Talk in Action

INTERACTIONS, IDENTITIES, AND INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

This book is about the workings of language and interaction in the everyday life of institutions. It arose from our long-standing conviction that, while it was all but ignored in conventional analyses of occupational worlds, professions, and organizational environments, the study of interaction had much to offer to the analysis of these domains of social life. Accordingly, in the early 1990s we decided to start a seminar that applied the emerging findings of conversation analysis to occupational environments of various kinds. At that time, studies of this sort were few and far between, and concentrated in a limited range of domains, notably courtroom interaction, 911 emergency, and mass communication. Our seminar was correspondingly small, attracting perhaps a dozen intrepid participants.

Since that time, the field has expanded dramatically. Conversation analytic (CA) research, once all but absent from the doctor's office, has now become an established presence in the field of medicine, where it is used to examine everything from genetic counseling to surgery. It has also colonized the world of business, from business meetings and decision making to, perhaps especially, the examination of technology-in-use. In education, CA has advanced from classroom lessons to embrace more far-flung enterprises such as one-on-one pedagogy, disciplinary hearings, and parent–teacher conferences. In the socio-legal area, a focus on formal trials has given way to a more differentiated range of studies encompassing the more informal legal proceedings such as mediation, arbitration, and plea bargaining. The study of 911 emergency has broadened to embrace an ever-widening array of help lines and support services. Mass media research has exhibited a similar diversification, with the initial news interview research joined by studies of campaign debates, radio call-in shows, and talk shows of various stripes. This growth and diversification is not confined to the English-speaking world; it is a world-wide phenomenon embracing many languages and diverse cultures.

In the meantime, our small seminar expanded to a large-scale lecture course that has been taken by students who now number in the thousands. Naturally there are limits to what can be covered within the confines of a 10-week course and, rather than spread ourselves too thinly, we chose to cover a smaller range of environments in a sustained way. Accordingly, while our teaching registered the many advances of an evolving field, three main criteria determined our selection of topics. We focused on domains of interaction that, first, have intrinsic interest as specimens of the everyday world; second, have significant outcomes for individuals and the society of which they are a part; and third, have an exemplary status

within a continuum of social contexts: private versus public, formal versus informal, and professional versus bureaucratic. This book is based on those choices.

It is important to emphasize that our aim is not to draw a dividing line between ordinary conversation and interaction that is professional, task-focused, or "institutional". This is because we do not believe that a clear dividing line can be drawn. Most important in this regard is the fact that practices of interaction in the everyday world are unavoidably drawn on in every kind of institutional interaction. For example, a witness in court may be confined by a variety of rules of legal process, but she will still deploy her ordinary conversational competences in constructing the details of her testimony. By the same token, the kind of rhetorical formulations used to persuade others in political speeches are also to be found in argumentative conversations over the dinner table and at the office water cooler. For this reason, we do not propose any hard-and-fast distinction between "ordinary conversation" on the one hand and "institutional talk" on the other. Rather, we investigate the ways in which ordinary conversational practices are brought to bear in task-focused interactions. Because the tasks of these interactions are recurrent, so too are the specific practices that they frequently engage. For this reason, we can fairly readily observe systematic relationships between practices of interaction on the one hand, and institutional tasks and identities on the other. It is the intersections between interactional practices, social identities, and institutional tasks that lie at the heart of this book.

These intersections take many forms. To prepare for their analysis, we begin with a theoretical and methodological overview of conversation analysis and its application to occupations and institutions. These chapters (2–4) provide an account of the theoretical origins of CA in the work of Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel, and explicate the methodology of CA and how it can be applied to institutional settings. We then offer an overview of different levels of analysis of institutional interaction that will be in evidence throughout the book.

The body of the book centers on four main institutional domains: calls to 911 emergency (chapters 5–7), doctor–patient interaction (chapters 8–11), courtroom trials (chapters 12–14), and mass communication (chapters 15–18). The pioneering work of Don Zimmerman and his colleagues established 911 calls as one of the first applications of CA to an institutional task. The domain is a useful starting point both because of its intrinsic interest and also because the overwhelming task focus of these calls starkly exemplifies the extent to which a task's organizational imperatives can shape multiple aspects of interactional organization and practice. 911 calls also highlight the extent to which the personal circumstances and emotional states of participants are enmeshed with, and become adjusted to, the demands of the business at hand.

In our second domain, doctor–patient interaction, we focus on primary care, in part because it is the largest part of the health care system, and also because of its clear exemplification of professionalism in action. Here we focus on the twin themes of professional authority and personal accountability in medical decision making by both doctors and their patients, and also on ways in which authority and accountability are challenged and contested.

For the third domain, we focus on one of the earliest applications of conversation analysis to a social institution: formal trial proceedings. In contrast to our first two domains, which essentially involve private interactions, trials are public events and are regulated by public and highly codified rules of conduct. Here we address the bookends of the trial process: examination of witnesses, and jury deliberations. In both areas, our analysis concerns how legal codes, rules of procedure, and the "facts of the case" are selectively deployed and

creatively articulated in the give and take of often contentious interactional processes. We also examine processes of informal dispute resolution, which have assumed an ever-increasing role in the legal system.

Our final domain, mass communication in the form of broadcast news interviews, news conferences, and political speeches, is also highly public in character. Our primary focus is on how the competing journalistic norms of objectivity and adversarialness are reconciled and implemented in practice, and how interviewees strive to stay on message in an environment of interrogation. We also consider political speeches, which are of course a context in which it is relatively easy to stay on message. However, in this form of interaction en masse, public speakers face the task of keeping audiences attentive and mobilizing their support. We examine the rhetorical resources that speakers deploy to this end, and show some ways in which these resources can, outlasting the speech itself, pass from utterance to history.

In our class at UCLA, we found that we were not only examining particular institutional domains, but also introducing our students to the methodology of conversation analysis. Studying institutions, we found, was a motivation for our students to learn the techniques of interactional analysis necessary to get at the workings of human organizations. Our class necessarily had a kind of double curriculum, which is carried over into this book. Accordingly, our aim is to be exemplary rather than encyclopedic in the hope that we will attract interest in both the institutions and the interactional practices through which they are talked into being.

I

Conversation Analysis and Social Institutions

2

Conversation Analysis: Some Theoretical Background

Social interaction is the very bedrock of social life. It is the primary medium through which cultures are transmitted, relationships are sustained, identities are affirmed, and social structures of all sorts are reproduced (Goodwin & Heritage 1990). It is, in Schegloff's (1996) phrase, "the primordial site of human sociality". In almost every imaginable particular, our ability to grasp the nature of the social world and to participate in it is dependant on our capacities and resourcefulness as social interactants (Enfield & Levinson 2006).

In the past, as Goffman (1964) noted, social scientists have had little to say about how interaction works, treating it as an inscrutable black box that is beyond coherent description. In particular, it was believed that individual episodes of interaction are fundamentally disorderly, and that attempts at their systematic analysis would only be a waste of time (Sacks 1984a). Lacking systematic knowledge of how interaction works, social scientists had even less to say about the relationship between interactions and institutions. Yet it is through interaction that institutions are brought to life and made actionable in the everyday world.

Consider the following segment of talk from a medical consultation. The patient is a divorced, middle-aged woman who lives alone and works a sixty-hour week in a restaurant she owns and manages. At line 4, the doctor asks a lifestyle question. Though compactly phrased, the question clearly raises the issue of her alcohol consumption. She responds with an apparently bona fide effort to estimate it as "moderate" (line 6). Pressed further, she elaborates this in a turn that conveys, without directly stating, that her drinking is social and infrequent (lines 9–10). The doctor is not satisfied with this, and pursues a more objective numerically specified estimate (lines 11–12). After a brief struggle, a compromise quasi-numerical estimate is reached (lines 15–16) and accepted (line 18):

```
(1)
 1  Doc:   tch D'you smoke?, h
 2  Pat:   Hm mm.
 3         (5.0)
 4  Doc:   Alcohol use?
 5         (1.0)
 6  Pat:   Hm:: moderate I'd say.
 7         (0.2)
 8  Doc:   Can you define that, hhhehh ((laughing outbreath))
```

```
 9  Pat:    Uh huh hah .hh I don't get off my- (0.2) outta
10          thuh restaurant very much but [(awh:)
11  Doc:                                  [Daily do you use
12          alcohol or:=h
13  Pat:    Pardon?
14  Doc:    Daily? or[:
15  Pat:             [Oh: huh uh. .hh No: uhm (3.0) probably::
16          I usually go out like once uh week.
17          (1.0)
18  Doc:    °Kay.°
```

Consider some questions which are absolutely central to understanding this sequence of inter-
action. What considerations led the patient to evaluate her drinking as "moderate" (line 6)
and, when challenged, to frame her response in terms of not "going out" very much? Why
did the doctor ask "Daily do you use alcohol or:=h" with the "Daily" at the beginning of
the sentence and the "or:" at the end of it? Why did the patient say "Pardon?" at line 13
when she plainly heard the question? Why, after all this, did the patient still end up talking
about how much she "goes out" (lines 15–16)? And how are all these details about the actions
and reasoning of the participants connected to the roles of doctor and patient?

If you had been presented with this segment in 1960, you would have found few systematic
resources with which to answer these questions, and none that could offer any significant
clues as to the details of the actions the participants are engaged in. The dominant systems
of analysis involved standard categories (e.g., "shows solidarity", "gives suggestion", "asks
for opinion", "shows tension" [Bales 1950]) which were simply imposed on the data even
though, as in our example, they frequently had little or nothing to do with what participants
were actually doing in their interactions.

The advent of conversation analysis in the 1960s changed all this. Today, the details of
this segment can be specified with a high degree of resolution. This is possible because
we now recognize not only that there is a "world" of everyday life that is available to
systematic study, but also that it is orderly to a degree that was hitherto unimaginable.
Our aim in this chapter is to introduce you to the basic ideas that underlie this revolution
in thought.

Two great American social scientists – Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel – laid the
groundwork for this conversation analytic revolution. Both of them dissented from the view
that the details of everyday life are an inherently disorderly and unresearchable mess, so we
begin with them.

Origins: Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman's fundamental achievement, developed over a lifetime of writing (see Goffman
1955, 1983), was to establish that social interaction is a form of social organization in its own
right. Interaction, he argued, embodies a distinct moral and institutional order that can be
treated like other social institutions, such as the family, education, or religion. Goffman came
to term this the *interaction order* (Goffman 1983) and, he argued, it comprises a complex
set of interactional rights and obligations which are linked both to "face" (a person's imme-
diate claims about "who s/he is" in an interaction), more enduring features of personal
identity, and also to large-scale macro social institutions. Goffman further argued that the

institutional order of interaction has a particular social significance. It underlies the operations of all the other institutions in society, and it mediates the business that they transact. The work of political, economic, educational, legal and other social institutions is in large part discharged by means of the practices comprising the interaction order.

Goffman's central insight was that the institution of interaction has an underlying structural organization: what he called a "syntax". In the Introduction to *Interaction Ritual* (Goffman 1967) he observes: "I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another" (Goffman 1967: 2). The participants use this syntax – which provides for the sequential ordering of actions (see Goffman 1971: 171–202) – to analyze one another's conduct. By looking at the choices people make within this structure, persons can arrive at judgments about personal motivations and identities. The syntax of interaction, Goffman argued, is a core part of the moral order. It is the place where face, self, and identity are expressed, and where they are also ratified or undermined by the conduct of others.

Thus, in contrast to his predecessors, Goffman viewed the normative organization of practices and processes that makes up the interaction order as a domain to be studied in its own right. He repeatedly rejected the view that interaction is a colorless, odorless, frictionless substrate through which social processes operate (Goffman 1964, Kendon 1987), and asserted instead that the interaction order is an autonomous site of authentic social processes that inform social action and interaction. With this framework, Goffman carved out a new conceptual space, and with it a new territory for systematic analysis: the interaction order as a social institution.

Goffman's inspired conceptualization, while influential, also presented limitations. He was interested in how face and identity are associated with action, and how moral inferences about them can *motivate* interactional conduct. However, he was much less interested in, and did not pursue, a second equally fundamental issue concerning how participants *understand* one another in interaction. How does this process of understanding work? And, just as important, how do persons know that they share the *same* understandings within interaction? Without this crucial component it is not obvious how the interaction order could operate as a working institution. Largely for this reason, Goffman's approach – brilliant though it was – failed to stabilize as a systematic approach to the analysis of interaction. There is no "Goffman School" of interaction analysis, and his seminal insights might have been stillborn but for their intersection with a quite separate emergence of interest in cognition and meaning in the social sciences during the 1960s.

Origins: Harold Garfinkel

This emergence can be traced, above all, to the extraordinary researches of Harold Garfinkel (1967). Garfinkel argued that all human action and human institutions, including Goffman's interaction order, rest on the primordial fact that persons are able to *make shared sense of* their circumstances and act on the shared sense they make. He further argued that coordinated and meaningful actions, regardless of whether they involve cooperation or conflict, are impossible without these shared understandings. Garfinkel wanted to know how this is possible, and he hit on the notion that persons use *shared methods of practical reasoning* (or "ethno-methods") to build this shared sense of their common context of action, and of the

social world more generally. Thus any analysis of social action is incomplete without an analysis of how social actors use shared commonsense knowledge and shared methods of reasoning in the conduct of their joint affairs. It is these shared methods that enable our doctor and patient to build and navigate their sequence of interaction knowing, for example, that issues are not quite resolved until the doctor says "Kay" at line 18. Thus Garfinkel insisted that shared sense-making is a primordial feature of the social world. Nothing can happen in the social world without it. His project – ethnomethodology – was to study how socially shared methods of practical reasoning are used to analyze, understand, and act in the commonsense world of everyday life.

To demonstrate the significance of these ideas, Garfinkel used a series of quasi-experimental procedures (known as "breaching experiments") to create basic departures from taken-for-granted social expectations. For example, using the game of tic-tac-toe (British "noughts and crosses"), Garfinkel (1963) had experimenters invite the subjects to make the first move, where-upon the experimenters erased the subject's mark, moved it to a new cell, and then made their own mark while acting as if nothing out of the ordinary was happening. These experimental departures engendered deep confusion and moral indignation in their subjects but, Garfinkel found, the deepest anger and indignation was engendered in those who *could not make sense of the situation*. From this Garfinkel concluded that the rules of tic-tac-toe are not only regulative rules that define how one should act within the game, they are also constitutive rules: resources for *making sense* of moves, and of the state of play more generally. It is the rules of tic-tac-toe that allow the one playing "O", who has the next turn to play, to see that the situation in figure 2.1 is hopeless. Similarly, they can be used by the "O" player to see (figure 2.2) that "X" has two in a row and is threatening to win. They can also be used to see that if you miss seeing that "two in a row" situation, you're being inattentive. And other understandings can be laminated onto this one. If the "O" player in figure 2.2 is an adult, and the "X" player is a child, missing "two in a row" by putting the next "O" in other than the bottom right square can leave the adult open to the accusation that "it's no fun because you're letting me win."

X	O	X
	X	
	O	

Figure 2.1

X	O	X
	X	
O		

Figure 2.2

From quasi-experimental procedures like this, Garfinkel concluded that shared methods of practical reasoning inform both the *production* of action, and the *recognition* of action and its meanings. In fact, he argued, we produce action methodically to be recognized for what it is, and we recognize action because it is produced methodically in this way. As he put it: "the activities whereby members produce and manage the settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making these settings account-able" (Garfinkel 1967: 1). In other words, the *same methods* organize both action and the understanding of action. We can unpack this complex sentence with the rules of tic-tac-toe. These rules are resources for analyzing and understanding what has happened in the game so far, and

for deciding what to do next. Looking backwards in time they are resources for making sense of actions, and looking forwards in time they are resources for methodically producing next actions:
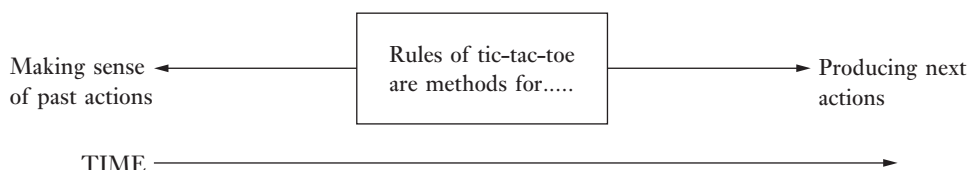
Figure 2.3 Rules of tic-tac-toe as methods

Most of social life is a great deal more complicated than games. And Garfinkel used other breaching experiments to demonstrate practical reasoning in these more complicated social situations. These experiments clearly indicated that social actions, shared understandings, and ultimately social institutions are underpinned by a complex body of presuppositions, tacit assumptions, and methods of inference – in short, a body of methods or methodology. This body of methods informs the production of culturally meaningful actions and objects, and it also is equally and profoundly involved in our recognition and understanding of them.

Methods of commonsense reasoning are fundamentally adapted to the recognition and understanding of events-in-context. Garfinkel epitomized the operation of these methods as "the documentary method of interpretation". Social interaction is a prime site for its implementation. Garfinkel argued that it involves assembling linkages between an action and its physical and social context by using a wide array of presuppositions and inferential procedures. This process involves the property of reflexivity: an action will be understood by reference to the context in which it occurs, but it will also, in turn, initiate changes in a person's understanding of the context itself. For example, a second person's greeting will be understood in context as a "return", but its occurrence will also transform the context from one in which engagement is unilaterally proposed to one in which it is mutually ratified (Heritage 1984b). When it is employed in a temporally dynamic context, which is a characteristic of all situations of human interaction, the documentary method forms the basis for temporally updated shared understandings of actions and events among the participants.

The upshot of Garfinkel's researches was that every aspect of shared understandings of the social world depends on a multiplicity of tacit *methods of reasoning*. These methods are socially shared and they are ceaselessly used during every waking moment to recognize ordinary social objects and events. These methods also function as a resource for the production of actions. Actors tacitly draw on them so as to produce actions that will be *accountable* – that is, recognizable and describable – in context. Thus, shared methods of reasoning are publicly available on the surface of social life because the results of their application are inscribed in social action and interaction.

Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) was developed by Harvey Sacks (1992) in association with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, and emerged in the late 1960s. Sacks and Schegloff were students of Goffman at the University of California at Berkeley and were also in close touch with Harold Garfinkel at UCLA (Schegloff 1992a). The program of research they developed together stood at the intersection of the perspectives developed by Goffman and Garfinkel. From Goffman, they took the notion that talk-in-interaction is a fundamental social domain that can be studied as an institutional entity in its own right. From Garfinkel came the notion that shared methods of reasoning are implicated in the production and recognition of contributions to interaction, and that these contributions advance the situation of interaction in an incremental, step-by-step fashion.

In the early CA publications (e.g. Schegloff & Sacks 1973) these two perspectives were melded into a new methodology. Integral to the methodology was a reversal of the old social science perspective that individual actions are inherently disorderly, and that their patterns can only be approximated using statistics. Instead Sacks and Schegloff insisted that social interaction is *orderly* on an individual level, action by action, move by move. If it were not so, how could interaction be reliable and meaningful in the ways that common experience tells us it is?

As CA developed during the 1970s a number of basic assumptions that now underlie the field began to crystallize.

The primacy of ordinary conversation

A basic CA assumption is that ordinary conversation between peers represents a fundamental domain for analysis, and that the analysis of ordinary conversation represents a basic resource for the extension of CA into other, "non-conversational" domains. This assumption was not a guiding principle of CA research from the outset. Indeed in his lectures, Sacks (1984a) did not portray the decision to study conversation in these terms. However, by the time that the work on turn taking (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974) was completed, it had become apparent that ordinary conversation differs in systematic ways from, for example, interaction in the law courts or news interviews; the conceptualization of these differences has developed substantially in recent years (Drew & Heritage 1992).

There is every reason to view ordinary conversation as the fundamental, in fact primordial, domain of social interaction. It is the predominant form of human interaction in the social world, and the primary medium of communication to which the child is exposed and through which socialization proceeds. It thus antedates the development of other, more specialized, forms of institutional interaction both in the life of society and in the life of the individual person. Moreover the practices of ordinary conversation appear to have a bedrock or default status. They are not conventional nor subject to rapid historical change, nor generally subject to discursive justification (by reference, for example, to equity or efficiency) in ways that practices of communication in legal, medical, pedagogical, and other institutions manifestly are. As we shall see in this book, research is increasingly showing that communicative conduct in more specialized social institutions embodies task- or role-oriented specializations that generally involve a narrowing of the range of conduct that is generically found in ordinary conversation. The latter thus embodies a diversity and range

of combinations of interactional practices that is unmatched elsewhere in the social world. Communicative conduct in institutional environments, by contrast, involves socially imposed and often uncomfortable departures from that range (Atkinson 1982).

The use of naturally occurring recorded data in CA

CA is completely insistent on the use of recordings of naturally occurring data as the empirical basis for analysis. This outlook was first articulated in Sacks' lectures (Sacks 1984a, 1992) where he stressed the value of recordings as a resource that could be analyzed and reanalyzed. Moreover, Sacks argued, naturally occurring data represent an infinitely richer resource for analysis than what can be invented or imagined. And invented data have another disadvantage: others may deny that they represent possible events in the real world. This is a problem not faced by empirical data (ibid.)!

These comments made their appearance in an intellectual context in which invented data were the stock in trade of linguistics and the philosophy of speech acts (Searle 1969, 1979). CA continues to stress that the use of recorded data is central to recovering the detail of interactional organization, and that all forms of non-recorded data – from memorized observations to all forms of on-the-spot coding – are inadequate and inappropriate substitutes. These substitutes inevitably compromise the linguistic and contextual detail that is essential for successful analysis. As these remarks suggest, recorded interaction is a fundamental constraint that disciplines conclusions by making them answerable to what real people actually do, rather than what an armchair theorist – no matter how talented – might imagine they do. The empirical advances that CA has made rest squarely on the use of recorded data that, together with data transcripts, permit others to check the validity of the claims being made.

The parallel insistence on naturally occurring data is similarly motivated. While experimental situations and role-play data can be recorded, there are reasons for regarding each of them as less than fully desirable. Experimental and related circumstances in which the participants are "set up" for some activity often yield data that are only partially usable. Often the limitations of the experimental situation narrow the relevance of the data and the applicability of findings (Schegloff 1987, 1991). Similarly role-plays, as those who have compared them with "real-life" interactions will know, are often compromised in terms of the range and authenticity of the conduct that emerges within them, not least because the empirical consequentiality and moral accountability that are associated with "real" interactions are attenuated in the role-play context.

Given these considerations, CA has approached the world of social interaction in the same spirit as the naturalist. The aim has been, as far as possible, to obtain recorded data of interactional practices in the natural contexts in which those practices occur. Once obtained, the data can be analyzed and reanalyzed in the context of new research questions and of growing knowledge and can be employed as cumulative data corpora in processes of comparison that accumulate over time.

The structural analysis of conversational practices

Fundamental to the inception of CA is the idea, inherited from Goffman, that social interaction is informed by institutionalized structural organizations of practices to which participants are normatively oriented. This assumption, perhaps more than any other, reflects

the sociological origins of the field. Associated with this assumption is the notion that these organizations of practices – as the conditions on which the achievement of mutually intelligible and concerted interaction depends – are fundamentally independent of the motivational, psychological or sociological characteristics of the participants. Indeed conversational practices are the medium through which these sociological and psychological characteristics manifest themselves.

It is this structural assumption which informs, in fact mandates, the basic CA imperative to isolate organizations of practices in talk without reference to the sociological or psychological characteristics of the participants. For example, a structured set of turn-taking procedures is presupposed in the recognition of an "interruption". Moreover, both these turn-taking procedures and the associated recognizability of interruptive departures from them are anterior to, and independent of, empirical distributions of interruptions as between males and females or between powerful and powerless individuals (Zimmerman & West 1975, West & Zimmerman 1983, Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz 1985). It is thus only *after* the structural features of, for example, turn taking and interruption have been determined that it is meaningful to search for the ways in which sociological factors such as gender, class, and ethnicity, or psychological dispositions such as extroversion or a disposition to passive-aggressive conduct, may be manifested in interactional conduct.

CA searches for structural organizations of interactional practices in a particular way. Rather than starting with a set of theoretical specifications of "structure" or "action" (cf. Parsons 1937), with an *a priori* theoretical specification of particular actions (for example, Searle's [1969] speech act specifications), or with a theory of the motivation of action such as the theory of "face" (Goffman 1955, 1959, 1971, Brown & Levinson 1987), CA has worked to avoid premature and idealized theory construction in favor of the empirical identification of diverse structures of practices. The shift is one from an idealized and conceptually simplified model – "the structure" of social action (Parsons 1937) to a particularized and multiplex one – "structures" of social action (Atkinson & Heritage 1984). It is the accumulation of empirical findings about the multiplex practices organizing social action that forms an ever-expanding background against which further empirical advances have been made.

The Sequential Structure of Interaction

When it comes to actual analysis, the basic idea of CA "is so simple that it is difficult to grasp" (Arminen 2005: 2). CA consistently and insistently asks a single question about any action (or indeed any component of any action): *why that now?* And in response to this question CA examines what the action does in relation to the preceding action(s), and what it projects about the succeeding action(s).

From its inception, CA has been occupied with the analysis of the sequential organization of interaction. Underlying this notion are a number of fundamental ideas. First, turns at talk are context-shaped: they are overwhelmingly produced with an orientation to preceding talk, most commonly the immediately preceding talk (Sacks 1987, 1992, Schegloff & Sacks 1973). Speakers design their talk in ways that exploit this basic positioning, thereby exposing the fundamental role of sequential positioning as a resource for the production and understanding of their utterances (Schegloff 1984). Second, turns at talk are context-renewing: They ordinarily project the relevance of a particular "next" action, or range of next

actions, to be done by a subsequent speaker (Schegloff 1972). Finally, turns at talk are the building blocks of intersubjectivity: By the production of next actions, speakers show an understanding of a prior action and do so at a multiplicity of levels: for example, by an "acceptance", an actor can show an understanding that the prior turn was possibly complete, that it was addressed to them, that it was an action of a particular type (e.g., an invitation) and so on (Schegloff 1992c). CA methodology is premised on the notion that all three of these features – the grasp of a next action that a current one projects, the production of that next action, and its interpretation by the previous speaker – are methodically achieved by means of a set of socially shared procedures. CA analyses are thus analyses simultaneously of action, context management, and intersubjectivity, because all three of these features are simultaneously, if tacitly, the objects of the actors' actions.

Finally, the procedures that inform these activities are normative in that actors can be held morally accountable both for departures from their use and for the inferences which their use, or departures from their use, may engender. It was in the integration of these three themes that the separate ideas of Goffman and Garfinkel became fused into a single, powerful research program that crystallized into a clear set of empirical working practices which were applied, without exception, to tape recordings of naturally occurring interactions.

Conversation Analysis: Two Research Traditions

Most of the early work in conversation analysis focused on "ordinary conversation" – a term that has come to denote forms of interaction which are not confined to specialized settings or to the execution of particular tasks. Ordinary conversation is often defined negatively: wedding ceremonies are not ordinary conversation, legal proceedings in court are not ordinary conversation, though both adapt practices of talk and action from ordinary conversation and press them into service in these more specialized and restricted speech settings (Schegloff 1999). In contrast, the studies of "institutional talk" which began to emerge in the late 1970s focused on more restricted environments in which the goals of the participants are more limited and institution-specific, there are often restrictions on the nature of interactional contributions, and talk is understood in terms of institution- and activity-specific inferential frameworks (Drew & Heritage 1992).

Two general lines of research have developed from this starting point. The first, and original, research line developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson studies everyday conversational interaction as an institution in its own right. This research process involves identifying particular conversational practices; for example:

(2) Examples of Conversational Practices
Turn-initial address terms
(a) A: Mary, do you want another piece of cake?

Oh-prefaced responses to questions
(b) A: How are you feeling Joyce.
     B: Oh fi:ne.
     A: 'Cause- I think Doreen mentioned that you weren't so well?

Polarity in question design
(c) Doc: Are there any other concerns you want to discuss?

To be identified as a practice, a feature of talk must (1) be recurrent, (2) be specifically positioned within a turn or sequence (or both), and (3) have some specific interpretation, consequence or set of consequences. For example, turn-initial address terms are a basic means of selecting a next speaker to respond (Lerner 2003). Oh-prefacing responses to questions is a means of conveying that the question was inappropriate (Heritage 1998); note that in (b) the questioner reacts by *defending* the relevance of her question in the third turn. Polarity items like "some" or "any" in questions are elements of design that favor positive (some) and negative (any) responses relative to one another (Heritage, Robinson, Elliott, et al. 2007).

Practices like these are, in turn, involved in larger-scale elements of conversational organization. Turn-initial address terms are one of a set of ways in which a current speaker can select another to talk next (Lerner 2003). This set, in turn, is part of the turn-allocational arrangements which are a part of the turn-taking system for conversation (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974). Oh-prefacing responses to questions is a practice which is part of a set dealing with the relative claims to knowledge that speakers unavoidably register in their interactions (Heritage & Raymond 2005), and is part of the management of the epistemic relations between speakers (Heritage 2008). Polarity in question design is a part of the preference organization of interaction, through which actors privilege or favor certain actions over other alternatives, often in ways that maximize solidarity and minimize conflict (Heritage 1984b, 2008, Pomerantz 1984, Sacks 1987, Schegloff 2006, 2007).

In sum, the basic tradition of conversation analysis involves identifying particular conversational practices and pinning down their contexts of occurrence, their meanings and consequences, and their place within larger orders of conversational organization. The outcome of this research is an understanding of how basic social actions are produced and recognized, and how their production and recognition are located and shaped within the institution of interaction.

Institutional CA

In the second type of CA – institutional CA – research builds on these basic findings about the institution *of* talk as a means to analyze the operations of other social institutions *in* talk. There is an important shift in perspective here. One can study interaction between 911 emergency and callers as *conversation* by focusing on generic interactional matters, how they take turns, or how one action invites another to form interactional sequences. Or one can study this talk as *emergency call interaction* in particular, that is, as something shaped by the concerns and exigencies of the emergency service (Heritage 2005). Institutional CA takes this second approach.

Institutional CA first emerged with Atkinson and Drew's *Order in Court* (1979), a classic study of courtroom interaction. Atkinson and Drew were interested in how the specialized turn-taking system for courtroom interaction solved problems connected with the large number of people in the courthouse during a hearing. They examined how questions were produced by lawyers and heard by witnesses to be building up towards an accusation, and how defenses could anticipate and forestall this kind of build-up. In short, they were concerned with how the tasks and substance of court business are transacted through interaction. This involves a distinctive approach to interaction relative to basic CA. Interaction remains the focus of investigation but it is examined for how specific practices of talk embody or

connect with specific identities and institutional tasks. Over time, this perspective spread into studies of 911 emergency calls (Zimmerman 1984, 1992), classroom lessons (McHoul 1978), doctor–patient interaction (Heath 1986, ten Have 1991), news interviews (Heritage 1985, Greatbatch 1988, Clayman 1988) and an ever-widening range of social institutions and contexts (Boden & Zimmerman 1991, Drew & Heritage 1992).

In all this work, the same basic question – *why that now?* – was applied to the data. However, the analysis centered on how specific types of turns and actions were being implemented to achieve institutional objectives. For example, returning to our doctor–patient example, it is evident that at line 11 the doctor redirects the patient's attempts to respond to his question because he wants to arrive at a medically useful estimate of the frequency with which the patient consumes alcohol. The patient is finally brought to recognize this and supplies such a response at line 16. However the patient, for her part, is concerned to convey how she drinks and not merely how often: that she is a social drinker, and not one who drinks alone. And she deploys a specific practice – describing time in terms of biographical activities to achieve this end (Button 1990, Drew & Heritage 1992).

Ordinary Conversation and Institutional Talk

The boundaries between ordinary conversation and institutional talk can be surprisingly difficult to define (Schegloff 1999, Heritage 2005). However, the participants to interaction nonetheless make clear demarcations (Drew & Sorjonen 1997), as when doctors and patients orient to a dividing line between the pleasantries that may occur at the beginning of a medical visit and the "turn to business" which the doctor may initiate with "What's the problem?" (Robinson 1998, 2006). And, although the boundaries between institutional talk and ordinary conversation are not clearly fixed and demarcated, there are clear distinctions between classroom interaction, news interviews, mediation sessions, and medical visits on the one hand, and ordinary conversations between family, friends, and strangers on the other.

The relationship between ordinary conversation and institutional talk can be understood as that between an encompassing "master institution" and its more restricted local variants. Relative to the institution of conversation, the law courts, schools, news interviews, doctor–patient interactions, etc. are comparatively recent inventions that have undergone a great deal of change, some of it planned on an organized basis. Anyone who looks at news interviews from the 1970s or doctor–patient interactions of the same period will easily see major changes. Ordinary conversation, by contrast, exists, and is experienced as, prior to institutional interaction both in the life of the individual and the life of the society. Relative to institutional interaction, it is relatively stable: the interactional maneuvers in the plays of Shakespeare, sophisticated though some of them are, are perfectly intelligible to us four centuries later. The ordinary conversation of the 1970s does not look so very different from the interactions of today.

In addition to its stability, ordinary conversation encompasses a vast array of rules and practices, which are deployed in pursuit of every imaginable kind of social goal, and which embody an indefinitely large array of inferential frameworks. Institutional interaction, by contrast, generally involves a reduction in the range of interactional practices deployed by the participants, restrictions in the contexts they can be deployed in, and it frequently involves some specialization and respecification of the interactional relevance of the practices that remain (Drew & Heritage 1992).

Institutional Talk: Research Objectives

In its early development institutional CA focused on comparison. Treating the practices of ordinary conversation as primary, researchers asked how things were managed differently in particular institutional contexts (Schegloff 1991, 1992b). For example, it was clear that, in comparison with ordinary conversation, turn taking was managed completely differently in news interviews (and classrooms and courts). Some practices that are extremely common in ordinary conversation – for example, acknowledging an answer to a question with "oh" – are virtually nonexistent in many institutional contexts. From examples like this, it seemed that each institution might have a unique "fingerprint" of practices that contributed to the fulfillment of its unique tasks and which made it uniquely what it is. Although it has its limitations, this fingerprint idea is highly useful and we will explore it further in chapter 3.

But other interests have also been pursued within institutional CA. There is a concern with how particular institutional tasks are managed and discharged through talk, without regard for the similarities and differences to ordinary conversation. Indeed specific action choices can index particular institutional stances, ideologies and identities that are being enacted in the talk, as well as particular professional beliefs and institutional rules and guidelines (Heritage 2005). For example, health visitors open their first visits to young mothers in strikingly different ways depending on whether fathers are present. When the father is present, they open with questions about the name of the baby, or compliments about the baby's appearance. When the mother is on her own, they open in a different way – with a question about the mother's experience of labor, or her general health. Table 2.1 shows seven opening questions. In this situation, the health visitors are faced with distinctive and sometimes conflicting objectives (Heritage and Sefi 1992, Heritage & Lindström 1998, Heritage 2002a). On the one hand they want to establish a "befriending" relationship with the new mother, and to establish the basis on which the mother can feel able to turn to the health visitor for support in times of need. Beginning the relationship by sharing the mother's recent experience of the birth of her child is a virtually ideal vehicle for this, while also being a part of the medical fact gathering that the health visitor must engage in anyway. With the father present however, the health visitors can be concerned that such an intimate opening would shut out the father, and alienate his interest and support for the health visiting service.

Finally, institutional interactions have causes and consequences. Thus we can ask how the use of particular interactional practices matters for issues that lie "beyond the talk". These

Table 2.1   Health visitor openings

Father or "significant other" present	What you going to call he::r?	(HV 1)
	Lovely.=A little <u>bo:y</u>.=What are you ca:lling him.	(HV 4)
	.hhh She's <u>beau</u>:tiful isn't she.	(HV 4)
Father or "significant other" absent	Didju have an easy ti::me,	(HV 1)
	Anyway, what sort of time did you have?	(HV 3)
	How do you <u>fee</u>:l.	(HV 3)
	.hhh What sort of <u>t</u>ime did you <u>ha</u>:ve.	(HV 5)

Source: Heritage 2005

issues can concern causes: do external factors influence the deployment of interactional practices, or even give rise to the invention of new ones? As chapter 16 will show, the types of questions that are asked in presidential press conferences vary with a slew of economic and political factors. Similarly interactional practices have consequences: does the deployment of specific interactional practices influence the outcomes of interaction, for example decision making or attitudes? As chapter 11 shows, medical decision making is strongly influenced by specific features of interaction in the medical visit. And this research has direct practical applications: do particular interactional practices expedite or improve the effectiveness of particular activities and, if so, are there downside costs? In chapter 10, a study is described which shows that the wording of medical questions can drastically reduce the likelihood that patients will leave doctors' offices with problems that were not addressed, and that this can be achieved in visits taking the same length of time.

At this point, however, we have got ahead of ourselves. In the next chapter, we consider how interactional practices are deployed in connection with particular institutions.

For Further Reading

Erving Goffman's research is diverse and wide-ranging. His work on the interaction order is best represented by several papers: "On face work" (1955), "The neglected situation" (1964), "The interaction order" (1983), and "Felicity's condition" (1983). Two books – *Relations in Public* (1971) and *Forms of Talk* (1981) – add important additional content, and Goffman describes his perspective in a fascinating interview with Jef Verhoeven conducted in 1980 (Goffman 1993). Drew and Wootton (1987) have a strong collection of papers on Goffman's work: the contributions by Adam Kendon, Randall Collins, and Emanuel Schegloff are particularly useful.

There is quite a large literature on Harold Garfinkel. The tic-tac-toe experiment is reported in his "Trust" paper (Garfinkel 1963), and others of his experiments and demonstrations are reported in his *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), and *Ethnomethodology's Program* (2002). Eric Livingston (1987, 2008) provides two wonderful views of ethnomethodology in practice, and Heritage (1984b, 1987) gives an account of ethnomethodology in relation to sociological theory. Garfinkel's idea that rules are involved in recognizing and understanding action as well as shaping it is echoed in John Searle's distinction between constitutive and regulative rules (Searle 1969).

The formation of CA can be traced in the collected *Lectures on Conversation* by Harvey Sacks (1992). One of the most influential early published papers in CA was Schegloff and Sacks' "Opening up closings" (1973). Schegloff recalls this period in his Introduction to Sacks' collected lectures (Schegloff 1992a), and in a more recently published extended interview in a collection devoted to his research (Schegloff 2003).

3

Talking Social Institutions into Being

In this chapter, we will start to connect sequences of interaction with the social institutions in which they occur. The basis on which we will do so was established in the previous chapter. There we saw that, first, social actions are produced in a methodical fashion and that this methodicalness is very stable. Second, these methods are resources for both *producing* and *understanding* actions. This is essential. Persons use the methodic character of their actions to *produce* them so as to be *recognizable* in a particular way. Third, quite a lot of this methodicalness is based in social rules. These rules are mainly tacit and taken for granted, but they are shared between persons, and this too is essential. A person who does not know the rules of football cannot produce or recognize football actions. Such a person cannot play the game, or even watch a televised game and understand what's going on. The game of football depends on each and every player sharing a knowledge of its rules. Similarly in interaction, if we didn't have shared access to the rules, it would be impossible to produce and recognize conversational actions, or make inferences from them. Intelligible interactional conduct would be impossible.

Accordingly, as we go about analyzing interaction from the point of view of how it is methodically produced, we essentially spend our time asking "Why that now?" (why that action, why that word selection, why that hesitation, why that look, why that gesture, and so on, *now*). And we ask that question as a way into studying interaction, because that is the question the participants are always asking themselves as they navigate through their interactions with one another and build a social world together, and we want to find out how they are doing that. When you ask the question "Why that now?", you overcome the tendency to view interaction as familiar and "natural". At the same time, you very quickly come to see how *methodical* social interaction really is – how deeply it is based on methods of reasoning and action that the participants share. As we analyze their interaction, we are trying to figure out their reasoning as they ask, and answer, this question about one another. And we're going to find that they answer this question by looking at the logic that's built into the conduct of interaction.

This logic is shaped by work settings. The production and understanding of actions is shaped and adjusted by the circumstances and tasks of institutions, and by the fact that the interaction is produced by people who have specific identities, like doctor and patient, attorney and witness, journalist and interviewee, to live up to. Of necessity then, we need to take a view on the relationship between interactions and the contexts in which they are produced.