I* or *we* is not “determined” by the setting; rather, both formulations are available to the institutional incumbent, who can achieve a variety of actions and communicational outcomes by selecting between them.
28. See Turner (1976) for analysis of a closely parallel case to the datum discussed here. The issue of medical vs. social/emotional agendas in medical consultations is usefully discussed in Byrne and Long (1976).
29. On intersubjectivity in CA see, *inter alia*, Schegloff and Sacks (1973), Heritage (1984a: 254–60), and Schegloff (1992).
30. As in datum (6) discussed above, the M and F’s turn designs embody different stances towards the health visitor and her assertions. The HV offers the remark on lines 1–2 of the datum having already asked the parents a string of questions about the baby’s behavior. It is noticeable that neither parents take up the HV’s claim that they will be “amazed” at all the different things their child will start doing. The mother responds with a remark offering the same view as a previously held general expectation about all children – thereby avoiding the “expert–novice” stance that the HV’s remark might be seen as expressing. The father, by contrast, agrees with the HV’s remark by asserting that they have already and independently noticed their child’s rapid development. Significantly, while the father (putatively the junior partner in the family’s child-care arrangements) appears eager to show their competence in noticing the details of their child’s behavior, the mother’s response avoids any indication that she will hold herself accountable to the HV for such skills.
31. For a sociological background to these observations see Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), Heritage (1984a: 144–57), Schegloff (1989).
32. Topic initiation and (rapid) topic shifts feature analytically also in Cicourel (1987: 222), Fisher (1983: 213–19), Shuy (1983), Erickson and Shultz (1982: 72–85), and frequently elsewhere, as do overlaps and “interruptions” (Fisher 1983: 210–12; Davis 1988: 268; Mishler 1984: 108–9; Gumperz 1982: 175–7), and other phenomena such as correction of a co-participant (Fisher 1983: 207; Tannen and Wallat 1986: 302–3), greetings sequences (Gumperz 1982: 175–7; Silverman 1987: 165–8), insertion sequences in response to (indirect) requests (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 155–67; Erickson and Shultz 1982: 24–5), and dysfluencies such as hesitancy, self-repair, and pauses (Mishler

1984: 72–5; Labov and Fanshel 1977: 313–14; Gumperz 1982: 177).

33. But see Gumperz (1982: 176) for an important exception to this.
34. On this transition from conversational mode into the “business,” as it were, conducted through professional questioning, Suchman and Jordan (1990) observe a related phenomenon in the General Social Survey and National Health Survey interviews they studied. Respondents were often misled by the interviewers’ opening “chatty” remarks into believing that they could treat the occasion as an extended conversation, for example, tell the interviewer stories. The interviewer had then to reorient the respondent just to answer the question.

[The respondent] initially takes the interview to have a kind of talk show format, wherein she is to provide her opinions in the form of a commentary on topics raised by the interviewer. The extensive and elaborate opening remarks by the interviewer contribute to this expectation and appear to be heard as an invitation to produce a response in kind. But what this respondent hears in the first question as an invitation to talk, to give her opinion, she discovers to be a fixed choice between items, where the possible terms of her answer are already decided and are non-negotiable. The interview comes to be transformed from an interactive “talking with” someone, to the solitary production of acceptable answers to questions: answers whose adequacy for the interview purposes respondents come to be able to evaluate, but in which they may have little personal investment.

(Suchman and Jordan 1990: 236)

35. A further variation of this “exam question” sequence involves the *withholding* of evaluative response to answers. This is characteristic of yet another somewhat related activity – educational testing (Marlaire and Maynard 1990).
36. In this respect it is significant that both doctors and therapists generally refrain from responding to patients’ reports with *oh* (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 137; ten Have 1991).
37. Though see Jefferson (1980b, 1988) for a delineation of particular kinds of sequences within conversations, notably “troubles tellings,” that may have some such “standard components on a standard order of occurrence.”
38. The tendency of lay participants to orient towards some task-related overall structure of interaction is underscored by the common complaint by social-work clients (Baldock and Prior 1981) that their interviews with social workers were such amorphous conversations that they had little idea of their agendas, of what was expected of them during the encounter, or, indeed, what it might take for the encounter to be complete.
39. This issue is extendedly discussed in Sack’s lectures on turn-taking (1992 [fall 1967]) in which he compares the locally constructed basis for conversational turn taking with the hierarchically based rules described by Albert (1962) for turn taking among the Burundi. See also Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974).

313–14; Gumperz 1982: 177).
 important exception to this.
 mode into the “business,” as it
 questioning, Suchman and Jordan
 on in the General Social Survey
 as they studied. Respondents
 opening “chatty” remarks into
 occasion as an extended conver-
 sation stories. The interviewer had
 to answer the question.

seem to have a kind of talk show
 format in the form of a commentary on
 their own and elaborate opening remarks
 that seem to appear to be heard as an
 attempt to tell what this respondent hears in the
 interviewer's opinion, she discovers to be a
 set of terms of her answer are already
 in place. The respondent comes to be transformed from
 a solitary production of acceptable
 quality for the interview purposes
 but in which they may have little

(Suchman and Jordan 1990: 236)

“question” sequence involves the
 interviewer's answers. This is characteristic of
 educational testing (Marlaire

and doctors and therapists gener-
 ally report with *oh* (Labov and

for a delineation of particular
 elements, notably “troubles tellings,”
 components on a standard order

orient towards some task-related
 underscored by the common com-
 and Prior 1981) that their inter-
 amorphous conversations that
 of what was expected of them
 it might take for the encounter

Sack's lectures on turn-taking
 rest on the locally constructed basis
 of hierarchically based rules de-
 veloped among the Burundi. See also

40. Though see Strong 1979), Maynard (1984), Moerman (1988), Ochs
 (1988), Conley and O'Barr (1990), and, most significantly, M. H.
 Goodwin (1990) for very serious efforts to combine the analysis of
 discourse with the use of ethnographic techniques and findings.