
DESCRIPTIONS OF DEVIANCE:
A STUDY IN MEMBERSHIP
CATEGORIZATION
ANALYSIS

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(1947 - 2014)

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Editors' Introduction

This book was the major project that Stephen Hester worked on in the last decade of his life. It was left unfinished when he died in April 2014. It is a study in Membership Categorization Analysis, in which this approach is applied to the analysis of talk in an educational setting in which 'descriptions of deviance' play a central role. In this Editors' Introduction, we discuss three matters: first, how *Descriptions of Deviance* came to be written and why it is being published as an online volume; second, Stephen's commitment to the approach taken in the book, Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA); thirdly, some background on Stephen's life and career.

About the Book

When Stephen became ill his goal was to complete this book in the time he had left. He had worked on it, intermittently and in between other projects, for more than twelve years. When it became clear that the rapid development of his illness made completing the book impossible he gave permission to ourselves, his long-time collaborators and friends, to take the drafts of the book and turn them into a publishable manuscript. This we have done, but before the reader turns to the book itself, we should perhaps explain why this was no simple task and describe how we went about it.

The book was left in an unfinished and uneven state – some chapters were more or less completed while others were quite fragmentary. Many of the chapters had various alternative drafts, sometimes with little indication about which was the preferred one. Stephen also rethought the overall structure of the book several times, so we were left with no definitive guide as to the order of the chapters. Roughly half the chapters were finished enough to stand as they are in our judgment, so we have done only minor editorial work on these. However, in several of the empirical, data-driven chapters the analyses had a "first-time-through" character to them. We were faced with a decision about how far to re-work these parts of the book. After much consideration, we decided that to engage in substantial 'improvement' of the analyses in these chapters – of the sort that would be required for the book to be commercially published - would go beyond our remit (and our promise to Stephen), since this would turn the book into a different animal from the one before you now. Therefore, we have opted for a 'minimalist' strategy; we have attempted to 'tidy up' these chapters while leaving the substance and character of the analyses intact. As regards chapter order, we have gone for a solution that seems to us to make the best sense of the topics addressed while acknowledging that, had Stephen lived to complete the book, it might well have had a different overall shape.

The data on which the book is based were collected by Stephen back in the 1980s, when he was teaching at the University of Northumbria in the UK. Influenced by Cicourel and Kitsuse's classic *The*

Educational Decision Makers, he obtained permission to sit in on, and to tape record, referral meetings in schools in a nearby Local Education Authority. These are meetings involving teachers and educational psychologists employed by the education authority, in which students presenting behavioural and learning problems in school are discussed with a view to them possibly being 'referred' for additional support by the Education Psychology Service. The talk deals in descriptions of the student and the problems he or she presents both within and outside of the classroom, descriptions which form the basis of assessments of the nature and extent of the student's 'deviance' and which are cast in categorial terms.

Stephen had published a number of earlier studies based on these materials (Hester, 1991; 1992; 2000; Hester and Eglin, 1997c). He decided around 2002 to write a book on categorization analysis, using the 'referrals' data corpus. Some of the analysis in these earlier articles, especially in his 1992 study "Recognizing References to Deviance in Referral Talk" (Watson and Seiler, 1992), can be found in modified form in this book.

In the subsequent years, as remarked above, he would spend periods working on it in between other projects. The book often would be put aside for six months or a year. On coming back to it, Stephen frequently found himself unsatisfied with the work he had done previously on a given topic and would make a fresh start, with the result that drafts proliferated.

What would the book have looked like if Stephen had lived and completed it to his own satisfaction? We cannot say for certain but the book as we present it here is, we believe, as close as we can come to the kind of book that he would have been content with.

Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA)

Membership Categorization Analysis was a central focus of Stephen Hester's work, throughout his career. Stephen considered himself an ethnomethodologist who was committed to the enterprise of revealing the unexamined ways in which the social activities that comprise the everyday commonsense world are actually accomplished in specific cases. He was hugely influenced and inspired by Harvey Sacks. The term 'membership categorization analysis' was first proposed by Eglin and Hester (1992) as a replacement for 'MCD analysis' (the term under whose rubric the distinctive categorial dimension of social life had been analysed during the 1970s and 1980s). The reasons for this proposal were not merely aesthetic, nor were they name-changing for its own sake; they were that 'MCD analysis' privileged the analysis of membership categorization devices, and whilst this privileging acknowledged the originality of Sacks's notion of category collections, it obscured the fact that whilst membership categories always belong to some collection and whilst their intelligibility depends crucially on their membership in a collection, it is also equally the case that category collections are dependent for their intelligibility upon which categories they collect together. If neither collections nor categories are intelligible without the other, then a term which recognized this fact seemed appropriate to say the least, hence the term 'membership

categorization analysis' as a term which covered the full range of categorization practices without giving priority to any particular concept or practice. Hester and Eglin (1997b: 3) described the scope, range and focus of membership categorization analysis as follows:

The use of membership categories, membership categorization devices and category predicates by members, conceptualized as lay and professional social analysts, in accomplishing (the sociology of) 'naturally occurring ordinary activities.' MCA directs attention to the locally used, invoked and organized 'presumed common-sense knowledge of social structures' which members are oriented to in the conduct of their everyday affairs, including professional sociological inquiry itself.

In other words, 'analysis,' in 'membership categorization analysis,' refers both to members' use of categories, devices and predicates in their talk and to professional ethnomethodological studies of such use.

Stephen Hester's Life and Career

Stephen was born in Romford, Essex and attended the University of Kent, where he received his B.A. and PhD in sociology. As a researcher at the Department of Education, University of Manchester for two years, he worked with David Hargreaves and Frank Mellor on a study of secondary education that was published in 1975 as *Deviance in Classrooms*. He lectured at the University of Northumbria for ten years, before emigrating to Canada to teach at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario. On his return to the UK in 1991, he took up a position at Bangor University, Wales, where he remained until his retirement in 2009, as Senior Lecturer, then Reader, and finally Professor of Sociology.

Over the course of his career Stephen wrote or co-wrote over forty journal articles and book chapters and wrote, co-wrote or co-edited eight books. Together with Dave Francis, he was Series Editor of a major book series: Ashgate's *Directions in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*. Almost without exception, in the topics addressed and the approach taken to those topics, Stephen's research output displayed his commitment to Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis. His primary focus throughout his career was working with conversational data. In this respect Stephen was a committed empiricist – in the best sense of that term. If an issue did not impact on how one deals with data, then, for him, it was of secondary relevance. His firm belief was that ethnomethodology is the only sociological position consistent with a rigorous empirical approach. Indeed, in his collaborations with each of us there were occasions when it seemed that he lived not only his professional life but his whole life according to ethnomethodology. In some weird way it was not just that he practised the sub-discipline, it was rather that *it* inhabited *him*. He was

always finding the locally ordered, relationally configured and reflexively constituted sense of the course of his own life.

It is not possible to convey adequately here what might be called “Steve’s way.” But an intimation of it was afforded by a chance moment in his spacious office in Bangor when one of us spent a term there in 1994. Some students came by wanting to know how to write up observations for an interactionist ethnographic paper they were doing for a course. Rather than giving a set of instructions, he had one of the students read out some of the observations they had made, while he asked them what social phenomenon they thought the observations were evidence of. He then turned to the computer and typed a title next to the margin, say, ‘methods of concealing dope dealing,’ followed by two to three sentences describing the phenomenon in general terms based on what the students said, followed by two indented, single-spaced, field notes they reported. Then he repeated the procedure for a second phenomenon and, lo, an incipient sociological ethnography of the interactionist sort appeared on the screen before their very eyes. It was possibly the finest bit of sociology teaching one of us had ever witnessed.

Collaborating with Steve was exhilarating. He combined analytic enthusiasm with deliberate, critical exposition. His bursts of analytic fervour were leavened with the patient stating and re-stating of the point to be conveyed. The interrogative élan he brought to his inquiries was at once their strength and their weakness. Steve was always beginning again. It somehow fitted with his way of living ethnomethodology. He left it for others to do the closings.

Peter Eglin & Dave Francis

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Chapter One

Ethnomethodology, Sociology and Deviance

Introduction

This book is about 'descriptions of deviance'. The approach to this topic is an ethnomethodological one (Garfinkel 1967, 2002; Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970) and more specifically that genre of ethnomethodological and conversation analytic studies now known as membership categorization analysis. Ethnomethodology, as will be explained in this chapter, invites a respecification of deviance as a *members' phenomenon*. The invitation involves understanding and approaching deviance as situated action, members' phenomena of local order production, accomplished for practical purposes. Such a respecification potentially opens up an enormous field of ethnomethodological inquiries, one whose adequate cultivation would vastly exceed the scope and capacity of this book. Consequently, the focus of analytical attention here is specifically on one particular topic, a collection of topics, namely the methods of, or conversational objects for, describing deviance. Aspects of this practical methodology include persons' assembly of descriptions with various descriptive resources, their selection of descriptions according to various considerations, including the recipient(s) of the descriptions, their design of descriptions and their use of them in relation to the accomplishment of particular social actions.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part consists of an introduction to ethnomethodology's interest in description. The second part comprises a discussion of the key differences between ethnomethodology and sociology with respect to deviance. In the third part, the data and research sites from which they were obtained are identified. The particular ethnomethodological approach used in analysing the data presented in later chapters, namely membership categorization analysis, will be discussed in chapter two, together with fuller explication of the notion of 'descriptions of deviance'.

Ethnomethodology and Description

As the opening page of Garfinkel's (1967) opus indicates, the key feature of an ethnomethodological approach is that social phenomena are made *accountable* phenomena. As Garfinkel (1967: 1) puts it:

The following studies seek to treat practical activities, practical circumstances, and practical sociological reasoning, as topics of empirical study, and by paying to the most commonplace activities of daily life the attention usually accorded extraordinary events, seek to learn about them as phenomena in their own right. Their central recommendation is that the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings "account-able."

From this point of view, ethnomethodology *respecifies* the problem of social order as a *members'* phenomenon and eschews theoretical explanations for a focus on the concrete and situated orderlinesses of ordinary activities. The world of everyday life, the ordinary society, *is* for the members of society in the sense that what goes on in it is intelligible, recognizable and understandable *for the members*. There is indeed 'order in the plenum'. How could it be otherwise? If the members of society were unable to recognize ordinary social activities and types or categories of person, if they were unable to understand the meanings of words and the actions being done in talk through their use, then social life would not be possible. Similarly, if the members of society did not know how to talk and produce actions that were understandable as the kind of talk and action intended then coordinated social life would be extraordinarily difficult to achieve. The point is that the everyday world is *already* orderly before the sociologist arrives on the scene. The sociologist may only be interested in discovering the theoretical order of things, an order unseen and behind the backs of the members of society, yet meanwhile, ordinary folk are busy doing the ordinary things of everyday life and recognizing them as having been done and acting accordingly. It is this 'people's order' – the order in the plenum – or what Livingston (1995) refers to as the 'ordinary society' or the 'witnessable order' - the order presupposed yet unacknowledged by professional sociology that is the focus of ethnomethodological attention. The topic that drives ethnomethodological inquiry is then: how is this people's order, the local, situated orderliness of the ordinary society produced, achieved and understood by the members of society?

Garfinkel, of course, was not simply issuing elegant reminders that the local orders of everyday life were practical achievements, and that that such reminders can now be incorporated into sociological theory. He was recommending a radical research programme into a hitherto unexplored domain. According to Heritage's authoritative account of Garfinkel's work, Garfinkel was 'building from scratch the case for the role of language in the constitution of social relations and social reality' (Heritage, 1984:

136). Central to the case being built was an interest in description. As Heritage (1984) points out, Garfinkel built his case initially in connection with 'indexical expressions' by examining how conversational utterances are interpreted (Garfinkel, 1967: 24-31), by looking at the management of description in a variety of sociological studies (Garfinkel, 1967: 11-24; 1967f, 1967g). As the history of the sometimes acrimonious relationship between sociology and ethnomethodology reveals, these studies of processes of contextual determination and elaborative inference which are necessarily involved in any process of description proved controversial. However, it is important to recognise that Garfinkel was not being critical. Rather, his observations were used by him to recommend a research programme directed at how various types of social activity are brought to adequate description and thus rendered accountable. From Garfinkel's point of view, his observations on descriptive accounting 'represent a point of entry into a whole range of investigations into domains which had previously been overlooked including, most immediately, the detailed organization of practical reasoning in social interaction and the bases of institutional fact production' (Heritage, 1984: 136).

Although Garfinkel focused for the most part on description in the context of sociological studies in his book, once attention was shifted away from such methodological matters, the full scope of this domain can be appreciated. This can be readily seen through the recollection that Heritage (1984: 136) makes:

during a substantial proportion of their daily lives, ordinary members of society are engaged in descriptive accountings of states of affairs to one another. Discussions of the weather, depictions of goods and services, assessments of character and reports of the day's doings are the routine stock in trade of mundane talk.

Furthermore,

... the social world, indeed what counts as social reality itself, is managed, maintained and acted upon through the medium of ordinary description. For many occupations and agencies – including medical personnel, police, lawyers, welfare workers, accountants, journalists, insurance agents, loss adjusters, estimators, technicians and scientists – a concern for adequate description is a central preoccupation.

However, despite its ubiquity, the management and organization of ordinary descriptions had not yet been the focus of sustained sociological interest. Until Garfinkel's initiatives, the properties of ordinary social interaction in and through which events in the real world are described, sorted and classified remained largely unexplored. Yet clearly, although neglected by sociology, description is a ubiquitous phenomenon in social life. Heritage (1984) attributes this lack of interest (in sociology) to the dominance of a 'representative' view of language (and in philosophy and the social sciences more generally). This view holds that language 'represented' something, for example, culture or ideology that could then be

used to explain social action. In contrast, ethnomethodology viewed language as a resource for accomplishing and making action accountable. As already indicated, the case for this focus on language use as action was built initially on the indexical and reflexive character of descriptive accountings. His studies pointed to how the meaning of any description is contextually informed and elaborated, how phenomena are brought to 'adequate' description and thus made 'accountable' and how those accounts or accountings are then reflexive (i.e. constitutive) features of the phenomena they describe.

If Garfinkel's initiatives drew attention to the importance of the phenomena of description, there remained the question of establishing a programme of ethnomethodological inquiries that investigated it. To quote Heritage (1984: 137) again, the key point is that 'such [descriptive] talk is *somehow* done seriously, realistically and as a feature of real practical tasks with significant outcomes for the parties concerned. Yet *how* is it done? There was no apparent answer.' Except, of course, whilst Garfinkel was developing his initiatives, Sacks was inventing conversation analysis, arguably, at least at its inception, a variety of ethnomethodology for which the phenomenon of description was pivotal. The discussion of Sacks's work will be taken up in chapter two. For the moment, this chapter will proceed to outline the differences between sociological and ethnomethodological approaches to deviance.

Ethnomethodology, Sociology and Deviance

Anyone familiar with the sociology of deviance, criminology and the sociology of social problems in recent decades will know that there have been some major debates about, and some significant shifts in, theoretical orientation and methodological preference (see Downes and Rock and others for suitable overviews). The challenge to positivism and functionalism in the 1960s and 1970s, the debates between the critical structuralists and interpretivist approaches during the 1970s and 1980s, the resurgence of positivism and correctionalism in the form of administrative criminology during the 1990s, and then the emergence of cultural criminology are just some of the major shifts in orientation in the last half a century.¹ A thorough review of these debates and shifts is beyond the scope of this book (cf. Downes and Rock (2011) and Maguire, Morgan and Reiner (2012)) but several of their features will be mentioned in order to advance the argument presented here. Thus, whilst these shifts in theoretical perspective, at least from within, may have appeared groundbreaking, the key point from an ethnomethodological point of view is that they nevertheless exhibit a fundamental continuity. As Button (1991) has pointed out with respect to the wider field of sociology, theoretical debate and development including the emergence of new and ostensibly radical sociological perspectives, have served primarily to conserve the fundamentally *theoretical* orientation of sociology, such that the stable foundations of the discipline remain undisturbed. This is exhibited in a disinterest in members' orientations to deviance. Sociology's interest in deviance remains driven by theory rather than inspired by the wonders of members' accomplishments.

Furthermore, as in sociology more generally, it is assumed with respect to deviance that there is no order in the plenum in the multitudinous doings of everyday life, in the melange of ordinary society. The understandings of the ordinary members of society about the social worlds in which they live are regarded as partial at best, spurious misunderstandings at worst. There is, of course, no reason for despondency here. Despite this impoverishment of everyday understanding, the sociologist can be sustained by the knowledge that there is an underlying order that can be revealed by the special methodological practices and theoretical applications of the profession. If everyday understandings are treated seriously at all, it is because they are gateways to an order that lies beyond and behind them. As already indicated, it is assumed in the representative view that everyday language is but the superficial expression of deeper structures of order, describable in and as of the concepts and theories of sociological discourse, such as ideology, culture and structural position. There are, of course, deep ironies here in so far it is impossible to see how sociologists could carry on their professional work without themselves being irremediably immersed in the world of everyday life.

In order to illustrate this argument, it is instructive to consider the fundamental bifurcation of the sociology of deviance and social problems (Maynard, 1988) between a 'realist' (or objectivist) approach on the one hand and a 'social constructionist' approach on the other, notwithstanding occasional (and allegedly misguided (Pollner, 1974, 1978, 1987) attempts to combine the two, for example, Becker (1963), nor their ostensible reconciliation in the work of Pollner (1987) himself. The key point is that whatever the differences of approach may be both within and between realism and social constructionism, for present purposes it is their similarities which are the most significant. Both are *theoretical* conceptions of deviance and, furthermore, both take an *ironic* stance toward their subject matter. For the realist, this theoretical conception concerns the social conditions out of which deviance springs: strain, cultural diversity, situational opportunity, late capitalism, post-modernity and such-like. The 'orderliness' of deviance is to be found in the relations of the theoretically specified conditions and the objective realities of their occurrence and distribution. In contrast, for the social constructionist, the orderliness of deviance is to be found in theoretically specified (and then empirically documented) 'social processes' of reality construction, deviance attribution, moral entrepreneurship, status degradation, claims-making, and labelling through which deviance is 'constructed' as a social reality. In addition, if realism and social constructionism are united in their commitment to a theoretical vision of deviance, so also are they allies in a commitment to an ironic conception of it. Thus, both realism and social constructionism subscribe to the standard sociological practice of distinguishing the analyst (theorist) and the (ordinary) member of society, a pragmatic distinction which then affords analytical leverage for sociological accounts of deviance that are different from and independent of members' understandings and orientations (Bogen and Lynch, 1993: 84). From such an ironic point of view, whatever the members of society may think and whatever they may believe about what they are doing, the analyst is afforded a methodological license

to show what the members of society are *really* doing and what is *really* happening, the members of society's *own* orientations and understandings notwithstanding. In this regard, sociological and criminological studies of whatever hue repeatedly take as their point of departure a 'common-sense view' and subject it to critical examination.ⁱⁱ It is hardly surprising, then, that the common-sense view is invariably found to be deficient and the sociological account of the topic found to be the correct or more adequate one. The result is that sociology's findings are confirmed as corrective of what ordinary persons (allegedly) think and believe. The ironic commitment, then, is to the view that while common sense can inform us about how the world 'seems' from a naive standpoint, only sociology, by virtue of its superior methodological and theoretical approach, can inform us about how it actually is.

This ironicism is evident in realism's stance that no matter what persons may think, for example, about the distribution of deviance, the truth is something quite different from these merely subjective opinions. On the basis of the assumption that there is some objective and in principle measurable amount of deviance in society, the realist can argue not only that there is a 'dark figure' of deviance which is much greater than that contained in official measures but also that the public's fears and estimates of deviance are incorrect - that is, they are not symmetrical with an analytically and objectively established 'reality' of deviance. Common-sense conceptions of deviance can therefore be denigrated by the realist as *misconceptions* and the argument can be run that the general public is misguided and mistaken in its fear and apprehension. The social constructionist is equally ironic. On the premise that crime *is* a social construction it can be argued that what are oriented to as 'facts' by the members of society (for example, rates of 'real' crime are rising or falling, certain types and instances of behaviour are deviant) are *in actual fact* ideological fictions, socially constructed *artefacts* of, for example, the application of interpretations, definitions and judgements, the use of assumptions about the reality of deviance and guilt and innocence thereof, and the various claims-making activities in and through which conceptions of deviance are articulated and eventually sedimented as moral and legal structures. Whatever persons may think they are doing, such as responding mundanely to a real world with real objective features, they are actually doing what the social constructionist says they are doing, that is to say, constructing or at least contributing to the construction of that real world.

In contrast to this theoretical and ironic view of deviance in realism and social constructionism, for ethnomethodology deviance is not a matter about which any *theoretical stance* needs to be or should be taken (Hester and Francis, 1996). In terms of the debate between realism and social constructionism, the upshot is that the problematics for realism and social constructionism are eschewed at the outset. Alternately, then, whether deviance is oriented to as something real or something that reflects a process of social construction (or something else entirely) is not a matter for theoretical stipulation and explanation. It is, rather, a matter for members and hence *discoverable* in how members talk about and take action towards those who may be, from their points of view, deviant. Consequently, because it examines

deviance as *members' phenomena*, ethnomethodology seeks to analyse and describe the ways in which concerns with deviance inform *members'* locally ordered practical action and practical reasoning. Its aim is to describe the mundane practices in and through which persons are oriented to issues of what is deviant and engage in its 'analysis' in the course of such activities as reporting, describing, questioning, interpreting, deciding, explaining and formulating the consequences of what is or is not deviant. If there is analysis to be done, it is analysis of, and grounded in, members' analysis. In short, its interest is in members' descriptions of deviance: their accomplishment, their uses, their properties and their organization.

The Descriptive Accountability of Deviance

It was mentioned earlier that the opening page of Garfinkel's (1967) opus indicates that the key feature of an ethnomethodological approach is that social phenomena are *accountable* phenomena. Accountability is a two-sided coin, and as such the recommendation in this book is that an ethnomethodological approach suggests two avenues of inquiry. On the one hand, as regards those who engage in 'deviant' activities, the accountability consists of what may be termed the accomplished intelligibility of their activities, the recognizable ways in and through which whatever kind of deviant activity is made accountable as just the instantiated category of deviance it is. On the other, given that the identification of 'deviance' involves third parties, almost always ones with an official standing of some kind, there is the question of how those who identify and respond to deviance decide what unacceptable action is involved and therefore what their response to and treatment of it should be. With reference to the first issue, we can note that that for the thief, the drug user, the rioter, the looter, adulterer, dangerous driver, corrupt official, murderer and liar, for example, the accountable character of their activities consists in just how such activities are produced endogenously such that they are recognizable and intelligible *as* theft, drug use, rioting, looting, adultery, dangerous driving, official corruption, murder and lying, from within these activities. The accomplishment of these activities is, then, a question of local and situated cultural competence, of the methodical and sensible production of activities and of the locally achieved orderliness or 'missing whatness', the *haecceities*, of deviant activities (Garfinkel, 1991; Garfinkel and Weider, 1992).ⁱⁱⁱ

With respect to this avenue of inquiry, there is, of course, a longstanding, if not always ethnomethodologically inspired, ethnographic tradition in the sociology of deviance which resonates with this ethnomethodological interest in the missing haecceities of deviant activities. Whilst pre-war 'Chicago' school studies are usually cited in this regard, more notable but somewhat neglected studies in this ethnographic tradition include, for example, Becker (1963, 1964), Blumer (1967), Carey (1968), Cressey (1973), Finestone (1957), Klockars (1974), Lemert (1967), Letkeman (1973), Lindesmith (1968),

Matza (1964, 1969), Polsky (1969), Smith (1969), Sorfleet (1976), Stoddart (1974), Sutter (1966) and Zimmerman and Wieder (1974). Like the earlier 'classic' studies of the Chicago sociologists, there is indeed massively interesting material in these works, even if they do not quite measure up methodologically to the standards set by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that these studies were not nearly naturalistic enough. This can be illustrated by considering what Matza (1969) refers to as the 'archetype' of humanist naturalism, namely Becker's (1953) classic '*Becoming a marihuana user*' and the equally creditable (Becker 1967), '*History, culture and subjective experience*'. Insightful as these may be when compared to non-naturalistic studies, they nevertheless failed to grasp that far from requiring a *sociological theory* of drug effects, what was required was an understanding of the members' own 'theories' and understandings of the production of drug effects. Stoddart's (1974) exemplary work on the 'local pharmacology' of LSD use was an early initiative in this regard, as was the contribution of Wieder and Zimmerman (1974). However, even these attempts to be as naturalistic as possible necessarily suffered from the following critique from Sacks. Speaking of the classic Chicago ethnographies, he writes (1992a: 27):

My own relation to that stuff [ethnography] is fairly tangential in some ways. Instead of pushing aside the older ethnographic work in sociology, I would treat it as the only work worth criticizing in sociology, where criticizing is giving some dignity to something. So, for example, the relevance of the works of the Chicago sociologists is that they do contain a lot of information about this and that. And this-and-that is what the world is made up of. The difference between that work and what I'm trying to do is, I'm trying to develop a sociology where the reader has as much information as the author, and can reproduce the analysis. If you ever read a biological paper it will say, for example, "I used such-and-such which I bought at Joe's drugstore." And they tell you just what they do, and you can pick it up and see whether it holds. You can re-do the observations. Here, I'm showing my materials and others can analyse them as well, and it's much more concrete than the Chicago stuff tended to be.

The central point here, then, is that whilst the commitment to observing social life in its natural habitat is the same, it is the nature of the data acquired through such inquiry that is the key to the difference between ethnomethodological 'ethnography' and that of the traditional sociological and anthropological kind. For the latter, data consisted of observations, assembled into 'field notes', which were then analysed and presented as 'findings'. In this process, as Atkinson and Drew (1979) pointed out many years ago, the actual events that were witnessed and then 'recorded' as field notes, were largely lost from view. With the exception of studies focused on 'texts' of some sort, the reader of the analyst's report could not access the data with a view to assessing the report's veracity. It was in order, at least in

part, to solve this problem that Sacks began his studies in conversation analysis. As he put it, it was not out of any great interest in language as such that he embarked upon the study of ordinary conversation but rather because ordinary conversation, as a social activity and as a particular sort of data, allowed the researcher to *record* it as it naturally occurred. Those recordings could then be transcribed and included in the analyst's report. Naturally occurring social interaction could therefore be preserved as far as possible as well as investigated. With technological advances in types of recording equipment, other kinds of data besides talk could also be investigated naturalistically. Through such methods, the naturalistic study of deviant activities may therefore be placed upon a much firmer methodological foundation, whilst at the same time avoiding recourse to 'theory' as its *raison d'être*. Arguably in this case, then, the notion of respecification delivers the analyst into situated social worlds wherein theft, violence, gang warfare, and the rest are everyday, ordinary occurrences, just like any other and may be legitimately and seriously studied with the same kind of ethnomethodological scrutiny as any other social activity.^{iv} If Garfinkel's later advice, given under the auspices of the 'unique adequacy of methods' (see Lynch 1993 for extended discussion) to 'become the phenomenon' through a process of immersion in order to fully understand and practice the social activity in question, for example by training to be a lawyer, a long distance lorry driver, a physicist or a physician, is followed, then there will inevitably arise major legal, moral and ethical dilemmas when it comes to illegal forms of deviance that might put the researcher and others at risk.

If one side of the coin of accountability leads the ethnomethodologist to investigate the missing whatness of deviant activities, the other side leads to the question of how persons make deviance accountable in the ways that that they make sense of it. This second avenue of inquiry concerns how for those who witness, report and take action toward someone else's deviance, the accountability of deviance consists in, and as of, how it is made sense *of*. It opens up for inquiry the entire range of 'analytical' and 'professional' interests in the sociology of deviance – its classification, distribution, variation, causation, motivation, history, and control – for respecification as members' phenomena and as situated activities of practical action and practical reasoning. Deviance is made accountable in the ways in which it is interpreted and talked about; in other words, deviance is made available and is constituted in its *description*. The question for research is: are there distinctive methods for describing deviance as such? The focus is on how is deviance described and made available to others. Furthermore, as will be shown, an answer to this question entails the recognition that persons do not *merely* describe, they do not engage in descriptive activities for their own sake; rather, their descriptions are selective, produced for practical purposes and as practical action, and they are recipient designed.

Before proceeding, it is worth acknowledging that it may have occurred to the reader that this emphasis on making sense of, and describing deviance, bears some semblance to earlier work in symbolic interactionism, phenomenological approaches to deviance and to the contributions made under the auspices of the 'labelling perspective' (for example, Becker 1963; Bittner 1963; Cicourel and Kitsuse 1963;

Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor 1975; Sudnow 1965; see also the excellent 'classic' collections by Cressey and Ward, 1969 and by Rubington and Weinberg, 2002). Clearly, in so far as there is a shared interest in how persons make sense of deviance, that is, make it accountable, there is some discernible continuity. However, such continuity is actually quite superficial and to make too much of it would be to misunderstand the nature of ethnomethodological and conversation analytic interest in these topics. The key point is that on close inspection, 'labelling accounts' reveal an overwhelming pre-occupation with generalised descriptions of cultures of understanding, often elicited from interviews in the field, allegedly brought to bear upon interactional scenes. Yet, for the most part (the 'vignette' notwithstanding) analyses grounded in accessible and actual real-time talk-in-interaction are just not available to back up analytical claims that 'this' is how it is done (for a noteworthy exception to this, see Gill and Maynard 1995).

This, then, is what it means to respecify deviance as a members' phenomenon. Deviance is here respecified as 'descriptions of deviance'. It is to return the concept of deviance to the members themselves and to investigate how they make it accountable, either in the local and situated instances of 'deviant' activities or in describing and analysing it. As indicated, it is the second of these two possible avenues of inquiry that is pursued in this book. If deviance is made available in its description, then the question becomes: what do these descriptions consist of? How are they done? What sorts of descriptions are we talking about here? What kinds of things are used to do the describing? These are the sorts of question that motivate ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. That is to say, apart from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis very little attention has been paid to this topic. If deviance is made available in its description the question then becomes: how, and what resources are used to do this?

On the face of it, then, the idea of an ethnomethodological respecification is a fairly straightforward one. There is, then, deviance in ordinary society. The order of things is not limited to that which the professional sociologist or criminologist may find and establish. The ordinary members of society have their own ideas about deviance, and these will be a constitutive part of how they relate to it, providing some of the raw material that the professional sociologist comes to deal with. The straightforwardness of this conception, however, should not mislead the researcher who is intent on discovering worlds of deviance *from within*. It might be thought that if one wants to capture the 'members' point of view' then all one has to do is *ask* them what they think. This, however, raises serious methodological problems, alluded to earlier when the dominance of the 'representative' view in sociology was discussed. Unlike much of sociology, ethnomethodology is committed to studying and preserving the naturalness of social life. It seeks not to ask people *about* their social lives but to investigate those social lives as they naturally occur. This requires research methods that both preserve and allow access to social life as it naturally occurs in the settings of its ordinary occurrence. Surveys, interviews and other methods that treat the members of society as informants about their own practices will, by their very

nature, divert attention from the natural realities of social life. In short, to study deviance as a naturally occurring members' phenomenon, the researcher must find ways to observe it in its natural setting and to collect data on it that preserve its naturally occurring character. At this point, then, the discussion will turn to the data used in this research and the setting from which they were obtained.

The Research Setting

A respecified concept of deviance involves a view of deviance as a members' phenomenon, that is to say, what deviance is for members of society, not all members of society at once but some particular persons on some specific occasions in some specific site. This is because social action takes place in real time in real settings, where those things can matter to the members. Social life does not, after all, really take place in a decontextualised world. Sites which permit a respecification of professional sociology's and criminology's ideas are called 'perspicuous'. In keeping with the principles, policies and practices of ethnomethodology, the focus of the research reported here is, of course, not on descriptions in general but on the local specificities of a corpus of instances of naturally occurring descriptive talk-in-interaction obtained in one particular setting, using methods of participant observation, audio-tape recording and transcription.^v Of course, the descriptive resources themselves may, in some senses, be context-free, but their usage is inexorably context-sensitive. Furthermore, the demonstration that some set of methodological resources is in general use or has in fact been deployed at all, is only achievable via an inspection of particular situated instances of talk-in-interaction. Accordingly, then, a specific setting was chosen for study and a collection of instances of descriptive talk were obtained.

Descriptions of deviance are produced in many different settings, including calls to the police (Zimmerman, 1992), courtrooms (Drew, 1978, 1985, 1992; Pollner, 1974, 1978, Pomerantz, 1986, 1987), police interrogations (Watson, 1983, 1990, Wowk, 1984), emergency helplines (Baker, Emmison and Firth, 2005), congressional hearings (Halkowski, 1990; Lynch and Bogen, 1996), family environments (Hester and Hester, 2010), schools and classrooms (Macbeth, 1990, 1991), and playgrounds (Butler, 2008), to name just a few. Similarly, they may be found in any place where the participants in some activity are oriented to the rule-governed character of such activities. Consequently, descriptions of deviance might be studied virtually anywhere, not least in the traditional contexts of deviance and social control favoured by sociologists of deviance and criminologists.

In the research reported here, the setting is one which is known in the UK as the 'referral meeting', involving teachers and educational psychologists, where children who have been referred from schools under the auspices of the UK Government's Department of Education's *Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice* to the *Special Educational Needs Assessment Service* (previously, the Psychological Service) are described and plans made regarding remedial intervention. Similar educational arrangements are

operative in many other countries. In the USA, for example, such referrals are made under the *Individuals and Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), whilst in Canada it is a matter for each Province. In British Columbia, for example, the equivalent of the UK *Code of Practice* is Ministry of Education's Special Education Services' *Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines* (2013), whilst in Ontario referrals are made under the *Ontario Education Amendment Act* (1980), more commonly known as Bill 82. The Australian Association of Special Education (AASE)'s practices are informed by the *Disability Standards for Education* (2005), and similar arrangements are in place in New Zealand. Each European country makes its own particular, if similar, organizational provision.

Referral meetings constitute an especially perspicuous setting for the analysis of descriptions of deviance because such descriptions are so central and pivotal to what is being done there.^{vi} By initiating a referral the school sets in motion a sequence of events, a proper diagnostic procedure. This sequence begins with the setting up of a referral meeting. The term referral meeting projects both the purpose of the encounter and the kind of talk that will take place. In overall terms, the encounter is informed by a diagnostic orientation: what is the nature of the problem and what appropriate steps should be taken in dealing with it? There are a number of elements involved in the diagnostic procedure that takes place in the referral meeting. A first is the identification of the referral(s) to be discussed. The second is the alignment of the speakers in speaker identities. The third is the sequence of discussion, from description to discussion of next moves. All parties to the encounter are aware that the purpose of the meeting is to consider the problems that a child (or several children) present(s), problems which are of such a kind and magnitude that the referring school has decided warrant assistance from the School Psychological Service (SPS).

Clearly, then, schools cannot refer just 'anyone'. They are obliged to refer only those for whom intervention by the School Psychological Service (SPS) can be heard as a reasonable and rational, for all practical purposes, course of action to take in response to the referral. In the UK, under the *Code of Practice*, the regulations are that referrals should only be made to the SPS once the case has already passed through two previous in-school stages of assessment, namely: (1) assessment by the classroom teacher that the child has special educational needs/a problem; and (2) the school's special educational needs coordinator (senco) has assessed the child. (As it happens, the 'process' is not quite as formal as the official *Code of Practice*. There are often informal and preparatory discussions held prior to the stage when the referral becomes an administratively recorded subject of a referral meeting. In such informal discussions, issues of parental approval for the referral may be raised and notification of the upcoming referral indicated.) Furthermore, whilst the act of referral, *tout court*, may legitimately be heard to implicate such intervention, by itself it will be insufficient to set the institutional wheels in motion, so to speak. For this to happen, the referral must be described in such a way that it can then be heard accountably as a *prime facie* case for such institutionally-provided-for intervention on the part of the educational

psychologist. Accordingly, the description of referrals in referral meetings affords an opportunity to investigate the selection and design of descriptions of deviance for their interactional utility, specifically their elicitation of professional help from the SPS.

The Data Corpus

A corpus of twenty-four referral meetings, each lasting on average about one hour, were observed, tape-recorded and transcribed over a two-year period.^{vii} Generally speaking, although the specific reasons for a referral differ from case to case, the main objective from the school personnel's point of view is to enlist the expertise, support and help of the educational psychologist in doing something about, and in devising ways of dealing with, the referred child and the problems for the school (and sometimes the family who may have requested the school to refer a child) that he or she presents. According to the *Code of Practice* for the educational management of children's deviance under the rubric of their special educational needs, the referral of a child to the School Psychological Service may occur when efforts within a school to control and remedy problems of deviance have been exhausted. A legally enforceable statement of the child's special educational needs may then eventually be issued, depending on the outcome of an educational psychologist's assessment of the child's problem(s), negotiations with the Local Education Authority about resource allocation and other contingent and interactional matters. From a teacher's first impressions of a child's problems to the eventual issue of a statement, the process comprises a long road of descriptive events, one whose cumulative constituent details remain largely unaddressed and unanalysed in both educational and sociological literatures.^{viii} Nevertheless, such length means that it is beyond the scope of the detailed analytic attention required for an ethnomethodological understanding of the local production of the events comprising it. Instead, then, and as already indicated, the focus here is restricted to some instances of one particular event, the first referral meeting where teachers describe in referred children to the educational psychologist for the first time and in detail.^{ix} Other events must await further research.^x

A note on Speaker Identification

In the data extracts from referral meetings that are quoted in the subsequent chapters of this book, speaker identities are as follows: 'Ep' refers to the Educational Psychologist; 'T' to the classroom teacher (of the child under discussion); 'Mt' to a male teacher; 'Ft' to a female teacher; 'Ht' to the Head teacher; 'Sw' to a school social worker.

Conclusion

In sum, then, as with other sociological concepts, an ethnomethodological approach to deviance entails its respecification as a members' phenomenon, that is, as a situated, oriented to and accomplished social fact of language use and social interaction. A respecified concept of deviance (a) dissolves back into the practices in and through which 'it' is described and thereby made available and (b) provides for the investigation and analysis of the organization and uses of such descriptions in situated action by members, rather than being allocated a role in a sociological theory of deviance. In speaking of 'deviance', then, what follows is addressed to how persons are described as having broken rules, departed from norms, failed to live up to normative expectations, etc. At the end of this chapter, it can be said that the site in question is a perspicuous one in two senses. First, it permits an investigation into the role of description, and second into the use of membership categorization work, because MCA is central to this descriptive work. That is, insofar as it has been indicated that descriptions are selections from alternatives, then MCA is the proper focus of study. One could look at sequential or mundane aspects of this descriptive work, but here the focus is on MCA, to which the next chapter devotes attention.

In sum, then, as with other sociological concepts, an ethnomethodological approach to deviance entails its respecification as a members' phenomenon, that is, as a situated, oriented to and accomplished social fact of language use and social interaction. A respecified concept of deviance dissolves into the descriptive practices whereby it is made accountable. These descriptive practices provide for the investigation and analysis of the organization and uses of such descriptions in situated action by members, rather than being allocated a role in a sociological theory of deviance. In this book, as indicated at the outset of this chapter, the focus is on descriptions of deviance and in particular those descriptions of deviance which deviance that are categorial in character. It is therefore to the nature of membership categorization that the next chapter will now turn. Central to members' descriptions of deviance are a range of membership categorization activities and what I propose to call 'categorial objects'. It is these categorial objects and their properties and uses in the context of the educational referral process that will form the focus of the empirical chapters that then follow.

Endnotes

i

The congeniality in the relationship between symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology during the heydays of the 1960s and 70s can also be discerned in recent developments in cultural criminology. From an ethnomethodological point of view, the major obstacle that inhibits further development of such congeniality is cultural criminology's stipulation of *the* wider structural context that surrounds the local ordering of social life. This is not to say that ethnomethodology has any principled objection to the notion of a 'wider social context'. What it does find problematic, however, is the abdication of consistency in that on the one hand there is an avowed naturalistic commitment but on the other hand a failure to treat 'social context' in terms of that commitment.

ii

Indeed, a major version of sociology's *raison d'être* since Durkheim is that it is a corrective to common sense, a position which fails to recognize how utterly dependent sociology is on said common sense in the first place, not to mention how its own practices are through and through common-sensical, sociologists' claims to the contrary notwithstanding.

iii

This is not to say that persons engaged in deviant activities of the kind described seek not to conceal or get away with their activities. In such cases, concealment practices can become the object of ethnomethodological attention. Cf. Sacks (1972), Matza (1969), Wedlow (1979).

iv

For an early and somewhat naive attempt to study the 'missing whatness' of cannabis consumption, see Hester (1976), *A Sociological Study of the Use of Cannabis*, University of Kent at Canterbury.

v

For extended discussion on policies and principles of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, see Francis and Hester (2004). The continuities between descriptions of deviance in these various settings will be addressed from time to time.

vi

See Lynch (1993) et al on 'perspicuity'. No doubt other referral settings are also perspicuous. In this connection see Heritage (1984: 137) quoted above (as they are too many other occupations and professions and in 'everyday life' more generally – see Heritage (1984)) 'during a substantial proportion of their daily lives, ordinary members of society are engaged in descriptive accountings of states of affairs to one another. Discussions of the weather, depictions of goods and services, assessments of character and reports of the day's doings are the routine stock in trade of mundane talk. Furthermore, '... the social world, indeed what counts as social reality itself, is managed, maintained and acted upon through the medium of ordinary description. For many occupations and agencies – including medical personnel, police, lawyers, welfare workers, accountants, journalists, insurance agents, loss adjusters, estimators, technicians and scientists – a concern for adequate description is a central preoccupation (Heritage 1984: 137).

vii

The data on referral meetings between educational psychologists and teachers were obtained from two settings. The first, and main body of data, was obtained in the course of an ESRC funded research project into 'Deviant Schoolchildren and the School Psychological Service' which was conducted in a large city in the northeast of England. A second corpus of research materials was obtained through observations of and discussions with teachers and educational psychologists in various parts of Britain, including North Wales, and the northwest and southeast of England.

Exceptions include Ford *et al* (1982) and Tomlinson (1982). In ethnomethodology see Mehan's work (1984; 1979). For a critique see Hester (1982).

Previously, in the course of setting up the referral meeting some minimal referencing and description may have occurred (for example, the child's name, school and age may have been mentioned when the educational psychologist was informed on the school's intention to refer), and before that, of course, there will have been meetings between teachers and the school special educational needs coordinator in which descriptions of the child will have figured centrally. However, the remit of the negotiated access and the research reported here did not extend to first-hand data on the talk-in-interaction in these previously occurring events. Instead, access via participant observation and audio-tape recording consisted only of those situations and occasions involving the work of educational psychologists as they met and talked with teachers, their social work colleagues, other educationists (such as education welfare officers) and referred children. Consequently, in addition to the initial referral meetings between educational psychologists and teachers, observations and recordings were also made of the psychologists' intelligence tests, case reviews, case conferences and what were known as 'waiting list meetings' where psychologists relayed received referrals to their social work colleagues who then allocated them a place on their list of cases awaiting social work assessment. However, to reiterate, these other settings and occasions, even though they too involve a great deal of descriptive action, will not be considered here. Had the rationale for the research been an ethnographic one. The rationale for the research reported here is not to attempt to produce an ethnographic description of the entirety of the referral and statementing process from beginning to end but rather, in accordance with the programme of ethnomethodology, and more specifically ethnomethodological conversation analysis, to investigate and analyse the detail, organization and uses of description in a specific setting, rather than a range of different settings.

What is not known is how deviance is described at various stages of the official process, and what sorts of considerations enter into its description.

Chapter Two

Membership Categorization Analysis

Introduction

In chapter one, it was indicated that Garfinkel's concern with the accountability of ordinary action and commonplace activities opened up the domain of description as a fundamental focus of ethnomethodological inquiries. The implications of this approach were then outlined with respect to an ethnomethodologically respecified notion of deviance. It was also indicated, that whilst Garfinkel was establishing ethnomethodology, Sacks was inventing conversation analysis. In this chapter, it will be shown how this programme of empirical research into the domain of description was developed by Sacks with respect to what is now known as 'membership categorization analysis'.

The discussion is divided into the following sections. The first will be concerned with Sacks's work on 'sociological description'. The second will focus on outlining the key 'categorial objects' comprising the 'machinery' or 'apparatus' of membership categorization analysis. In the third section, attention is drawn to the occasionality and indexicality of membership categories, category predicates and membership categorization devices. It is shown that in some of his stipulative remarks, Sacks sometimes reified such categorial objects. Of course, such lapses into reification were more than compensated for by his acute awareness of the situated and occasioned 'considerations' pertaining to selection of descriptions. In the fourth section the discussion will address the issue of 'culturalism' with respect to the 'model' of membership categorization analysis as laid out in Sacks's analysis of 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up', and then taken up in 'self-reflective' MCD analysis/MCA. Following Sacks, some solutions to the problems of culturalism are suggested. In the final section of the chapter, the empirical topics covered in the rest of the book are briefly outlined.

Sociological Description

Others who were close to these developments at the time will know far more of their history and chronology than me, but one place where Garfinkel's and Sacks's ideas converged is in an early paper by Sacks (1963) on 'sociological description'. Furthermore, in the paper Sacks (1963: 1), acknowledges his debt to Garfinkel as follows:

Almost all of the point of the following paper have been developed in preparation for, during, or as a consequence of the numerous meetings with Professor Harold Garfinkel of U. C. L. A. Professor Garfinkel has not only been, through these meetings and through his (largely unpublished) writings, the stimulus for these thoughts but he has on occasion provided me with funds for pursuing this work. My debts to him are barely noted by the references in the body of the paper. It might be added that he is far from agreeing with all that I have to say.

According to Heritage (1984) and Silverman (1998), Sacks wanted to make sociology's conventional practices 'strange'. As Heritage (1984: 234) points out, Sacks was 'uncomfortable with the vagueness of sociology's generalisations about social order and social action. He felt that there was an "indeterminate relationship" between sociology's concepts and the detail and the specifics of particular social events. Sociology glossed actual social events in the production of its generalised sociological descriptions.' He used Durkheim's work on suicide as an example. As noted in Chapter One, Durkheim starts out by formulating a generalised definition of suicide. Sacks points out that, in so doing, Durkheim fails to address this question: just how, in any particular case, do persons actually manage to make sense of (that is: describe) a death *as* a suicide? In Durkheim's work, often held as a model for sociological methodology, sociology had in fact chosen at the outset not to investigate the very phenomena which provided in unacknowledged ways for both its subject matter and its own enterprise. Sociology is 'strange' because, while on the one hand it relies upon commonsense understandings and categories, such as 'suicide', to define its phenomena, on the other hand it refuses to investigate as an empirical problem how such understandings and categories are employed by the members of society themselves to describe the social world, preferring instead to treat such descriptions as faulted versions of sociology's professional ones. Consequently, how such descriptions are accomplished, such that everyday scenes and events are rendered 'accountable', is nowhere addressed. Instead, sociology just accepts commonsense categories - just 'puts them in' - without subjecting them to analysis of how they are actually used by members.

Sacks's problem, like Garfinkel's, was to turn the processes of everyday, ordinary description into objects of study. Following Garfinkel's argument that common sense needed to be treated as a topic and not simply an unacknowledged resource in sociological analysis, Sacks wanted to reveal the unexamined ways in which the social activities that comprise the everyday commonsense world are actually accomplished in specific cases. Heritage (1984: 235) quotes Sacks (1984: 26) in this regard:

When I started to do research in sociology, I figured that sociology could not be an actual science unless it was able to handle the details of actual events, handle them formally and in the first instance be informative about them in the direct ways in which primitive sciences tend to be informative, that is, that anyone else can go and see whether what was said is so. And that is a tremendous control on seeing whether one is learning anything. So the question was, could there be some way that sociology could hope to deal with the details of actual events formally and informatively? ... I wanted to locate some set of materials that would permit a test.

It was in the context of this concern with the methodological foundations of sociology that Sacks developed his investigations into the organisation of conversation. He indicated (1984: 26) that:

It was not from any large interest in language or from some theoretical formulation of what should be studied that I started with tape-recorded conversation, but simply because I could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and also, consequentially, because others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me.

Sacks's approach and its continuity with ethnomethodology can be appreciated in remarks contained in the very first lecture of his *Lectures in Conversation*. Where Garfinkel had spoken of 'methods', Sacks speaks of what he calls 'conversational objects' for the accomplishment of conversational interaction. These objects comprise key components of common-sense knowledge as it is used in making activities accountable, both in their recognition and their production.ⁱ As Sacks (1992a: 10-11) puts it:

And now when you, or I, or sociologists, watching people do things, engage in trying to find out what they do and how they do it, one fix which can be used is: Of the enormous range of activities that people do, all of them are done with something..What we want to find out is, can we first of all construct the objects that get used to make up ranges of activities, and then see how it is those objects do get used.

And as he goes on to say (1992a: 11):

Some of these objects can be used for whole ranges of activities, where for different *ones a variety of the properties of those objects will get employed*. And we begin to see alternative properties of those objects. That's one way we can go about beginning to collect the alternative methods that persons use in going about doing whatever they have to do. And we can see that these methods will be reproducible descriptions in the sense that any scientific description might be, such that the natural occurrences that we're describing can yield abstract or general phenomena which need not rely on statistical observability for their abstractness or generality.

From these beginnings, two distinct but overlapping and interrelated lines of analysis have developed. These are membership categorisation analysis and the sequential analysis of talk-in-interaction. Of course, Sacks himself did not differentiate between 'membership categorisation analysis' and 'the sequential analysis of talk-in-interaction' as 'sub-disciplines' or 'strands'. Furthermore, it is plainly the case that the analysis of sequential organization may be fairly described as having become the predominant mode. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that categorial analysis on the one hand and the sequential analysis of conversation on the other did provide different foci and ways of working for Sacks, and following Sacks these 'strands' did indeed develop into largely

distinct avenues of inquiry. As already indicated, it is with membership categorization analysis that this book is concerned, and so it is with respect to some of its key features that the discussion will now proceed.

Membership Categorization Analysis

The term ‘membership categorization analysis’ was proposed firstly by Eglin and Hester (1992) as a replacement for ‘MCD analysis’ (the term under whose rubric the distinctive categorial dimension of social life had been analysed during the 1970’s and 1980’s).ⁱⁱ The reasons for this proposal were not merely aesthetic, nor were they name-changing for its own sake. Rather, they were that ‘MCD analysis’ privileged the analysis of membership categorization *devices*, and whilst this privileging acknowledged the originality of Sacks’s notion of *category collections*, it obscured the fact that whilst membership categories always belong to some collection and whilst their intelligibility depends crucially on their membership in a collection, it is also equally the case that category collections are dependent for *their* intelligibility upon which categories they collect together. If neither collections nor categories are intelligible without the other, then a term which recognized this fact seemed appropriate to say the least, hence the term ‘membership categorization analysis’ as a term which covered the full range of categorization practices without giving priority to any particular concept or practice. Hester and Eglin (1997b: 3) describe the scope, range and focus of membership categorization analysis as follows:

The use of membership categories, membership categorization devices and category predicates by members, conceptualized as lay and professional social analysts, in accomplishing (the sociology of) ‘naturally occurring ordinary activities.’ MCA directs attention to the locally used, invoked and organized ‘presumed common-sense knowledge of social structures’ which members are oriented to in the conduct of their everyday affairs, including professional sociological inquiry itself ...

‘Analysis,’ in ‘membership categorisation analysis,’ refers both to members’ use of categories, devices and predicates, that is to say these and other categorial objects, *and* to professional ethnomethodological studies of such use.

There are now many introductions to, and applications of, the key ideas of MCA and it is beyond the scope of this book to consider them here. For those prepared to return to the beginnings, there is, of course, no better place than to start with Sacks himself. On the other hand, for those who wish to taste more closely the flavours of subsequent developments, the following would be especially recommended: Coulter 1991; Cuff, 1993; Cuff and Francis, 1978; Edwards, 1998; Eglin, 2002; Eglin and

Hester, 1992; Hester and Eglin 1992, 1997a; Jayyusi, 1984; Lee, 1984; Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000; Nikander, 2002; Schegloff, 2007; Silverman, 1998; Speier, 1973; Watson, 1978, 1983, 1997; and Stokoe, 2006, 2012a, 2012b^{iii, iv}

Sacks on Categorization

In his early lectures, presented in 1964 and 1965 (Sacks, 1992a), there is an alternating focus on categorization activities and those concerned with sequential matters.^v A close reading of these lectures will repay the reader with powerful resources for analysis and will afford an appreciation of how their content presages later developments. For example, the lecture on the 'MIR' anticipates much of the later elaboration and specification of membership categories and their various predicates, as well as introducing the notion of 'category sets', which later became 'category collections' and 'membership categorization devices'. Similarly, the lecture on 'character appears on cue' explores interactional issues which are later formulated in terms of the 'viewer's maxim'. Nevertheless, it was not until 1966, and in two particular places, that the scope and range of categorization analysis was most explicitly and fully articulated. The first of these, as indicated, is Sacks's PhD thesis, *The Search for Help: No One to Turn To* the second is his lectures at the beginning of the Spring session of 1966 on 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up'. Versions of both were subsequently published (Sacks, 1967, 1972, 1974) and have provided a major resource for researchers in the field.

In the *Search for Help: No One to Turn To* (Sacks, 1967) Sacks describes the 'problem of categorization' and identifies some of the key concepts that make up the framework of ideas in membership categorization analysis. The touchstone for Sacks's argument is Goodenough's (1965) remarks on the 'identity selection problem.' Sacks (1966: 10) remarks,

Goodenough in short proposes: the fact that everyone has many more identities than they assume in a given interaction poses for the researcher the problem of how it is that for any given interaction, identities are selected. This problem has not been dealt with by developed role theory. And while Goodenough's formulation is simple enough and obvious enough the question remains as to whether a precise formulation can be given to the selection problem.

Giving a 'precise formulation to the selection problem', which Sacks characterizes as the 'central theoretical task' of his thesis, involves several elements. However, it is important to recognize and to emphasize that *The Search for Help* is also empirical research; the theoretical 'precision' which is achieved is developed from the analysis of real calls made by real people to a *Suicide Prevention Centre*, calls which Sacks recorded and then used as data for analysis through which he then demonstrated his 'more precise

formulation of the identity selection problem.'

Sacks begins with a change of terminology, replacing the 'identity selection problem' with the 'problem of categorization', the concept of 'identity' with 'membership category' and introducing an entirely new notion – that of 'collections of membership categories'. The meaning of 'membership category' is plain enough, referring to the categories of person, social types or social identities that have currency in describing persons in a culture, categories such as 'mother', 'lawyer', 'boxer', 'teacher', etc. There is clearly some continuity between symbolic interactionist work on social identities (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1967, 1968) and phenomenological sociology's interest in social types and typifications (Schutz, 1962, 1964, 1966). Membership categories are, then, ways in the language of a culture in which persons can be classified and which they can 'belong to', be incumbents of, and have membership in. Membership may be achieved or ascribed. Furthermore, such stand-alone categories are often combined with various adjectives, yielding thereby other categories, for example, '(fat) man', '(old) lady', '(criminal) lawyer', '(stupid) boy/girl', etc.

If the concept of 'membership category' resonates with already established sociological concepts such as 'label', 'social role', 'role', 'social identity', 'social type' and so forth, the notion of 'collections of membership categories' is an original invention by Sacks. Category collections (or category sets) refer (Sacks, 1966: 16) to 'the natural groupings of categories, categories that members of the society feel "go together"'. The examples that Sacks (1966: 16) uses to illustrate this are as follows:

So, for example, it seems to be the case that members of this society consider the categories 'male' and 'female' to go together, to form a 'collection', or 'set', i.e. the set *they name* 'Sex'; and the categories 'pitcher', 'first baseman', 'second baseman' ... 'catcher', are apparently organized by members of society into the grouping they term 'baseball team'.

One particular type of membership categorisation device is the 'standardised relational pair.' Sacks developed this concept in relation to what refers to as a 'search procedure' or 'category search' undertaken by suicidal callers to the *Suicide Prevention Centre*, a category search resulting in the suicidal caller's self-categorization as someone who had 'no one to turn to turn'. According to Sacks, the search for help in the case of personal troubles such as suicidalness is organised in terms of such paired categories as 'husband-wife,' 'parent-child,' 'friend-friend,' 'cousin-cousin,' 'neighbour-neighbour' and 'stranger-stranger.' Sacks refers to such pairs of membership categories as 'relational categories' consisting of two subsets. as 'Rp', which means that refers to those they who are 'proper' persons to whom one might expect to turn in times of trouble, persons with whom one has a personal and intimate relationship, and where that relationship is reciprocal and 'standardized'. On the other hand, 'Ri' consists of that class of relationship of relationship with persons to whom it would be inappropriate and improper to turn to in times of troubles, persons who are otherwise

strangers, persons upon whom the telling of one's troubles would be a burden and an imposition, and so forth. Accordingly, then, when the suicidal caller calls and says that they have 'no one to turn to' what they mean is that they have searched for potential members of 'Rp' and found 'no one' there, hence their call to *The Suicide Prevention Centre*, where at least a 'professional' service is available for persons who find themselves in such a position. Of course, when someone reports that they 'have no one to turn to', they may not mean literally that there is no one in the whole world to whom they might turn, since they are actually turning to the suicide prevention centre staff. Rather, what they mean is that there is no one available from the collection of persons in Rp from whom they feel they can properly ask for help. They may well have a boyfriend, brother or parent who belongs to this group Rp, but for whatever reason they feel they cannot turn to them under present circumstances. It is when this category of person is unapproachable that suicidal people may turn elsewhere to talk about their troubles. The key point is that the search for help and talk about the search for help is fundamentally and normatively organised in terms of such membership categories. It is, furthermore, not just the callers who make use of this categorical organisation, but also the counsellors working at the suicide prevention centre. Thus, in response to callers they ask whether they have available such members of Rp as husbands, wives, boyfriends, to seek help from. Likewise, it is not only that the caller *can* (i.e. has the right to) turn to members of Rp but that they are obliged to do so and are expected to do so by such persons. It is in terms of this normative arrangement that relatives of deceased suicidal persons can 'legitimately' complain: 'Why didn't she say something to us?' The conclusion that a suicidal person reaches is, then, a result of a category search category or set of 'considerations' undertaken by the person. The procedure for analysis thus involves starting with an 'outcome' and then to seeking to describe the methods or methodology whose use will have produced that outcome. In line with Sacks's general approach to this kind of analysis, his question was how is it that a person could come to such a conclusion and therefore can the analysis provide a description of what the person will have used to come to this conclusion? Thus, Sacks is concerned with the methodical production of such a conclusion. As he puts it (1967: 203):

I shall aim to construct a description of how the conclusion a suicidal person may reach (that he has no one to turn to) may be reproducibly provided for. The aim may be satisfied by (1) locating the collections of membership categories in terms of which the search for help is properly formulated; and by (2) describing the ways such collections are used to determine whether there are eligible persons available.

The 'problem of categorization' is: which categories from which collections should be selected and applied, to oneself and to others, in any given interaction, and what 'considerations' pertain to the selection of membership categories? The solution to the problem is not simply a matter of 'correctness', even though for example, it would obviously be incorrect in our culture to select a category from the

collection 'occupations' to categorize a child. It is, more significantly, a matter of *relevance*. Sacks makes this point more forcefully and emphatically, and thereby disposes of correctness as the definitive criterion of category selection, with reference to what he calls 'Pn-adequate' collections. These are collections of categories that apply *correctly* to everyone. So, everyone is an incumbent of one or other of the categories making up the collections 'sex', 'age' and 'ethnicity' ('race' was the term used by Sacks at the time). However, these collections and the categories comprising them are not all relevant for the purpose of social interaction at the same time. There are interactions between people where their age category or their gender is just not an issue; their erstwhile incumbency of an age category or of the categories 'male' or 'female' is neither oriented to nor relevant for the interactional activities and purposes at hand. So, for example, when a university professor delivers a lecture, it is his or her incumbency of the membership category 'professor' that is the relevant one for this occasion, not his or her age, ethnicity or gender, just as it is that the recipients of his or her lecture categorize themselves as 'students' rather than as 'teenagers' or 'men' and 'women'. Of course, if in the course of the lecture, the professor stumbles and seems to forget his or her words, then this might become attributable to his or her age; it is only under such circumstances that the collection 'age' is likely to become interactionally relevant. Similarly, it is possible to imagine scenarios where parties to educational events such as lectures may allude to other category collections with respect to whose categories they may be prospective incumbents, but for the situation at hand, it is the tasks of lecturing and listening to the lecture which provides the operative collection of categories. Clearly, then, the relevance of the selection of this or that category from this or that collection is a *contingent* and *occasioned* matter. Such contingency and occasionality opens up a vast domain of inquiry: by what means and methods do persons select the collections and categories that they do?

So far the discussion has addressed 'membership categories' and 'natural collections of categories'. There are also 'rules of application' useable with respect to these collections. In combination, collections and rules of application comprise 'membership categorization devices' (MCDs, for short), which Sacks (1966: 17) defines as 'such natural collections of membership categories ... *plus* whatever rules of application the use of the collection involves.' These rules offer both a general and a partial solution to the problem of categorization, i.e. to the problem of which categories from which collections are to be selected for a particular interactional occasion. The solution is general because these rules may be used whenever categories and collections are being selected, but it is also partial in that notwithstanding the use of these rules there are also particular 'considerations' pertaining to specific selections on particular occasions. Such specific considerations comprise a domain of local relevancies pertaining to the situated accomplishment of social action that are only discoverable through empirical investigation. For the moment, the progression of this exposition requires that the two general rules identified by Sacks with respect to category/collection selection, are namely the 'economy rule' and the 'consistency rule,' is are discussed.

The economy rule provides for the adequacy of using a single membership category to describe a member of some population. Of course, sometimes more than one category may be used, but standardly in describing persons a single category will suffice. For example, in accomplishing 'introductions' it is interactionally redundant to provide an extended list of the membership categories with which the person being introduced might be described; one, such as 'my boyfriend,' will be sufficient for practical purposes. The consistency rule holds 'if some population of persons is being categorised, and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorise a first member of the population, then that category or other categories of the same collection may be used to categorise further members of the population' (Sacks 1974a: 219). Thus, for example, if a person is categorised as 'first violin' then further persons may be referred to in terms of other membership categories comprising the collection 'members of the orchestra.' Sacks also identified a corollary or 'hearer's maxim' with respect to the consistency rule. This maxim holds that 'if two or more categories are used to categorise two or more members of some population, and those categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, then: hear them that way' (Sacks 1974a: 219-220). The now famous example in Sacks's work is the child's story, 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.' Here, with reference to the hearer's maxim, the two categories, 'baby' and 'mommy,' may be and are routinely and commonsensically heard as both belonging to the collection 'family.'

Another key concept of membership categorisation analysis is that of the *category predicate*. Thus, Sacks introduced the concept of 'category bound activities' to refer to those activities that are expectably and properly done by persons who are the incumbents of particular categories. He notes that categories selected to categorise some member performing a category-bound activity and categories selected to categorize that activity are *co-selected*. Thus, although it is possibly correct to say of a baby crying that it is a male shedding tears, it is not possibly recognisable as a correct or appropriate description of the scene. The 'preference' for category co-selection is a strong and generative one and helps us to understand some of the organisational and selectional features of such utterances as the one with which Sacks began: 'The baby cried, the mommy picked it up.' Subsequent researchers have extended Sacks's work on category bound activities to encompass other properties or predicates which may be presumed of particular categories (cf. Sharrock, 1974; Payne, 1976; Watson, 1976, 1978, 1983; Jayyusi, 1984). Other predicates include, for example, rights, entitlements, obligations, knowledge, attributes and competences.

A second 'hearer's maxim' is introduced with respect to category predicates. Thus, Sacks (1974a: 224) points out:

If a category-bound activity is asserted to have been done by a member of some category where, if that category is ambiguous (i.e. is a member of at least two different devices) but where, at least for one of those devices, the asserted activity is category bound to the given category, then hear that *at least* the category from the device to which it is bound is being asserted to hold.

Thus, in the case of the category-bound activity 'crying' it is asserted that this is done by a member of the category 'baby.' This is an ambiguous category: it may be heard, that is, as a member of the device 'family' and the device 'stage of life.' However, following this maxim, if for one of these devices the asserted activity 'crying' is category-bound to the given category 'baby,' then hear that the category is one which belongs to the device for which the category-bound activity holds. In other words, if one can hear the activity as bound to a category then hear the activity as being done by an incumbent of that category. In the case of 'the baby cried, the mommy picked it up,' then, the category 'baby' is heard as one belonging to the device 'stage of life' since it is bound to the category 'baby' which is a member of that device; it is not bound to the category 'baby' as a member of the device 'family,' though incumbents of that category *may* cry. This hearer's maxim, then, provides for a minimal hearing: the 'baby cried' refers 'at least' to 'baby from the stage of life device.' This maxim is not used by itself. Hearings are the result of the use of more than one maxim. The maxim above is used *in combination* with the consistency rule corollary. The latter gives 'baby' as a member of 'family,' whilst the former gives 'baby' as a member of the 'stage of life' device. Combining these hearings provides us with the result that the 'baby' is not only the baby of the mommy but also a baby for whom crying is category-bound.

Membership Categorization Analysis as Culture in Action

In a partial critique of Sacks, Hester and Eglin (1997b) draw attention to a tendency towards cultural decontextualisation in some of Sacks's remarks, particularly about membership categorisation devices. With respect to the occasional or situated character of membership categorization practices, it was emphasized by Hester (1994) and Hester and Eglin (1997b) that MCA takes a particular stance toward 'culture' (see also Watson 1997; Baker 2000). The 'machinery' of MCA – category collections, membership categories, category predicates, etc. – can be thought of as one aspect of a society's culture but in the sense of 'culture-in-action' or as improvisational cultural practices rather than as a body of decontextualised knowledge, practice and convention. As already indicated, one way to appreciate the occasionality of the machinery is to recognize the 'branching texture' of collections and categories. A category can become a collection, and vice versa. Categories may belong in collections but they may then also be collections themselves, that is, providing for a new 'branch' of categories. It is important to recognize that this is not just an abstract formulation of the apparatus. Whether something is being used *this time* as a category or a collection is an empirical matter. Furthermore, it may well be that certain consequential matters and actions *turn on* whether it is being used in one way or the other, that is, as either a category or a collection.

Sacks's reification of membership categorisation devices and membership categories is also evident in certain stipulative statements and definitive comments on *the* categories making up a categorisation device.

For example, he states that:

'An instance of a categorisation device is the one called `sex'; its collection is the two categories (male, female)' (Sacks, 1974a: 219).

Similarly,

'while many devices ... are not Pn-adequate ones, it is perfectly obvious that there are at least two Pn-adequate devices that Members do have available to them and do use. For example, there are the devices whose collections are (1) sex (male, female), and (2) age (young, old). There are of course others (Sacks, 1972a: 33) ...'

(Sacks, 1974a: 219)

In these extracts, it is possible to infer that Sacks is saying that *the* categories making up the *sex* device *are* male and female, and that the device *family* consists of the categories baby, mommy, daddy, etc. Furthermore, Sacks appears to exclude from these collections other possible categories. In this stipulative conception, the meaning of the collections `sex' and `family' appears to be offered in some pre-given and decontextualised sense; the constituent categories of these devices appears to have been settled in a once-and-for-all manner. However, MCA is an occasioned or situated activity in a much deeper sense than this. In this regard, it is useful to recall that Sacks (1992a: April 17., 1968) drew a distinction between 'occasioned' and 'natural' collections of categories in one of his discussions of the phenomenon of 'topic'. The distinction is easily misunderstood if it is taken to imply that some collections are 'occasioned' whilst others, that is, 'natural' collections, are not. Thus, Sacks said that an 'occasioned' collection is one assembled on the occasion of some topic having been introduced in a conversation and, as a result, some 'strange bedfellows' may be collected together for the duration of the topic. The example he uses is the consecutive mentioning of 'child, fourteen' and 'dog', two membership categories with respect to which a collection is not immediately transparent. However, once it is known that the parties to the conversation are talking about 'potential obstacles to renting an apartment' then it is reasonably the case the case that these membership categories could both be included in such a collection. The relevance of their mentioning would have been provided for, that is to say 'occasioned,' by the topic at hand. Sacks also said that a 'natural' collection was one where if the name of the collection was known, then a member of the culture could name its members. This might be mistakenly understood as meaning that 'natural' collections are part of a decontextualised cultural apparatus, a 'stable' cultural framework that the analyst can use to make sense of (or impose sense upon) data. Such 'culturalism' obscures rather than illuminates *members'* membership categorization analytic practices.

Sacks recognized clearly that the collection to which a category belongs is an occasioned matter, and this applied to both 'occasioned' and 'natural' collections. In a discussion of category bound activities (Sacks 1992a: Spring 1967, Lectures 12 and 13) he indicated that the collection to which a category belongs will depend on the meaning of the category on the specific occasion of its use. He used as an example the category 'baby', making it plain that it may belong to a number of collections, including not only 'family' and 'stage of life device' but also 'boyfriend/girlfriend' and 'married couple.' By extension, then, not only may the category 'baby' have a variety of different activities predicated of it - 'crying' is an activity bound to the category 'baby' only *on the assumption that the baby in question is an infant* (Sacks 1992a: Spring 1967, Lecture 13: 584) - but also collections can mean different things and therefore be composed of different categories. In short, all collections, whether 'natural' or 'topically occasioned' - are assembled on particular occasions (Hester and Eglin 1997b; Watson 1997).

Accordingly, as an aspect of culture, the machinery of membership categorization analysis is conceived as a situated and occasioned machinery. This means not simply that the machinery is put to localized uses but that the machinery itself is locally assembled on the occasions of its use (Watson 1997). This does not mean that collections, categories and their predicates are invented *de novo* each time they are used; it means that collections, categories and predicates are always 'indexical expressions', and irremediably so (Garfinkel, 1967). The sense or meaning of a collection, a category or a predicate will always be relative to, and require recourse to, a particular local social context; it will depend upon how the collection-name, category or predicate is being used on a particular occasion.

In spite of the reification of membership categorisation devices implied by his methodological practices and stipulative remarks, it is also clear that Sacks recognised the importance of context and the irremediably indexical quality of all membership categorisations. That is, the decontextualised model of membership categorisation is belied elsewhere in the ethnomethodological investigation of MCDs contained in Sacks's corpus, hence the ambiguity of his work. As Lynch and Peyrot (1992: 114) put it:

Consistent with the emphasis in Garfinkel's early work, ethnomethodologists reject the idea that persons make sufficient sense of each other's actions by attaching culturally encoded meanings to particular words and gestures. Instead, ethnomethodologists treat meaning *contextually*, which means that they endeavour analytically to unpack relational configurations that enable sense to be made and understood *in situ*.

Sacks's recognition of the occasionality, indexicality and contextual embeddedness of membership categorisations is evident in various ways in his work and it would be wrong on the basis of a few potentially misleading stipulative statements to accuse him of adopting a decontextualised approach to 'culture'. Through so much of his work, his careful attention to just what 'considerations' pertain on the occasion of

the selection of some category, collection or predicate for some particular descriptive purpose, clearly evidences that he regarded 'culture,' as located in action and that categories are always 'categories in context.' Accordingly, this means that the task for MCA is to discover how collections, categories and predicates are used on the occasions of their occurrence rather than presuming their stable cultural meanings.

Culture,' then, is to be found in action and categories are always 'categories in context' and this means that the task for MCA is to discover how collections, categories and predicates are used on the occasions of their occurrence rather than presuming their decontextualised cultural meanings. However, in terms of the present discussion it is important to stress that membership categorization *analysis* refers not only to and not primarily to the analysis *of* members' categorization practices but also and most emphatically to the naturally occurring membership categorization analyses *in* members' practices. What this means is not only that the apparatus is used situationally, and on occasions, but that the apparatus itself is situationally assembled. Activities, for example, are not tied to categories except in so far as they are so tied on the occasions of their use. Collections do not pre-exist their assembly on some occasion. Persons are not members of categories until or unless they recognisably constitute themselves or are constituted as such. It is against this background that the rest of the book explores descriptions of deviance as occasioned, indexical and assembled categorial objects, and explores their properties and uses.

The Problem of 'Culturalism'

It is important to emphasise the occasionality and contextuality of category use, since otherwise MCA can lay itself open to a serious methodological critique involving a charge of 'culturalism'. The problem of culturalism is raised by the reification of categories and their predicates; it involves the presumption that there exists a machinery that specifies once and for all what a category means, what its predicates are, as well as what collection it belongs to. It also entails analytic assertions of category understandings that are not adequately grounded in data. Critics argue that too often in MCA studies category understandings and inferences are posited arbitrarily by the analyst, based on nothing more than his/her own presumptions rather than the displayed orientations of participants.

The issue has been posed most forcefully by Schegloff. As he reminds us (2007: 475), speaking of members' use of membership categorization devices,

In CA work - with its commitment to getting at the practices by which the world we see and hear gets produced ... We need ... evidence that the participants' production of the world was itself informed by these particular membership categorization devices. And so if we want to

characterise the parties to some interaction with some category terms, we need in principle to show that that the parties were oriented to that categorization device in producing and understanding - moment-by-moment - the conduct that composed its progressive realisation. In doing so, we will need to be alert to the ways in which the parties make accessible to one *another* these orientations, because that is the most serious and compelling evidence of their indigenous-to-the-interaction status. If we can show that, we can neutralize the equivocality that otherwise subverts category-based inquiry.

The equivocality that Schegloff alerts us to here is that unless MCA is grounded in such displayed members' understandings, it will remain self-reflective, lacking in external authorization. It is, furthermore, an equivocality which equivocality that extends beyond the evidential availability of particular membership categories, devices and predicates. It pertains to *whatever* categorization practices the analyst claims the members are said to be engaged in. Let me repeat, membership categorization *analysis* refers not only to and not primarily to the analysis *of* members' categorization practices but also and most emphatically to the naturally occurring membership categorization analyses *in* members' practices.

Schegloff's point is well taken, but his concern for the possible arbitrariness of analysis serves mainly to emphasise the differences between phenomena, especially between texts, on the one hand, and interactional encounters on the other. The problem of 'culturalism' has most frequently been raised in relation to the analysis of texts. In order to deal with it, the discussion needs to return to Sacks's analysis of 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up'. The key point to make about this is that it was, and remains, a brilliant pedagogic exercise, demonstrating acutely and accessibly the main ideas in this kind of analysis. Others, notably Eglin and Hester (1992), Hester and Eglin (1992) and Francis and Hester (2004), have used the same pedagogic device to introduce students to MCA, but with different data., Francis and Hester (2004), in particular, suggest that the model provided by Sacks can be used to form the basis of what they call 'self-reflective analysis' of texts, as a means of accessing the taken for granted machinery of membership categorization practices.

To appreciate the issue here, one needs to reconsider Garfinkel's observation that common sense understandings furnish sociology with both the topics of its inquiries and the resources by which those inquiries are conducted, and his recognition that the sociologist, including the ethnomethodologist, is first and foremost a member of society like everyone else. The key difference between ethnomethodological inquiries and conventional ones, as already noted, lies in the fact that whereas the latter utilize the orderliness of the common sense world as an unexamined resource, the former seek to explore it as a phenomenon in its own right. Another way of putting this is that one's membership, conceived as the requirement for and presumption of relevant situated competencies, provides

ethnomethodology with the opportunity to study everyday life 'from within'. Of course, 'from within' is not to be contrasted with 'from without'. As Garfinkel insists, *all* sociological inquiries are conducted from within the practically organised, commonsensically available affairs of the society. In this sense, then, EM inquiries are investigations into what is already known, as Sharrock (2001: 258) notes:

It (EM) is not motivated by the aspiration to make discoveries about the nature of social phenomena, but to undertake the recovery of what is already known - but is 'known' in the form of competent mastery of practical affairs – to the members of society.

The concept of 'self-reflective analysis, then, points to the fact when considering a given text – a newspaper headline, a TV report or, as in Sacks's classic case, a story told by a child -, the analyst is involved in explicating his or her own understandings as much as those of others. Indeed, Sacks's analysis of *'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up'* begins by noting that the commonsensically obvious way to hear these sentences, obvious to Sacks and presumably other members also, is that the baby is an infant, the mommy is the mommy of the baby and the baby is picked up to comfort it. It is precisely these hearings that the analysis then seeks to explicate. However, whilst there is nothing wrong in principle with self-reflective analysis as a pedagogic exercise, it would nevertheless be wrong to think that such analysis is all that MCA is about as a programme of empirical research. There is a danger that such self-reflective research might be seen as substitute for such empirical research, undermining and contradicting Sacks's initiatives in MCD analysis which sought to establish a programme of inquiry into members' various categorization practices and activities. The fact that the analyst is a member of the society and, consequently, can be presumed to possess the kinds of commonsense knowledge and cultural competences that may be taken-for-granted of any member, is both a prerequisite of analysis and a source of methodological tension. In the analysis of a text the phenomenon to be explicated is the reader's' understanding of that text, an understanding that the analyst lays out as his/her first step. Such analysis necessarily differs from conversational analysis of a transcript in terms of the grounding of analytic claims, since a text is a different animal to from a conversation or other interaction. While it does not follow that self-reflective analysis is any less 'empirical', it clearly raises questions about the external check upon analytic claims. Sacks, in his classic analysis, is quite clear that the hearing he proposes to examine is not simply his own, but one which other persons will also make when confronted with the child's story. This is the empirical claim upon which his entire discussion rests.

The problem of culturalism, then, can be overstated. There is no inherent objection to analysis that invokes the shared commonsense cultural understandings to access practices the analyst is ostensibly attempting to empirically investigate and explain the use of. However, whilst this does not preclude the self-reflective analysis of the analyst-as-a-member's practices, clearly it pays to be careful about the

assertion of mere categorial observations by an-analyst-as-member.^{vi} Sacks (1992a: Spring 1967, Lecture 12: 583) makes it very clear that this 'is not yet anywhere near good enough' in his discussion of category bound activities. Any such observations can only be a starting point for analysis, not its conclusion. Furthermore, it is arguably the case that the main strength of 'self-reflective' MCA is pedagogical; it serves as a useful device for explicating the concepts and methods of doing MCA but it falls short of demonstrating occurring talk-in-interaction. In order to achieve such an empirically authorized account, the analyst is required to ascertain which categorizations are demonstrably relevant for and used by the participants in the talk-in-interaction under consideration. This is achievable not by invoking what is 'hearable' or 'recognizable' from the analyst's point of view but by showing, from the details of the talk-in-interaction, how the participants themselves analyse each other's categorizations (and other) practices.

Conclusion

It has been indicated in this chapter that descriptions, and in particular, categorizations, are selected according to considerations, and that this topic was a central focus of Sacks's work in *The Search for Help: No One to Turn To*, in giving a more precise formulation of the 'identity selection problem'. It has also been shown, following the argument put forward in Hester and Eglin (1997b), that there is an irremediable indexicality or occasionality about all of the apparatus or machinery of membership categories, membership categorization devices and category predicates, such that on the occasion of their use, membership categories, devices and predicates, can be thought of as 'assembled objects' (Hester, 2007; Hester and Eglin, 1997b; Watson, 1997). I am proposing to call such objects, 'assembled categorial objects' in order to include not only their occasioned and indexical properties but also the categorial character of such assemblages of descriptive 'components' on particular occasions. Descriptions of deviance comprise a class of such assembled categorial objects. It is the task of the rest of this book to see what may be discovered about them, their properties and their uses in the setting in which the research was conducted.

As indicated in chapter one, descriptions of deviance are produced in a wide variety of social contexts in everyday conversation and in many different institutional settings. It is via these descriptions that persons make available to others that some other person or persons are deviating, are in contravention of some rule, or depart from some norms pertaining to the conduct and categories of persons in a particular situation. If this is uncontroversial, what is perhaps surprising is just how little research has been done on just how such descriptions are accomplished, what their properties are, what uses they are put to, and how they connect with various social actions. With these considerations in mind, the rest of this book will be concerned with exploring this topic further and reporting on the findings from the research undertaken.

Endnotes

i

With the widespread use of video recordings other possibilities of social organization with respect to MCA organization can come into view, for example playground activities, queuing, driving cars, riding bikes, crossing intersections, etc.

ii

iii

For those who would prefer to read about MCA in languages other than English please see Paul Ten Have's EMCA website: <http://www.paultenhave.nl/resource.htm>

iv

The flavours differ, of course, and some may be less satisfying in their coverage of the field than others. Stokoe's (2012) semi-auto-biographical account, for example, uses a vehicular metaphor to compare CA's achievements with those of MCA. CA is apparently a 'juggernaut' while MCA is a 'milkfloat'. Perhaps this metaphor was intended humorously, but it also runs the risk, at least for those reading about MCA in a preliminary and introductory way, of conveying the impression that not much has been going on in MCD analysis nor in MCA that is worthy of closer inspection. More than this, it also serves to belittle the achievements of those who have worked in MCD analysis or subsequently under the rubric of MCA. In addition to the works cited above, the reader might also wish to consult such contributions to the field as: Antaki and Widdicombe (1998), Atkinson (1978), Atkinson and Drew (1979), Berard (2002), Butler (2008), Carlin (2003), Coulter (1973), Drew (1978), Francis and Hester (2004), Hester (1994, 1998), Hester and Hester (2003, 2012), Mazeland (2008), Payne (1976), Psathas (2002), Schegloff (1972) and Speier (1971, 1976),

v

The interested reader may also find fragments of analysis on categorical topics in Sacks's unpublished 'Research Notebooks' where, for example, he discusses 'membership'.

vi

For a more extended discussion of 'self-reflective analysis', see Francis and Hester, (2004), chapter 3.

Chapter Three

Sequential Orders of Description in Referral Talk

Overall Structural Organization of Referral Meetings

Like other forms of institutional talk, referral meetings have an overall structure. The meetings usually occur at the referring school when the psychologist makes a routine or specially arranged visit. The initial part of such meetings involves the establishing of an interactional relationship (cf. Heritage and Maynard 2006), typically through a greeting sequence. This is then standardly followed by a nomination sequence in which the first (though sometimes there is only one) referral to be discussed is named. There then occurs a descriptive phase in which the teacher describes the referral for the educational psychologist (EP), and then a phase during which the central tasks consist of the educational psychologist making recommendations and proposals to the teacher concerning intervention and treatment. The discussion of the referral is then terminated. If there is more than one referral to be spoken of then the sequence of nomination, description, proposals and recommendations, and termination is then repeated for each subsequent referral. Each referral, in other words, is dealt with in its entirety before the speakers move on to the next one. In broad outline, then, the overall structure of referral meetings is as follows:

1. Opening: educational psychologist and teacher establish an interactional relationship
2. Nominating the referral
3. Describing the problem
4. The psychologist's response
5. Transition to next case

Sections 2 – 5 are repeated for each referral to be discussed. The final case is followed by

6. Closing of meeting

Referral talk is, then, organized on a case-by-case basis which is serial in character, where each case is allocated a turn in a series. The means by which such allocation occurs is a 'nomination sequence'.

The Nomination Sequence

In one sense the referrer has already sought permission to tell the ‘story’ of the referral and the visit to the school constitutes a response and an acceptance of that. However, before the ‘story’ can be told, the participants have to know who they are talking about. This may not be a problem if there is only one referral to discuss but often there are several and under these circumstances the parties have to establish an order in which each referral will be discussed. In any case, even when there is only one referral to be considered its nomination will be accomplished in particular ways. Accordingly, this section contains an analysis of the sequence whereby the identity of the referral to be discussed is established. This sequence is the nomination sequence. Where there is more than one referral to consider, each case for discussion begins with a nomination sequence and discussion continues until a conclusion before moving on to the next case. In the *nomination sequence* the referral to be discussed in the immediately ensuing talk is named. The following examples show (a) the beginning of referral meetings with nomination of the first case and (b) termination of first case and movement/nomination of the second. In each case this is accomplished collaboratively by the participants but with the educational psychologist ‘in charge’, as it were. Here, then, the teacher and psychologist align as nominator and recipient of nomination. The EP establishes (a) the serial ordering and (b) the identity of the referral subject.

The nomination sequence, then, is the means whereby the task of naming the referral to be discussed (next) is established. The naming is invariably done by the psychologist. Either s/he will be invited to name the referral or will announce the name of the referral. Consider the following examples of nomination sequences (where Ht = head teacher, Ft = female teacher, Mt = male teacher and Ep = educational psychologist):

(1) RMSJ/1

- 1 Ht: now who were you wanting to discuss first?
- 2 Ep: can we do Richard Rogers very quickly?
- 3 Ht: yes
- 4 Ep: errm he is difficult is he?
- 5 Ht: he’s proving as difficult as ever he used to be, yeah
- 6 would it be possible for you to get mother into school
- 7 Ep: and have a word with her?

(2) WJS/7

1 Ft: I haven't sent out a letter for parental consent yet
 2 Ep: well okay I mean we can di[scuss it first]
 3 Ft: [we sent out the] three
 4 (.....)
 5 (0.5)
 6 Ep: oh did you good
 7 Ft: y[es]
 8 Ep: [ye]s [uh huh]
 9 Ft: [so that] was done
 10 (0.6)
 11 Ep: errn(d) did you get the other referral forms
 12 Ft: ((s.v.)) yes
 13 Ep: ((s.v.)) goo:d that's [fine]
 14 Ft: [yes] and some queries as well
 15 (.[.....].....)
 16 Ep: [mmhmm]
 → 17 Ep: ((r.v.)) well we can deal um=
 18 Ft: =yes all right=
 → 19 Ep: =can we [deal firstly with um] (2.1) not Stephen
 20 Whitemouse but the other one
 21 Ft: [if you are satisfied you know]
 22 (1.0)
 Ep: nmm that's um=
 Mt: =umm=
 Ep: =clarify why y'know why you why you [()] feel that
 er
 → Mt: [Phillip]
 Mt: yes a ha
 → Ep: no Philip Boge you are worried about aren't you?
 Mt: yes a ha
 Ft: ((s.v.)) mm hmm=
 → Ep: =who was the third one?
 → Mt: umm Carol Smith
 (0.7)
 → Ft: ((s.v.)) r[ight]
 Mt: [that]'s righ[t]
 Ep: [n]ow what did we do about her
 the last time?

In the first of these two examples (RMSJ/1), the head teacher's (Ht) query can be heard to invite the educational psychologist (Ep) to nominate a 'first' for discussion ('who would you like to discuss first') to which the educational psychologist replies with a request ('can we deal with Richard Rogers first'), which is then granted ('yes'). The second example (WJS/7) is more drawn out as the educational

psychologist demonstrably seeks to recall the name of the referral he wishes to discuss first. As in the first example, the psychologist makes a request that they ‘deal firstly with...’ a particular pupil that he has in mind but the name eludes him. He therefore instigates an elimination procedure, naming one of the referrals that he does ‘not’ want to discuss first (‘not Stephen Whitemouse’) but ‘the other one’.ⁱ Such a reference to ‘one’ is readily understandable as meaning a ‘one’ from the collection ‘referrals whom we are discussing on the occasion of *this* referral meeting.’ However, as becomes apparent in Mt’s next turn, the particular ‘one’ intended by the psychologist is not unequivocal because there is in fact more than one other ‘ones’ on the list of referrals to be talked about. Thus, the teacher can be heard to select and offer ‘Phillip’ as a candidate nomination from this collection. The offer can thus be confirmed or disconfirmed. As is evident from the psychologist’s disconfirmation (‘no Phillip Boge’) the teacher’s nomination is incorrect; this ‘one’ is not the one he means. Eventually, the psychologist clarifies the matter by asking directly, ‘who was the third one?’ He receives in reply, from Mt, the name of this ‘one’, namely ‘Carol Smith’ and Ft confirms this (‘right’). Both Ft’s ‘right’ and the following ‘that’s right’ from the Mt can be heard to accede to the request (and are so treated by the psychologist, as evidenced by what he does in his turn that follows) originally made by the psychologist to ‘deal firstly’ with the particular referral that he has in mind. Having arrived at the correct nomination, the psychologist then proceeds to ask his first question.

If the conversational objects used in these two nomination sequences are examined closely it can be appreciated that, with respect to example (1), the sequence begins with a *query* as to whom the psychologist would like to discuss first, followed by a *nomination* in the form of a *request* that *answers* the query which is then *granted*. In other words, this nomination sequence is composed of two adjacency pairs: firstly, a question and an answer and secondly a request and an accession, where the answer and the request are produced not only in the same turn but also where the answer is constructed in the form of a request. As far as example (2) is concerned, the sequence is composed of the following components: (a) a request; (b) an identification insertion sequence consisting of: (i) a first ‘negative’ identification, (ii) a nomination in terms of the collection to which the intended nomination belongs, (iii) a candidate nomination from the collection, (iv) a disconfirmation of the candidate nomination, (v) a question as to the name of the ‘third’ member of the collection, and (vi) an answer, and then (c) an accession or granting.

It may be worth noting that the initiation of these nomination sequences is done by different persons in each case. In the first example the sequence is initiated by the head teacher who, by inquiring as to whom the psychologist would like to discuss first, can be heard to invite him to nominate the referral, an invitation that the psychologist readily accepts. In the second extract, in contrast, the nomination sequence is initiated by the psychologist. The context is preceding talk about referral forms and letters of permission, matters ancillary to the referral talk and indeed the referral itself. The psychologist’s initiation of the sequence – via his request – can be heard then to move the discussion

forward to a new phase, so to speak, and thereby to close the preceding topic of discussion.

I will turn shortly to an analysis of this and other ‘first questions’ asked by the educational psychologist. Before doing so, however, some consideration must be given to some other instances of the nomination sequence. These are not nominations of first ‘ones’ but nominations of second and third referrals in the assembled collection of such referrals. The following extract, for instance, contains an example of the sequential organisation of the termination of discussion of a first referral and the commencement of discussion of a second. It can be observed that the psychologist terminates the first and then initiates (nominates) the second.

(3) RMSJ/2

- 1 Ep: ... it'll give me yeah it'll give me a better picture
 2 anyway of his behaviour
 3 Ht: mm
 → 4 Ep: ermm very quickly Colin Robson
 5 Ht: ah
 6 Ep: was he the one that went to Chestfeld?
 7 Ht: no no he's the one I wanted you to test but he wasn't
 8 in school he he his school attendance is appalling but
 9 we got him in school over the past few weeks
 10 Ep: yeah
 11 Ht: on a fairly regular basis

Here, then, the psychologist can be heard to bring to a close discussion of one referral prior to the nomination (‘ermm very quickly Colin Robson’) of the next one. The closing consists of a *formulation* (cf. Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970; Heritage and Watson, 1979, 1980) of what the just-discussed intervention procedures will amount to: a period of observation in the classroom will yield a ‘better picture any of his behaviour’. This formulation is then acknowledged by the teacher. The conversational floor thus having been returned to the psychologist, and after a ‘place holder,’ a new nomination is made via a naming of the child to be considered (‘very quickly Colin Robson’). Immediately after the nomination is made by the psychologist the teacher acknowledges it, returning the floor to the psychologist who then asks his first question about this referral. The sequence here then is: (a) a closing formulation; (b) an acknowledgement; (c) a nomination; and (d) an acknowledgement.

Similarly, in the following example the psychologist brings to a close the teacher’s remarks about his planned intervention with his ‘right right now.’ Clearly, the psychologist could have returned the floor to the teacher with a continuer. Instead, however, he deploys ‘right right now’ in order to indicate that he does in fact have something to say, and indeed he then proceeds to say it by combining in his one utterance a nomination of the next referral to be discussed and a first question about it.

(4) RMSJ/3

1 Ht: ... if they have had any comments or any queries would
 2 they please come and see me so you're covered that way
 3 Ep: right right now what about this other one Michael?
 4 Ht: Fitzgerald
 5 Ep: Fitzgerald
 6 Ht: Michael Fitzgerald mm hmm well ah this is father's
 7 request

The sequence here, then, is as follows: (a) closing acknowledgement ('right'); (b) a transition marker/place holder ('right now'); (c) a first question/nomination.

There are then some particular sequences involved in achieving the identification or nomination of the referral to be discussed. Furthermore, these sequences involve collaborative work on the part of the speakers involved. Like stories, nominations take more than an utterance to do. In the case of first nominations they involve requests by the psychologist and grantings or agreements from the teacher. In the case of subsequent nominations in the series of referrals to be described these sequences involve closings (of which there are several types – some collaborative, some involving a closing token and a transition marker) and then nominations.

Before moving on to consider the sequential organization of the description of the referral it is important to consider some categorical aspects of the sequences examined with respect to the nomination procedures. Firstly, it is noticeable that the teacher in both of these instances recognizably *defers* to the psychologist in the nomination sequences. Thus, it is clear from these extracts that it up to the psychologist to select from the alternative referrals comprising the collections to be discussed just who is to be talked about. More precisely, it is the psychologist who decides the *order* of referral discussion. Such deference suggests an asymmetry in their relationship, with the psychologist apparently having 'rights' to make the selections that determine who will be spoken of and in what order. Secondly, at least in the selection of first cases to be discussed, it is noticeable that the psychologist does not instruct the teachers nor simply inform them of the identity of the referral. Rather, a noticeable component of the nomination is the use of a *request*. In putting it this way, the psychologist can be heard to ask permission for a particular child to be discussed even as the teacher seeks to be told the identity of that child. In other words, the determination of the order of referral discussion is recognizably *polite*. Thirdly, it is also noticeable that in these sequences it is the psychologist who aligns as *nominator* with the teacher correspondingly aligned as *recipient* of the nomination. Such category alignment entails a particular distribution of speaking positions for the participants, with the psychologist in first position and the teacher in second position. As will be shown in due course this categorical arrangement has consequences for and is perpetuated in the ensuing phase of the consultation, namely describing the problem.

Sequential Orders of Problem Description

In these meetings two major tasks are accomplished: the referral problem is described and some plan of response is discussed. Consequently, once a particular referral has been selected for discussion via the nomination sequence, subsequent talk about it is routinely divided into two main 'phases'.ⁱⁱ Drew (2006) speaks of the 'phases' of a trial, such as examination and cross-examination. These are formally marked phases of the trial in that there are procedures for initiating and terminating them. The question is whether it is reasonable to speak of 'phases' of the referral meeting. The data corpus shows that broadly there are two such phases, a first in which the concern is with describing the problem, and the second with talking about what to do next. In these 'phases' the participants align themselves in terms of the membership categories or discourse identities (Zimmerman 1998) of informant and recipient. However, again in broad terms, in the describing phase the teacher is the informant and the psychologist the recipient, whilst in the response phase the psychologist is the informant and the teacher the recipient. The focus in the remainder of this chapter will be upon the descriptive phase of the referral meeting talk.

Descriptions of deviance are produced in several sequential contexts within the referral talk. Firstly, they are produced in and as answers to questions, of which there are several types, and each question shapes the character of the description so produced. Secondly, they are produced in response to continuers via which the teacher is invited to continue talking, to produce further description and to elaborate prior descriptions. Thirdly, they may be volunteered, and hence may be sequence initiators. Fourthly and finally, there are 'second assessments'. However, in all these contexts, it is notable that descriptions, both elicited and given, are concerned with generality. This point will be considered more fully after a brief discussion of types of 'first questions', questions by the psychologist designed to elicit initial information about the student and the problem he or she presents.

Initiating the 'Descriptive Phase'

Descriptions overwhelmingly are produced or generated, firstly, through question and answer sequences. As noted above, broadly, the psychologist asks questions and the teacher provides answers. The key point is that as first pair parts of adjacency pairs, questions shape and constrain what may be done in the next turn. They do so in the sense that questions make answers conditionally relevant, but they also make relevant an answer to the particularities of the question, i.e. its particular or specific content (Watson 1997). Therefore, after a review of different types of question and their positioning, attention will be focused on the content of the questions – i.e. what sorts of thing the questions are seeking as answers. It is here that an indication can then be found of the generality of the descriptions of deviance that are

then produced as answers. Of course, there remains the fact that descriptions are also produced in other sequential environments: they may be produced as responses to continuers, they may be volunteered and they may be done as 'second assessments'.

In examining questions and answers in referral meetings, it is notable that questions vary in several respects. They may be open or closed/directed. They may be first questions, follow-up questions or questions that open up a new aspect for discussion. First questions are either open or they refer to some previous knowledge and therefore refer to some specific aspect. The different sorts of questions can be seen to be deployed in different places and for different reasons. That is, 'open' questions are used in getting the discussion off the ground. They invite the recipient to select whatever it is that they want to focus on. They are often used as first questions therefore. Alternatively, first questions may be 'closed'. This typically occurs when the psychologist refers to prior knowledge. So, a first task is to see what kinds of question are used, when and with what consequences. Once this is done the focus will turn to the sorts of thing that the questions ask for, i.e. their content.

There are, then, several types of question. Type 1 questions are general inquiry questions. They are 'open' questions. As is also the case with such questions inviting the presentation of patients' concerns in medical consultations (Heritage and Robinson 2006), they have three primary features: firstly, they invite the presentation of teachers' concerns in the next turn; secondly, they are topically 'general' in that do not specify the precise nature of the aspects of the referral to be addressed and hence, thirdly, they permit teachers to present their concerns in their own terms.ⁱⁱⁱ Type 2 questions are 'directed' or 'closed' questions. As with open questions, they too invite the teacher to speak about his or her concerns but unlike open questions they do specify particular aspects of the referral to be addressed by their recipient and thereby constrain teachers to deal with the aspects specified.

There are three sub-types of directed or closed questions. They are (a) those that specify some aspect of the referral that the questioner wants the recipient to address (follow-up questions are a variant of this type), (b) those which present candidate descriptions for confirmation, disconfirmation or elaboration, and (c) those which present a choice of candidate descriptions for which a selection is to be made for confirmation, disconfirmation or elaboration. Each of these gets deployed in a different sequential environment and is differently procedurally consequential.

These types of questions are variously deployed in relation to the tasks carried out in the descriptive phase of the referral consultation. I will begin with the initiation of referral description, turning, then, to 'focusing in' and 'shifting focus.' Termination of description will be taken up in relation to the next phase of the consultation, deciding what to do next.

First questions

Once the identity of the referral to be discussed has been established the description of the problem begins. This is achieved with ‘first questions’. The psychologist not only identifies the child to be discussed but also starts off the discussion thereafter. First questions fall into several types: (a) open questions, (b) questions that specify an aspect of the referent to be discussed, (c) candidate categorizations, and (d) questions with a choice of candidate categorizations.

Open questions

(5) RMSJ/273

→ 1 Ep: right right now what about this other one Terence
 2 Ht: Clark
 3 Ep: Clark
 4 Ht: Terence Clark mm hmm well ah this is father’s request...

In this instance the opening question is combined in the same utterance as the nomination. This question, in contrast to the others above, is open ended and therefore allows the teacher to answer it as s/he sees fit. By saying ‘what about this other one’ the only instructions given are to talk about the child in question. However, the question is still constraining in so far as it names the child to be spoken of. Here then, the educational psychologist merely says ‘what about...?’ thereby inviting the teacher to address whatever aspect she chooses at this point in the consultation.

In the following extract, for example, the psychologist begins with the report that he knows nothing about the case. As the teacher’s response to this demonstrates, she takes it as an invitation to speak. However, no particular topic is indicated; the question is an ‘open’ one:

(6) MP/28

1 Ep: ((r.v.)) an umm (1.4) e-urrm (0.6) this is Catherine is
 2 it it’s [Catherine the] one that=
 3 Ft: [Cathy Jones]
 4 Ep: =I’m calling for ((s.v)) y[es:] ((s.v.)) mhmm (1.0)
 5 Ft: [mm]
 6 (1.0)
 → 7 Ep: I’m in the nick about Cathy and we=
 8 =haven’t had anything back
 9 Ft: hhh. shall I just (0.5) sort of say what she’s like in
 10 the home as far as I went erm tch well she’s in her
 11 she’s (0.5) the oldest out of a family of two she’s got
 12 a younger brother and she lives in quite a bad area...

As the teacher's response indicates, she treats the psychologist's question as an invitation to 'say' something about Cathy. She proposes to do so with respect to 'what she's like in the home' and without waiting for a verbal acknowledgement of her proposal, proceeds with the production of a first description: 'she's the oldest out of a family of two'.

(7) AH/1

1 P: mm hmm yeah I see does he have any friends in the
 2 classroom?
 3 T: (.....) January when I came into the class Barry was very
 4 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
 5 situation but I think all children do with a new
 6 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
 7 round the room screaming 'I'm taking no notice, I'm not
 8 bothered (...) I don't care what you say' and if you
 9 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
 10 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
 11 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
 12 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
 13 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
 14 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
 15 kick them or swear at them ·hhh and if that didn't work
 16 y'know if I didn't jump up immediately and (...) straight
 17 to Barry he'd pick up the chairs and start throwing
 18 them across the classroom and (...) eff off
 19 P: mm hmmm

Interestingly, in this extract, even though the psychologist (P) asks a question about whether the child has friends in the classroom, and thereby indicates the aspect of the referent to be addressed, the teacher (T) constructs her answer as a story whose 'punchline', whose point, is prefaced by a 'but', as in Sacks's observations of using 'but' as a way to focus. This suggests something, possibly, about the positioning of descriptions of the problem (the deviance), just as descriptions or reports of irremediability are similarly positioned.

Sacks (1992a: 12) says:

there may well be ways that persons go about attempting to focus on some topic. Thus, he suggests that 'if you're going to put somebody down, people regularly say things like 'I like her but she's an awful nag'. One thing that may be involved there is that if one said, 'Mary is an awful nag', then what one sets up is things like, 'someone else is an awful nag', 'what other things are rotten about Mary' etc. (nb. these are different ways in which the talk is organized). If one wants to focus on that Mary's an awful nag, then it may be that what one does is to indicate, by such a thing as 'I like her but...' that

that's what's being proposed; not, eg., that you don't like Mary and now a list of rotten things about Mary is up.

Perhaps it is the case that answers to open questions operate in this way (but is the focus already provided by closed questions?).

Directed Questions 1: referent aspect specification

It is not always the case that 'describing the problem' begins with an open-ended question. Sometimes, as here, they begin by drawing on, and seeking to extend already acquired information. This involves the educational psychologist specifying in his or her invitation to talk or question some aspect of the referred pupil about which the teacher(s) should now speak. With respect to the data, then, let us turn to the start of the discussion of Philip Boge in WJS. After the psychologist has identified the referral for discussion, he initiates discussion by asking a question.

(8) WJS/17

1 Ep: (here's the) ol' Phillip Boge business [err]
 2 Mt: [yes] ah ha
 3 (0.7)
 4 Mt: oh he's the awkward on
 → 5 Ep: (they) say-er he doesn't concentrate at all well_er[mm]
 6 he appears unable=
 7 Mt: [no]
 8 Ep: =attention at times ·hhh (0.5) are you worried about
 9 hearing in fact?
 10 well I was...

It can be noted that this question refers back to some previous knowledge. That is, the aspect of the referent that is specified for address relates to a prior characterization of the child as one who 'doesn't concentrate at all well'. That is, the educational psychologist initiates discussion of the referral by naming the child to be talked about. The Mt acknowledges this topic initiation and can be therefore be understood to have returned the floor to the Ep. In the absence of further talk from the Ep, the Mt offers a first assessment – 'he's the awkward one' – which is ignored by the Ep who instead then offers a first topic to be addressed. Here, then, the EP draws upon some prior knowledge – what the teacher has written on the referral form – as a resource for asking a question. The prior knowledge or description – that the child appears unable to pay attention at times – is here being used as a problem to be explained. If the child does not pay attention, then this may be because he has some kind of hearing problem. Descriptions have explanations.

One can say that this question constrains the teacher to answer it; he has to address the matter introduced in the question. This is the issue of conditional relevance. Questions set agendas for responses; they make relevant not just the production of answers but particular sorts of answer, namely ones that are relevant to the question (cf. politicians' answers which ostensibly answer but also avoid answering)

(9) WJS/7

1 Ep: who was the third one?
 2 Mt: umm Christine Watson
 3 (0.7)
 4 Ft: ((s.v.)) [right]
 5 Mp: [that's] ri[ght]
 6 Ep: [now] what did we do about her last
 7 [time]?
 8 Mt: [no] I [was]
 9 Ep: [bec]ause that doesn't ring a bell=
 10 Mt: =I withdrew I withdrew her referral form because..

This question refers to a 'what' that was done with respect to the child on the previous occasion that she was discussed.

(10) WJS/9

1 Ep: okay ((r.v.)) well that seems som[ething you're happy
 2 about dealing with]=
 3 Ft: [that.....]
 4]
 5 Ep: =in school g:ood [1.0] umm Stephen Whitefield urmm_you
 6 were (0.8) it was=
 7 Mt: [yeh]
 → 8 Ep: =an interesting kind of err: (1.8) y'know response you
 9 made to th-form itself that's what impressed me
 10 actually [Da::vid] y'know=
 11 Mt: [was it yes a ha]
 12 Ep: =it was err .thh[h y'kno]w
 13 Mt: [actually] yr: to be quite honest I
 14 can't remember what I wrote now

As the arrowed utterances in extracts (8), (9) and (10) indicate, the psychologist's question is followed not only by an answer to the question but also by an answer that addresses the topic mentioned in the question. Thus, in extract (8) the psychologist asks a question about the child's 'hearing' - is the teacher 'worried' about the child's hearing, and in the next turn the teacher responds 'well I was ...' and then

proceeds to recount how the problem of inattention has now receded and hence he is no longer worried about a possible hearing problem. Similarly, in extract (9) the psychologist asks what was done about the child the last time they talked about her. The teacher then answers this question by pointing out that he had in fact then withdrawn the referral form and hence nothing had been done. In extract (10) the psychologist states that he found the teacher's response on the referral form 'interesting' and can be heard to invite the teacher to elaborate on this. The teacher's answer to this is to say that he cannot remember what he wrote. In each extract, the psychologist's question is taken up in the teacher's answer.

It is certainly the case that, like problem presentation in medical consultations, the questions used by the educational psychologist are often shaped by preceding interactions. That is to say, the educational psychologist may already have received some information in a letter or telephone call or from a previous meeting.

Directed Questions 2: candidate descriptions

In the following extracts there are cases of *candidate categorizations* (as a sub-type of referent aspect specification). As the extracts show, the teacher(s) may confirm or disconfirm these:

(11) RMSJ/1

- 1 Ht: now who would you like to discuss first?
2 Ep: can we do Richard Rogers very quickly?
3 Ht: yes
→ 4 Ep: ermm he is difficult is he?
5 Ht: he's proving as difficult (as ever he) used to be yeah

Thus, the psychologist's first question makes relevant an answer that addresses the topic specified in the question. Likewise, in the following extract:

(12) RMSJ/250

- 1 Ht: ermm very quickly Colin Robson
2 Ep: ah
→ 3 Ht: was he the one that went to Nuffield?
4 Ep: no no he's the one I wanted you to test but he wasn't
5 Ht: in school...

Here, then, the psychologist asks a question about whether this child was 'the one that went to Nuffield?' Again, the teacher responds by answering the question directly, 'no no he's the one ...'

Achieving Granularity and Detail

So far, then, I have considered the constraining character of the psychologist's first questions – those that follow (or are sometimes combined with) the identification of the referral to be discussed. The issue now is what follows first questions and answers? In contrast with patients' problem presentations, which are said to be brief because of physicians' interventions, those of the teachers tend to be lengthy in part because of the lack of interventions and in part because of the use of continuers that encourage further problem presentation. As I shall show, teachers are encouraged to talk further. It is not just the 'problem' that is discussed but the child as a whole (relevant aspects thereof). This is not to say that the educational psychologist does not ask questions and thereby have an impact on what the teacher says. In what follows I will be looking at these questions and will seek to ascertain how they affect the descriptions of the problems that are produced. One issue here is how the problem presentations are initiated.

In his discussion of membership categorization, Sacks (1972a, 1974a) observes that the 'economy rule' provides for the use of a single membership category as adequate in making reference to persons. With respect to ordinary conversation, adequate reference is recurrently achieved in such an economical manner. However, whilst this observation may hold for practical and ordinary conversational purposes, it is open to speakers, under perhaps different circumstances and for rather different purposes, to provide 'more than adequate reference' via the use of more than one membership category. Moreover, in certain 'institutional' settings it would seem that it is incumbent on speakers to provide 'more than (conversationally) adequate reference' via the use of more than one membership category and/or their predicates. In such circumstances, it may well be that provision of a single membership category may be deemed 'inadequate' for particular organizational purposes, with a single membership category thereby recognized and treated as indicative of an 'incomplete' description.

In general, 'as an interactional practice, describing is organized along a number of dimensions' (Schegloff 1972). One of these is 'granularity' or 'degree of resolution' (Schegloff 2003). This refers to how different descriptions 'zoom in on' or 'pan out from' specificity, including or excluding particular details (see also Jefferson [1985] on 'unpackaging a gloss'). In a variety of contexts, such as story-telling and announcements (Goodwin 1996; Sacks 1974b; Terasaki 2004), generalized glosses project subsequent elaboration. For example, Sacks (1974b) noted how story prefaces frequently include gloss-like descriptors that project their own elaboration, for example, the descriptor 'wonderful thing' in the preface. Compare, for example, "the most wonderful thing happened to me today" and the more fine-grained announcement that "I received a raise today". In **RMSJ/273** this is what 'this is father's request' does: it projects an account.

The possibilities mentioned above became a focus when it was observed that the teachers, psychologists and social workers often made use of what can be called 'multiple references' in their

‘extended’ descriptions of pupils. The teachers describe, and are encouraged to ‘talk at length’. This talking at length is achieved in various ways. It may be possible to say that this is done in two main ways: through the use of continuers and through follow-up questions. The key point to make here is that following first questions and their answers a recurrent feature of referral consultations is a *focusing in*. That is, the focus of attention is sharpened, the degree of granularity increased. There are two main interactional methods for achieving this: (a) follow up questions and (b) the use of acknowledgements and continuers. In this section I will consider the sequential organization of the accomplishment of this task. There are two main vehicles for doing this: *questions and answers* and *continuers and continuations*.

Follow-up questions

Follow-up questions are used to clarify, extend and elaborate prior descriptions. They may involve *candidate descriptions*. Thus, they may make use of the resource of previously made descriptions. They may be used in the sequential environment of last turn, earlier description, previously supplied information. Follow-up questions can be closed (as in formulations and clarification requests). Follow-up questions address specific topics, typically with respect to prior turns (though this is not exclusively the case). They may be used, for example, in *clarification requests*. This question is, then, a *follow-up* question: it occurs as a response to a previous description. As has been shown, this may involve a description made on a previous occasion and one made in a prior turn

(13) WJS/16

- 1 Ep: do you mean coordination er(-) in the sense of his
 2 he's=
 3 Ft: [well he's so gawky]=
 → 4 Ep: =he's clumsy and yes (0.5) yeah mmhmm.
 5 Ft: =[you know] (-) [yeah he is really(-)] quite clumsy.
 → 6 Ep: But he is also restless?
 7 Ft: Yeah very.
 8 Mt: Mm.
 9 Ep: Mmm.

In this extract the educational psychologist builds the follow-up question as a clarification request. He seeks clarification as to whether the pupil ‘has coordination problems’ in the sense of being ‘clumsy’ and whether he is ‘also restless?’ In each case, the psychologist can be heard to seek confirmation of these ‘assessments.’ The teacher provides the confirmations.

Likewise, in the following extract (14), the educational psychologist seeks confirmation of the candidate categorisation that the referral disturbs others ‘when he's not working’:

(14) WJS/22

- 1 Ep: ...so well in-in that case erm you-you feel pretty happy
 2 that that's at least [where he is]
 3 Mt: [that's at least where he [is yes
 4 oh] yes a [ha]
 5 Ep: [yeah
 6 .hhh] [yeah] ummm and (0.6) what about attain(-)
 7 well no let's just say umm (1.2) what is the main
 8 problem then?
 9 Mt: .thh well I would say i-it's mainly behavioural [it's]
 10 this p-er it-it is this problem of the=
 11 Ep: [mhmm]
 12 Mt: =fact that he cannot settle for very long
 13 Ep: mhmm
 → 14 Mt: that in the process of not settling he d-disturbs too
 15 many other children
 16 Ep: mh[mm]
 17 Mt: [so] much of the time .hhh an th-thing is that in my
 18 classroom situation it's very difficult to isolate
 19 anybody because it's such a small room and we're so
 20 cramped to [get]er .hhh [it's] not a case of sitting
 21 him by himself because you can't sit anybody=
 22 Ep: [yeah] [yeah]
 23 Mt: =by themselves in that ro[om] you know
 24 Ep: [no]
 25 Ft: No
 26 Mt: umm (0.8)so r-really from that point of view I-I just
 27 wondered if there was any-there was anything that we
 28 can sort of pinpoint specifically [.hh] where he might
 29 be having=
 30 Ep: [mm]
 31 Mt: =problems .hhh an I've just av-have never even
 32 considered
 → 33 Ep: Th-when they say er disturbing others is that when he's
 34 not working?
 35 Mt: Mm(-) well (0.7) mainly ye-heh-heh-yes I-I was goin'
 36 to=
 37 Ep: [yeah]
 38 Mt: =although even when he is working he do' this is it he
 39 doesn't get down to his work qui-he he'll do two or
 40 three and then
 41 Ep: [mm]
 42 (0.8)
 43 Mt: I dunno h-he gets fed up with it doesn't want to do it
 44 anymore
 45 Ep: mmhmm

Here a class of 'disturbing others' namely 'disturbing others ... when he's not working' is used. The teacher confirms this but also selects another from the class, namely 'disturbing when he *is* working'

So, candidate descriptions, categorizations and assessments are offered as clarification requests or formulations that are correction sollicitors, as in this candidate categorization:

(15) MP/757

1 Ep: although she's missing errm (1.0) what is it? two
 2 eighty four out of two hundred and one that's awful
 3 isn't it (0.7) less than fifty percent
 4 (1.8)
 5 Ft: it's improved though hasn't it she's 'appy keen
 6 Mt: [mm]
 7 Ep: [mm]hmm

In the following extract, the psychologist focuses in by using a candidate categorization to clarify the previous categorization.

(16) WJS/16

→ 1 EP: do you mean coordination er(-) in the sense of his
 2 he's=
 3 Ft: [well he's so gawky]=
 → 4 Ep: he's clumsy and yes (0.5) yeah mmhmm
 5 Ft: =[you know] (-) [yeah he is really (-)] quite clumsy
 → 6 Ep: but he's also restless?
 7 Ft: yeah very
 8 Mt: mm
 9 Ep: mmm

In this example, the teacher has mentioned that the child has 'coordination problems'. This attribute covers a multitude of possibilities. As a collection, it encompasses various types of coordination problem. It is to which type or category of coordination problem the teacher is referring that the educational psychologist seeks clarification. As the educational psychologist says, via his use of a candidate categorization: is it a problem of gawkiness?

(17) WJS/13

1 Ep: th-when they say er disturbing others is that when he's
 2 not working?
 3 Mt: mm(-) well (0.7) mainly ye-heh-heh-yes I-I was goin'
 4 to=
 5 Ep: [yeah]
 6 Mt: =although even when he is working he do' this is it he
 7 doesn't get down to his work qui-he he'll do two or
 8 three and then (0.8)=
 9 Ep: [mm]
 10 Mt: =I dunno h-he gets fed up with it doesn't want to do it
 11 anymore
 12 Ep: mmhmm

This correction solicitor or candidate categorization requests clarification of a prior categorization of the pupil as one who 'disturbs' other children. Note that it used with respect to subsequent categorizations not just first ones. Thus, the same range of questions, apart from open questions, namely questions with referent aspect specification, candidate categorizations and a choice of candidate categorizations are used both with respect to (a) first topics and (b) subsequent topics.

In each of these extracts, then, the psychologist provides the teacher with a *candidate categorization* for disconfirmation or confirmation. Thus, these types of question may be produced as requests for clarification of prior talk containing categorizations on the part of the teacher, drawing on materials already produced in the referral meeting, or as will shown in the following section, they may be produced as topic initiations - new aspects of the referral to be discussed.

(18) WJS/

1 Mt: I dunno I haven't done enough of these to find out whe-
 2 whether [I'm gi' doing it unintentionally or not you
 3 know ·hh yes a umm]
 4 Ep: [no no (-) I-I just wondered whether it was err
 5 y'know] something you-you tend to do(-) to
 6 err on the safe s[ide perhaps]
 7 Mt: [I (-) well] really I think this is
 8 probably a tendency you know er-errgh ((s.v.)) I-I do
 9 tend to do thus [umm]
 10 Ep: [mhm]m
 11 (1.1)
 12 Mt: that's my that's a fault in my makeup really=
 13 =I-wou-would tend to underestimate these things
 14 slightly
 15 Ep: mhmm
 16 Mt: umm (0.8) but that way you know rather he
 17 he['s certainly lively]
 → 18 Ep: [what do you mean] er-you prefer to underestimate
 19 them deliberately (-) or-or that's the [way] things
 20 turn out when you get=
 21 Mt: [umm]
 22 Ep: =[the]m corroborated ·h[hh]

The educational psychologist then starts to ask questions. Up until now the teacher has been permitted/encouraged to describe the case in extended detail. Now the psychologist begins to question her about the case.

(19) AH/1

1 Ep: and now this behaviour you've described is it more
 2 often than () less. I'll start that one again sorry,
 3 does he do that more often throughout the week than he
 4 doesn't do it, like [he's]
 5 Ft: [he's] more often disruptive than
 6 he is a good boy
 7 Ep: he's yeah err and that's every day?
 8 Ft: rrr well sometimes at his best I think he's been really
 9 good for half a day never for the full day
 10 Ep: mm hm

In this segment the psychologist asks a question about the frequency of the deviant behaviour. This is one of the *standard questions* that the psychologist asks.

Continuers and continuations

A second method involves continuers and continuations. Another pervasive sequential feature of teacher/psychologist talk is the acknowledgement or continuer. Thus, an observable feature of the talk is that it is extended, not only through further questioning on the part of the psychologist but by the use of these minimal utterances. Teachers' answers to the psychologist's *questions* are standardly followed by acknowledgements or continuers. Thus,

(20) WJS/18

1 Ep: you say er he doesn't concentrate at all well ermm
 2 [he] appears unable to pay=
 3 T1: [no]
 4 Ep: =attention at times ·hhh ermm (0.5) are you worried
 5 about hearing in fact?
 6 T1: well I was=
 7 Ep: =mmhmm=
 8 T1: =umm as a-again you see now-what-m_I must admit that-um
 9 this has been entirely my fault ·hh these orig-the
 10 original referral umm_I-I started filling in forms
 11 (0.6) about I can't remember the exact time but it's
 12 about four weeks a-ago
 13 Ep: mmhmm
 14 T1: what happened was I was off for a week with flu=
 15 Ep: =mmhmm=
 16 T1: =then we had this week's holiday=
 17 Ep: =mmhmm=
 18 T1: =ermm and then I was of for another two days during the
 19 next week so you know i-in fact_all the time went past

20 Ep: mmhmm=
21 T1: =and it was during that time that things changed a
22 little bit you see=
23 Ep: =mmhmm mmhmm=
24 T1: =so when I came to look back on that one again (0.5)
25 umm an this business about his hearing ·hh I now find
26 that I'm less bothered about it because (0.5) I realise
27 sort of i-in the intervening..

Acknowledgements may also be seen to comprise a class of utterances that, according to Jefferson (1984: [page no.]), 'can themselves be deployable devices with consequences for the shape of the interaction'. In fact, Jefferson distinguishes three types of acknowledgement token, the first of which is associated with the phenomenon of topical shift and involves the production of an acknowledgement token as a prior to pursuing one's own overlapped talk. This kind of acknowledgement token is said to typically take the form of 'yeah' or 'yes', a token that, according to Jefferson, prefaces and indicates a preparedness to shift from reciprocity to speakership. A second type of acknowledgement token involves and exhibits what Jefferson calls 'passive reciprocity' in that its user is proposing that the co-speaker is still in the midst of some course of talk and shall go on talking. A third type of acknowledgement token is the 'news receipt' or 'topicalizer', a token which is used to demonstrate an interest in being told more, which indeed encourages the telling of more, and warrants the introduction of the matter in the first place.

It is the second of these types of acknowledgement token which appears to be in regular and routine use in referral meetings. Through their use, the psychologist can be heard to be 'doing' passive reciprocity, exhibiting an inclination or preparedness that the teacher shall 'continue' to talk. Through the use of such tokens the psychologist can be heard to be 'aligning as recipient' and proposing to the teacher that he or she continues to talk about the pupil. It is a way of recognisably yielding the floor at possible completion points in the teacher's turn and where, therefore, transition to the psychologist becomes relevant. It is a way, in other words, of getting the teacher to continue to provide information about the pupil.

Similar observations have been made by Schegloff (1981) in his discussion of 'continuers'. These (Schegloff, 1982: 81) are 'utterances which are used to exhibit on the part of their producer an understanding that an extended unit of talk is under way by another, and that it is not yet or may not yet be (even ought not yet be) complete'. Further, utterances of this type class display 'the stance that the speaker of that extended unit should continue talking and in that continued talking should continue that extended unit' (ibid.). Utterances such as 'uh huh' and 'mm hmm' and other minimal vocalizations demonstrate this understanding, and take this stance, by passing the opportunity to produce a full turn

at talk and instead return the floor to the other speaker.

Acknowledgements as invitations to talk also furnish the conditions for the teacher to develop the topic and extend topically their answer/story. These acknowledgements or continuers are interactional or sequential consequentia in that they do indeed return the floor to the previous speaker and that they produce continuations of the descriptions in the previous speaker's turn. It is via the use of this device that the categorization sequence can be extended and a string or chain of categorizations or categorization sequences can be constructed or assembled in the talk.

That is, how far this is deployable varies. In some cases, it may be deployed for only a turn or two before the onset of a new question. Alternatively, whilst these two examples only extend the sequence by a turn or two and this is frequently the case, occasionally the acknowledgement token can be used to extend the categorization sequence for a much larger number of turns. This is evident in the following extract:

(21) MP/981

1 T1: heh (-) everythin'
 2 T2: well (0.8) as I see it (0.5) er he always has been a
 3 nuisance I mean I hear from other people who've had him
 4 you know from the time when he was in the first and
 5 second year that's the way he spoke to teacher in the
 6 way he behaved in class
 7 Ep: mmhmm
 8 T2: you know a continuous disruptive element in the class
 9 Ep: mmhmm
 10 T2: I've had im now since last September
 11 Ep: mmhmm mm hm
 12 T2: and (0.8) up till err Easter (0.6) though-i-his
 13 attitude to: to teaching he er(-) to me particularly
 14 (we have er(-) gathered from what it is) attitude to
 15 teaching is one of utter noncooperation and contempt
 16 (0.7)
 17 Ep: mmhmm
 18 T2: and (0.5) but (0.9) this was only in the in the manner
 19 of you know he wasn't prepared to work (0.5) he-e
 20 wasn't as far as I was concerned up till this term
 21 positively disruptive
 22 Ep: mmhmm

Where extract (21) indicates that the acknowledgement token can be used to generate a series of relatively short categorization turns, each of which is interspersed with an acknowledgement/continuer, it is also the case that a far more frugal use of this device may in fact generate an extended and uninterrupted combination of categorizations. This is evident in the following extract:

(22) AH/1

1 Ep: mm
 2 Ft: (...) he'd go and punch them or kick them or swear at
 3 them ·hhh and if that didn't work y'know if I didn't
 4 jump up immediately and (.....) straight to Ralph he'd
 5 pick up the chairs and start throwing them across the
 6 classroom and (....) eff off
 7 Ep: mm hm
 8 Ft: and he just was really trying to show that he wanted
 9 attention all the time
 10 Ep: mm hm
 11 Ft: but he'd come in some mornings and he was really good
 12 and he'd write a story and he could write about two
 13 sides and it was really interesting it was fluent it
 14 was really good his art work's good when he wants to
 15 other mornings he'd come in he'd say `I'm doing nothing
 16 I'm not going to do an effing thing' and he won't no
 17 matter what you do you can cuddle him you can talk talk
 18 to him nicely you can sit him down if you (got him away
 19 if) we have the supernumary if she can take him out and
 20 if he doesn't want to that day he'll do absolutely
 21 nothing (1.0) now the other children have started
 22 following in the same things he's decided `I'm going
 23 home' so I had a stage where I had to more or less
 24 stand by the door for part of the lesson because `oh to
 25 hell' the book'll go off in one direction pencil in the
 26 other the crayons'll (....) little boys always (.....)
 27 thrown across the room and off he'd go to the door and
 28 if you didn't get there quick enough he'd be out and
 29 over the yard he's gone once the auxiliary had to go
 30 and bring him back ·hhh and he's very disruptive really
 31 but there again on the odd day he's beautiful
 32 Ep: mm hmm
 33 Ft: we've just got the two extremes
 34 Ep: mm

These two examples, then, suggest that acknowledgements or continuers may be used and understood as having been used for the purpose of returning the floor to the previous speaker and thereby achieving a continuation of their talk. As these examples indicate, such continuations may vary in length. The longer turns may therefore be generated through not only the use of continuers but in conjunction with a 'let them run on' procedure. Indeed, as Schegloff has observed, continuations may be constructed in a variety of ways. Schegloff, for example, noted that included in this variety are increments to the turn-unit (sentence) already in progress, increments to the prior sentence and starts of

new sentences. The continuations in the above examples include not only increments to sentences already in progress and prior sentences but also extended collections of sentences, that is new sentences.

One final matter on the subject of continuations is their marking. Thus, it would seem that a recurrent feature of the continuations is their commencement with a continuation marker if the continuation has been preceded by a continuer. These include 'and', 'errm', or 'ahm', and 'but'. The following extracts contain examples of the use of continuation markers as beginnings of continuations. They such suggest that 'continuity' is achieved, in part, through the use of 'continuation markers.'

(23) RMSJ/273

1 Ep: right right now what about this other one Terence
 2 Ht: Clark
 3 Ep: Clark
 4 Ht: Terence Clark mm hmm well ah this is father's request
 5 Ep: yeah
 6 Ht: ahmm Terence for about the last eighteen months his
 7 behaviour has been quite difficult just behaviour wise
 8 he's not very good academically but ahmm nothing that I
 9 would refer him to you for
 10 Ep: yeah
 11 Ht: ahh the father and mother are sensible enough ahmm when
 12 I've sent for father and said again a bit like Richard
 13 you know (we err) we think you should know this situation
 14 that's happening in school
 15 Ep: mm hmm
 16 Ht: ahh I had his telephone number at work at er from work
 17 any particular day
 18 Ep: mm
 19 Ht: ahmm he's sometimes phoned me and I thought that
 20 Terence's behaviour was improving slightly (-) ahh he
 21 was going to the lake District with us this year
 22 Ep: mm
 23 Ht: and er at four days we were due to go to the Lakes
 24 Terence came in with the remark that he wasn't going
 25 mummy and daddy said he couldn't go and I thought well
 26 possibly he hadn't paid all his money so there was some
 27 financial=
 28 Ep: =yeah=
 29 Ht: =bother so I con-contacted father and said if there is
 30 any financial trouble we could help him with this he said
 31 no there isn't I want to come and see you anyway and he
 32 came up and although his behaviour had appeared to
 33 improve slightly in school in actual fact it had got
 34 considerably worse at home

This extract contains, then, what can be heard as a ‘story’ about the origins of the referral. What is noticeable is that the story is told collaboratively, the teacher doing the storytelling and the psychologist doing acknowledgements or continuers. There follows an ‘uninterrupted’ collection of descriptions which continues until, making reference to the last utterance, the psychologist asks for the girl's age.

Finally, turning to the third component of the elicitation-assessment-acknowledgement sequence, the acknowledgement, it may be observed, firstly, that this typically takes the form of a minimal, transitory utterance such as ‘uh huh’, ‘a ha’, ‘mm’ or ‘mm hm’ and that such utterances are designed in the first place to indicate that the assessment has been received. The acknowledgement ‘token’ can be seen to play this role in the following sequence:

(24) AH/211

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | Ep: | when he actually gets down to doing some what's his |
| 2 | | work like? |
| 3 | Ft: | very good he's one of the top children he's very good |
| 4 | | he doesn't have any problems with his number work he's |
| 5 | | good at mental arithmetic his writing is neat it's tidy |
| 6 | | it's fluent and strong (...) good |
| 7 | Ep: | mmhmm |

Thus, in this extract, on completion of the teacher's utterance, the psychologist can be heard to produce an acknowledgement - ‘mmhmm’ - indicating reciprocity of the utterance.

When the data are inspected for the consequences which flow from these acknowledgements or continuers it becomes clear that they do indeed return the floor to the previous speaker and that they produce continuations of prior categorizations. It is via the use of this device that the assessment turn can be extended and a string or chain of such turns can be assembled in the talk. The acknowledgment tokens, in other words, function in the same manner as elicitation but without explicit specification of the referent or aspect or topic to be addressed. However, as the analysis of particular continuations, reported below, suggests, such continuations are typically linked with the prior topic (that is, they can be heard that way); they amount to continuations of categorizations on the same or topically consistent aspect of the referent. Through these devices, furthermore, the educational psychologist facilitates the production by the teacher of topical talk without continual interruption or questioning. In contrast, say, to the interrogative structure of examination in courtrooms (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979) the teacher is encouraged to provide information and categorizations in a more informal and smooth way, with fewer pauses between answers and questions. The following extracts contain examples of the use of acknowledgement tokens as ‘continuers’ and exhibit how their use serves to extend the categorization sequence.

(25) RMSJ/1

1 Ep: what are what are the kids like? you've had them
2 presumably?
3 Ht: well Sandra and Annabel are very bright children Sandra
4 got a scholarship in the days when you had grading
5 exams
6 Ep: yeah
7 Ht: ahmm Tony does not appear to be very bright I think
8 he's a good average actually he just er (2.5) he just
9 lacks any initiative to want to work at all
10 Ep: mm mm

(26) AH/218

1 Ep: mmhmm
2 Ft: ehhr his best subject is drawing he's really good at
3 that
4 Ep: mmhmm
5 Ft: he certainly even if er yet talking about something
6 (...) draw him in he'll bring his own experience into
7 the class work

Whilst these two examples only extend the sequence by a turn or two, and this is frequently the case, occasionally the acknowledgement token can be used to extend the assessment sequence for a much larger number of turns. This is evident in Extract (21), above. Here it is again:

(21) MP/981

1 T1: heh (-) everythin'
2 T2: well (0.8) as I see it (0.5) er he always has been a
3 nuisance I mean I hear from other people who've had him
4 you know from the time when he was in the first and
5 second year that's the way he spoke to teacher in the
6 way he behaved in class
→ 7 Ep: mmhmm
8 T2: you know a continuous disruptive element in the class
→ 9 Ep: mmhmm
10 T2: I've had im now since last September
→ 11 Ep: mmhmm mm hm
12 T2: and (0.8) up till err Easter (0.6) though-i-his
13 attitude to: to teaching he er(-) to me particularly
14 (we have er(-) gathered from what it is) attitude to
15 teaching is one of utter noncooperation and contempt
16 (0.7)
→ 17 Ep: mmhmm

18 T2: and (0.5) but (0.9) this was only in the in the manner
19 of you know he wasn't prepared to work (0.5) he-e
20 wasn't as far as I was concerned up till this term
21 positively disruptive
→ 22 Ep: mmhmm

Where extract (21) indicates that the acknowledgement token can be used to generate a series of relatively short assessment turns, each of which is interspersed with an acknowledgement/continuer, it is also the case that a far more frugal use of this device may in fact generate an extended and uninterrupted combination of assessments. This is evident in extract (22), repeated here:

(22) AH/1

→ 1 Ep: mm
2 Ft: (...) he'd go and punch them or kick them or swear at
3 them ·hhh and if that didn't work y'know if I didn't
4 jump up immediately and (.....) straight to Ralph he'd
5 pick up the chairs and start throwing them across the
6 classroom and (.....) eff off
→ 7 Ep: mm hm
8 Ft: and he just was really trying to show that he wanted
9 attention all the time
→ 10 Ep: mm hm
11 Ft: but he'd come in some mornings and he was really good
12 and he'd write a story and he could write about two
13 sides and it was really interesting it was fluent it
14 was really good his art work's good when he wants to
15 other mornings he'd come in he'd say `I'm doing nothing
16 I'm not going to do an effing thing' and he won't no
17 matter what you do you can cuddle him you can talk talk
18 to him nicely you can sit him down if you (got him away
19 if) we have the supernumary if she can take him out and
20 if he doesn't want to that day he'll do absolutely
21 nothing (1.0) now the other children have started
22 following in the same things he's decided `I'm going
23 home' so I had a stage where I had to more or less
24 stand by the door for part of the lesson because `oh to
25 hell' the book'll go off in one direction pencil in the
26 other the crayons'll (.....) little boys always (.....)
27 thrown across the room and off he'd go to the door and
28 if you didn't get there quick enough he'd be out and
29 over the yard he's gone once the auxiliary had to go
30 and bring him back ·hhh and he's very disruptive really
31 but there again on the odd day he's beautiful
→ 32 Ep: mm hmm

33 Ft: we've just got the two extremes
 → 34 Ep: mm

The practice of 'allowing the teacher to run on' and the use of continuers provide for a particular observable feature of referral talk in these meetings between teachers and psychologists. This feature is that of 'multiple referencing'.

Shifting Focus

In addition to 'focusing in,' the participants may shift focus. Once discussion is under way, the educational psychologist may ask further questions. Besides permitting the elicitation of information on the topics indicated, the first position enables other interactional events to occur. It permits, for example, topic change. That is, the first position enables the speaker to determine the materials to be addressed by the person in second position, including terminating information gathering and topic switching.

Closed questions invite teachers to answer specific questions; they specify some particular aspect of the referral to be addressed. A first type of closed question consists of a specification of some aspect of the referent to be categorised and, as such, may be referred to as questions with 'referent-aspect-specification'. As with first questions and going into detail, the several types of questions identified earlier were used by psychologists in relation to the task of shifting focus. A first type consisted of a 'referent-aspect-specification?'. These elicitation are evident in the following extracts. In the first, the teacher and the psychologist have been talking about the child's 'ability':

(27) WJS/21

1 Ep: d-d-you mean coordination:-er[-in the sense of his-he's
 2 (-) clumsy and yes (0.5) mhmm]=
 3 Ft: ((r.v.)) [well he's so gawky (0.5)
 4 you know (-) yeah he is really] quite clumsy
 5 Ep: but he's also restless
 6 Ft: [yeah] [very]
 7 Mt: [mm]
 8 Ep: [yeah]
 9 Ft: so maybe he's not being stretched enough to a certain
 10 extent but at the same time (0.8) err
 11 Mt: possibly
 12 (1.1)
 13 Ft: but he is quite bright [isn't he (-) very(-) err]
 14 Mt: ((r.v.)) [oh yes he is-he is quite]
 15 Ep: mhmm ((r.v.)) err well yes I mean you err your
 16 impression is that err::m he seems to be an average

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17 sort of lad in terms of y'know [ability and umm]
18 Mt: [yes aha oh he is]
19 Ep: (.....) [occasion]
20 Mt: [(.....)] yes I would go er-I would go even
21 as far as to say he might be slightly above [(0.5)]
22 average [I would] think ((s.v.)) he's: er y'know (-)
23 umm (-) um=
24 Ep: [mhmm]
25 Ft: [oh he is]
26 Mt: =I-wou-would tend to underestimate these things
27 slightly
28 Ep: mhmm
29 Mt: umm (0.8) but that way you know rather he
30 he['s certainly lively]
31
32 Ep: [what do you mean] er-you prefer to underestimate
33 them deliberately (-) or-or that's [the waly things
34 turn out when you get=
35 Mt: [umm]
36 Ep: =[the]m corroborated ·h[hh]
37 Mt: [I] [I] dunno I haven't done enough
38 of these to find out whe-whether [I'm gi' doing it
39 unintentionally or not you know ·hh yes a umm]
40 Ep: [no no (-) I-I just
41 wondered whether it was err y'know] something
42 you-you tend to do (-) to err on the safe s[ide
43 perhaps]
44 Mt: [I (-)
45 well] really I think this is probably a tendency you
46 know er-errgh ((s.v.)) I-I do tend to do this [umm]
47 Ep: [mhm]m
48 (1.1)
49 Mt: that's my that's a fault in my makeup [really]
→ 50 Ep: [so well]in-in
51 that case erm you-you feel pretty happy that that's at
52 least [where he is]
→ 53 Mt: [that's at lea]st where he [is yes oh] yes [a ha]
→ 54 Ep: [yeah ·hhh] [yeah]
55 umm and (0.6) what about attain (-) well no lets just
56 say umm (1.2) what is the main problem then?
57 Mt: .thh well I would say i-it's mainly behavioural
58 [it's] this p-er it-it is this problem of the=
59 Ep: [mhmm]
60 Mt: =fact that he cannot settle for very long
61 Ep: mhmm

62 Mt: that in the process of not settling he d-disturbs too
63 many other children
64 Ep: mmhmm
65 Mt: so much of the time

Thus, having talked about the child's ability, the psychologist shifts the focus with two conversational objects. The first is a formulation and the second is another question involving the specification of a new aspect of the referent. Here the topic is 'the main problem'. Similarly, in the following extract the psychologist shifts the focus with a specification of a new aspect of the referent;

(28) AH/89

1 Ep: mmhmm yeah I see and does he any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ft: they like him he's likeable the like him even when the
4 throws chairs they go back which is peculiar but they
5 do they got this (-) they think Ralph's fantastic he's
6 a hero in the class
7 Ep: yeah

In the following extract the educational psychologist extends the subject matter of relations between the child and those who have been mentioned so far by asking about his relationships with the 'other' children in the class.

(29) WJS/1

→ 1 Ep: what about umm (-) you know (the) relationship with
2 other kids there in the class? How does he get on with
3 them?
4 Mt: mm thh well here again you see (-) er(-) very often (-
5)umm (-) the sort of thing that I hear (0.8) is (-) umm
6 (0.5) 'Please Sir' umm 'Peter Brown just punched me'

In each of these extracts, then, the psychologist specifies a new topic that he wishes the teacher to address. In the first extract, the aspect is 'the main problem,' in the second it is 'friends in the classroom,' and in the third it is 'relationships with other kids in the class.' In specifying these topics, the psychologist selects the teacher to speak about a particular topic and thereby provides for an alignment in which the teacher will be speaker for that topic and the psychologist the recipient of topical talk. All the above topic initiators involve questions.

As I have shown with reference to 'first questions' and 'follow-up questions' in relation to 'focusing in,' some questions or elicitations involve the use of 'candidate categorizations'. These are elicitations in which the psychologist supplies a categorization and asks the teacher to confirm or disconfirm it. They

are 'correction solicitors' as evident in doctor-patient interaction (cf. Sharrock and Anderson, 1987). The following extracts containing elicitations involving the use of 'candidate categorizations' are used in the context of shifting focus as well. In the first case, the candidate categorization is used to formulate what has been assessed so far as regards the child's ability, and as part of a topic shift:

(30) WJS/146

1 Ep: so well in-in that case erm you-you: feel pretty happy
2 that that's at least where he is?
3 Mt: that's at least where is yeah

In the following extract the psychologist uses another candidate categorization to shift topic:

(31) RMSJ/10

1 Ht: and yet in the past it's always been said to him in the
2 school "well tell the truth and you will not get into
3 trouble"=
4 Ep: =yes=
5 Ht: ="but if I find out you've been lying you are in
6 trouble"
7 Ep: yeah
Ht: but it doesn't have any effect I mean I've actually
stood and watched hum deliberately without any
provocation on the part of another child go and punch
hum and oh he's got the most horrible big heavy boots
[I do]n't know why they bought them for him and
Ep: [mm]
→ Ep: yeah I seem to remember he's at least average
intelligence isn't he?
Ht: oh yes about average (1.6) something like that

In this candidate categorization the educational psychologist can be heard to propose for confirmation/disconfirmation, to solicit correction, the categorization of the child as having 'average intelligence.' The point is that it is used to shift focus. These elicitations are evident in the following extracts:

(32) WJS/1

1 Ep: what about umm (-) you know (the) relationship with
2 other kids there in the class? How does he get on with
3 them?
4 Mt: mm thh well here again you see (-) er(-) very often (-
5)umm (-) the sort of thing that I hear (0.8) is (-) umm
6 (0.5) 'Please Sir' umm 'Peter Brown just punched me'

In this extract, then, the educational psychologist asks a relatively closed question in that he specifies a particular topic, namely the referral's 'relationships with other kids in the class' and, as if that was not specific enough, he continues to explicate the sense of 'relationships' by saying 'how does he get on with them?'

(33) AH/89

1 Ep: mmhmm yeah I see and does he any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ft: they like him he's likeable the like him even when the
4 throws chairs they go back which is peculiar but they
5 do they got this (-) they think Ralph's fantastic he's
6 a hero in the class
7 Ep: yeah

Finally, in the next extract, the educational psychologist begins with a relatively closed question - it specifies 'attainment' as the topic to be addressed - but then cancels that question and replaces it with one much more hearably open, namely 'what is the main problem'.

(34) WJS/2

1 Ep: ummm and (0.6) what about attain(-) well no let's just
2 say umm (1.2) what is the main problem then?
3 Mt: .thh well I would say i-it's mainly behavioural [it's]
4 this p-er it-it is this problem of the=
5 Ep: [mhmm]
6 Mt: =fact that he cannot settle for very long
7 Ep: mhmm
8 Mt: that in the process of not settling he d-disturbs too
9 many other children
10 Ep: mh[mm]
11 Mt: [so] much of the time

In each of these extracts, then, the psychologist specifies some aspect of the referent (i.e. the pupil) that he wishes the teacher to address in his or her response. In the first extract, the aspect is 'relationships with other kids in the class', in the second it is 'the main problem' and in the third it is 'friends in the classroom'. These topics provide for a class of relevant mentionables. However, as we shall see these are not specified in advance. Focusing in, *and* potentially shifting focus may also be done with questions offering a *choice* of candidate categorisations. This type is evident in the following extracts:

(35) MP/1000

1 Ep: is he::-is dull generally or: is mathematics a tch(-)
2 particularly difficult area?

(36) MP/134

1 Ep: and is he one of these generally (-) clumsy kids or is
2 he just slow to pick it up?

Thus, in extract (35) the psychologist offers the teacher a choice between a categorization of the pupil as 'dull generally' and an assessment of him as having particular difficulty with mathematics. Similarly, in extract (36) the choice is between an assessment as 'generally clumsy' and 'just slow to pick it up'.

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been shown that the educational psychologist's questions were either open or closed, and where they were closed they consisted of either questions that specified some aspect of the referent, or as a subset of these, questions involving candidate answers or a choice of candidate answers. Furthermore, as first parts of adjacency pairs, these questions made relevant in the recipient's next turn the production of an answer. The psychologist's continuers worked in a similar fashion. However, questions not only sought answers, they sought particular kinds of answers. In this chapter, then, attention has been directed to the kinds of answers that the questions sought. More specifically, if the answers sought contained descriptions of deviance, what kinds of descriptions were these?

In order to answer this question, it was necessary to look at the educational psychologist's questions in order to see what they were asking for. It was shown that they make seek clarification and further detail. At first sight, and without further analysis, it could be seen that the questions were designed overwhelmingly to elicit general descriptions of the problems presented. They did not seek descriptions of specific incidents. They also addressed a wide range of aspects and not just the deviance of the referral.

In the following chapter the answers to these questions will be considered. It will be shown that answers are shaped by questions and they also use particular components. These components are used in making general descriptions of the deviance. It is perhaps unsurprising that questions that seek general descriptions are followed by general answers. One way is to use membership categories. Similarly, when activities are described, they are not described as activities done on specific occasion or in a particular event but activities done generally. Similar where attributes are described they are generally applicable attributes. There are describable ways in which the general character of activities and attributes are

accomplished. When specific actions or action sequences are mentioned they are described as generally illustrative. Furthermore, these components are used in relation to each other. This will be examined in the following chapter.

Endnotes

i

This raises the question of the intelligibility of 'one,' an analysis that cannot be undertaken here.

ii

The concept of 'phases', like that of 'context' raises vexed issues for sociology and ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. For useful discussions see Anderson and Sharrock (1984), Sacks (1992a, 1992b), Sharrock and Watson (1988). The crux of the matter for ethnomethodology and conversation analysis is showing that social context (including phases of some stretch of social interaction) is something to which members are oriented, draw upon and otherwise use in organizing their social interaction.

iii

Heritage and Robinson (2006) distinguish three sub-types of Type 1 questions: first, those that propose a 'service' relationship between patient and physician and are agnostic about the nature of patients' business, second, those that are again about general unknown problems but which refer to the tensed of the problem (present, past etc), and third, those which index specific problems or symptoms. ([T]hese are different from referent aspect specification.) It can be noted that the 'service relationship' can be expressed in a variety of ways.

Chapter Four

Tasks, Turns and Topics: Accomplishing Category Membership in Referral Talk

It was argued in Chapter One that sociology typically takes for granted the intelligibility and accomplished character of the phenomena that it investigates. Such taken for granted phenomena include firstly the *social identity*, or in the language of membership categorisation analysis, the *membership category*, of the persons subject to sociological investigation, secondly, the *sense* of their talk, and thirdly the *social context* in which such talk occurs. For ethnomethodology, that taken for granted recognisability and availability is respecified as a local or situated accomplishment of members' methods of practical action and practical reasoning that requires investigation in its own right. As noted in Chapter One, the data for the studies reported here were obtained in a particular setting, namely meetings between educational psychologists and teachers at which children referred from schools to the School Psychological Service were discussed. As a member of society, and as a sociologist, I had no difficulty in recognising 'teachers', 'pupils' and 'educational psychologists'. I had no trouble in conceiving them as sociologically relevant actors within a socially organised educational environment. It was not a 'discovery' of the research that educational psychologists were significant actors in the world of educational decision making. This commonsense knowledge was available to me from the outset and provided the grounds for my initial inquiries and for negotiating issues of 'access'. Likewise, the settings in which these actors operated - the schools, classrooms, clinics, meetings - were readily available and intelligible social contexts of social interaction. In order to explore how events are available as the events they appear to be, one useful concept is that of the category bound activity or, more generally, the category predicate, as introduced in Chapter Two. The orientation to category bound activities is one means whereby participants in a setting are able to 'determine *without further inquiry*' (Sharrock and Button 1991, 160) 'what is happening in a specific instance'. As Sharrock and Button (1991, 160) put it: 'we decide that what is happening here, in this case, is happening just because these people are of this kind and this is the kind of thing that such people do'. This means that the 'mundane occurrence' of having a referral meeting 'will be observable as such only because the witnessing of it can be subordinated to a knowledge of the relevance of the organisation' of the teacher-psychologist relationship, 'of the positions which comprise such units, and of the motivations which *properly* govern transactions amongst inhabitants of those positions' (Sharrock and Button 1991, 160). Accordingly, then, in turning to the data corpus in this chapter, the first analytic priority is to consider how recognisably educational settings and identities are accomplished. The particular focus of concern is the recognisable availability of the categories of 'teacher' and 'educational psychologist'. Furthermore, in so far as such membership categories can 'belong' to various membership categorisation devices - the collections to which membership categories belong being an 'occasioned' matter - their constitution as members of the device 'parties to a referral meeting' is a focus of attention. Two interrelated topics will be considered: firstly, the recognisability of persons as 'teachers' and 'educational psychologists', and specifically as members of the device 'parties to a referral meeting' and, secondly, the observability of these parties' talk as 'referral meeting talk'. In relation to the latter, I will focus on three

aspects of this talk, insofar as it is concerned with tasks, topics and turns.

Constituting Category Membership: 'Teachers' and 'Educational Psychologists' as 'Parties to a Referral Meeting'

How are 'teachers' and 'educational psychologists' constituted as 'parties to a referral meeting'? One way to approach this issue is to recognise, following Sacks (1966: 16), that 'there is always more than one device, more than one collection of categories' in terms of which any person or group of persons, no matter what size, may be categorised (cf. Speier, 1971: 205). This being the case, it means that 'at all times there will be a choice to be made as to which of the available devices is to be used'. Some devices may be correct, but not appropriate. 'The main question about categorisation activity is not whether the "right" category has been selected for an interactant, but *which out of the possible alternatives is selected* for the relevant purpose of immediate membership in interactional circumstances' (Speier 1971: 206). Furthermore, 'the task would consist of persons using some principled selection procedure to decide which among competing categorisations is relevant to the interactional occasion'. The aim, then, 'of an analysis of categorising activity' is not to 'list devices and their categories and show independently how particular selections are "correct" ones irrespective of their actual use'. Rather than 'formulating for "correctness of use" the aim is to discover the *procedural basis of "relevantly correct"* alternative selections of membership categories by interactants engaged in making selections' (Speier 1971: 206). At any given moment, a person may be 'correctly' categorised in a variety of ways. For example, they might be categorised as a doctor, a white woman, a mother, a wife, an aunt, a female, a criminal, and a feminist. If any one of these were selected in some way they might be seen as 'correct' but as inappropriate for the context at hand. 'Appropriate' means 'relevant' here - for a category might not be relevant to what was being done in that context or who the person otherwise categorisable as 'doctor', 'white woman', 'mother' etc. was for that occasion. Where inappropriate, though technically correct, categorisations are deployed then, as Coulter (1991) rightly suggests, what may be risked is 'ambiguity at best and unintelligibility at worst'.

The distinction between 'correct' and 'operationally relevant' categorisations needs to be approached with caution. Thus, an implication of the distinction is that some categorisations are applicable irrespective of the descriptive work through which correctness is established: to say of a category that *it* is 'correct' (as opposed to 'operationally relevant') can be heard to imply that it corresponds with the independent features of the object/person it purportedly describes. This is, of course, one method in terms of which members' descriptive activities might be investigated. However, it stands in contrast to an ethnomethodological approach in which correctness is to be treated as a

members' phenomenon. Consequently, the distinction between correct and operationally relevant categorisations can be understood as a replication of the confusion between 'realist' and 'constitutive' models of deviance evident in the work of symbolic interactionist and other 'realist' models of deviance (cf. Pollner 1974, 1978).

The conception of the categorisational 'problem' as involving a 'selection from available alternatives' only partially elucidates the character of membership categorisation *activity*. Of course, on any particular occasion, a person may be categorised in different ways and the selection of a category (or equivalent) is the product of, reflects, the speaker's analysis of the interactional appropriateness of the categorisation selection. However, it is necessary also to recognise that in selecting a category, that is, in *using a category in a particular way*, the device to which a category belongs is also being constituted. Thus, it was argued in the previous chapter that the devices to which a given category may belong is a contextually accomplished matter. It depends on how the category is used *this time*, and indeed, *just this time*. Garfinkel (1991) refers to 'just thisness' as the haecceitic character of phenomena. With reference to the *in situ*, haecceitic character of membership categorisation, the 'selection problem' concerns not so much how categories are selected from an already constituted set of alternatives but rather how categorisations are 'collected' as members of a device on the occasions in which this recognisably occurs. Given that they may be members of various devices, how are they selected as members of *just this device* for this occasion?

Thus, whilst it may be 'correct' in some sense to say that the co-present persons are 'teacher' and 'educational psychologist', this does not in itself provide the *operationally relevant sense* in which they are the incumbents of these membership categories. Thus, teachers and educational psychologists may be 'parties to a lesson', 'parties to a case conference', 'parties to an educationists' convention', 'parties to an interview with a parent', and so forth. In other words, the *device* to which these categories belong is a contingent matter, where that contingency concerns such matters as the task at hand, the purposes for which the parties have assembled (and thereby assembled as constituent categories of some device). As Cuff (1984) points out, the decontextualised sense in which teachers and educationists can be assembled as members of the device 'educationists' (say) does not provide *what* the situated and local identities of the parties are. Consequently, *what* the relevant predicates are for these categories will vary according to task or context. Thus, as Payne (1976) has indicated, in the context of the beginning of a classroom lesson, a predicate of 'teacher' may be issuing instructions or, more specifically, telling pupils that they 'cannot sit down, until we're all ready'. Likewise, in the context of a 'waiting list meeting' with social workers, a predicate of 'educational psychologist' may be 'reporting suitable cases for social work' to social work colleagues. Similarly, whether or not these categories are related will likewise vary according to the locally specific relevances of their interaction.

Within the context of referral meetings, teachers and psychologists are parts of a standardised relational pair. That is, as 'parties to a referral meeting' they comprise a locus of rights, entitlements,

activities and the rest, i.e. predicates, that not only provide for relevant conduct on their part but also reflexively constitute their co-membership as parties to a referral meeting. Elsewhere, of course, these 'parties' might be members of the device 'educationists' (say, at a conference of teachers, psychologists and others with an interest in education). In such a setting their co-membership of the standardised relational pair for referral meetings would not be relevant.

The particular focus here is on how 'teachers' and 'educational psychologists' are accomplished as 'parties to a referral meeting', given that they may also be recognised as co-members of other collections. The following analysis seeks to show that the category membership of teacher and educational psychologist as 'parties to a referral meeting' is constituted, in part, through the selection and performance of various *activities* that can be seen to be *predicates* of these categories. These predicates centre on 'problem talk' and the range of work-related tasks that are accomplished in such talk. Referral meetings are, for the participants, occasions on which the talk is directed to the performance of certain work-related tasks. As incumbents of the categories 'parties to a referral meeting' participants are expected to know and display an orientation to such knowledge as to how to talk and talk understandably and be so recognised as having talked, in such a way as to display their co-membership of this collection. So, one way in which members are selected as members of particular devices is through the performance and/or allocation of such tasks. Such task allocation and performance is accomplished through the interactional distribution of turns to talk, and also by the topics that those turns at talk establish. Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter I will focus upon how the local display and constitution of category membership is made available in terms of these three interrelated phenomena: *tasks*, *topics* and *turns*. The first two of these will receive only a brief, introductory consideration in this chapter, as they will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. The question of the turn organisation of referral talk will be given more extended treatment here.

Tasks

The selection of membership categories and thereby the constitution of the teacher and the educational psychologist as members of the device 'parties to a referral meeting' through the selection and performance of predicated activities or work-related tasks can be appreciated via the following two sets of examples. The first set involves the teacher requesting the educational psychologist to perform certain activities. In so doing the teacher not only selects the psychologist as an appropriate person to do such things, she also co-selects for herself membership of a category for whom receipt of such services is appropriate. The second set of examples concerns the activities of providing and receiving information about the referral. It is shown that the ways these activities are accomplished constitutes their

membership of the device 'parties to a referral meeting'. (Moreover, as they are so selected and constituted, so also is the referral meeting accomplished.)

Requests for educational psychological services

One way in which the participants' category membership is selected is through *requests for educational psychological services*. These requests for various kinds of educational help and service display a category analysis of their recipient as one from whom the provision of such services is category relevant and appropriate. Such requests comprise therefore *imputations of category membership* as far as their recipient is concerned and *accountable displays of category membership* as far as the requestor is concerned. So, for example, requests for 'advice' and for specific services such as 'testing' are intelligible in the light of what is known about the category bound activities and obligations and responsibilities of educational psychologists *in this context*. In extract (1), the Head Teacher asks for 'advice':

(1) AN/1

1 Ht: now, what I what I really would [like]=
 2 Ep: [mm hm]
 3 Ht: =would like you to advise me do you think there would
 4 be any chance of getting him to learn to talk and to
 5 behave normally or do you think that the damage will be
 6 so bad now that he won't catch up?

Asking for 'advice' is to categorise the recipient of the request as an, at least potential, advisor. Giving advice is a category bound feature of educational psychologist as far as their relationship with teachers is concerned. However, the advice which is sought is intelligible as a type that is appropriate for an educational psychologist to provide in this context. For other types of advice (eg. 'medical' advice), other categories of persons would be asked. The rational accountability of the advice is achieved by and achieves the predicated character of advice about learning to talk with respect to the membership category, educational psychologist.

Similarly, in extract (2), the teacher asks for a particular educational psychological service, namely testing:

(2) RMSJ/1

1 Ep: ermm very quickly Kevin Dobson
 2 Ht: ah
 3 Ep: was he the one that went to Chestfield?
 4 Ht: no no he's the one I wanted you to test but he wasn't
 5 in school he his school attendance is appalling but we
 6 got him in school over the last few weeks=

7 Ep: yeah
 8 Ht: =on a fairly regular basis but I do want him tested I
 9 do want to know whether I'm dealing with a dull child=
 10 Ep: =uh huh=
 11 Ht: =and lack of schooling or armm an average child and
 12 it's lack of schooling err he's getting ermm remedial
 13 help ermm and Mrs Mason is getting nowhere fast with
 14 him for all he's ermm
 15 []
 16 Ep: have you contacted the parents?
 17 Ht: oh I've sent letters before

Like 'giving advice' on the matter of there being 'any chance of getting him to talk', (intelligence) 'testing' can be heard as an activity bound to the membership category, educational psychologist. Both giving advice about language development and assessing children's intelligence can be heard as activities which fall within the educational psychologist's range of predicated competences; making judgements and projections of this sort comprise category predicates (responsibilities, obligations, competences) with respect to their work with children who have been referred to them. Consequently, in requesting these activities, the teacher can be heard both to presume and to select a membership category, namely educational psychologist, for her co-participant in the referral meeting.

Furthermore, in presuming and selecting a membership category for her co-participant, the teacher can be recognised as having co-presumed and co-selected for herself a membership category that is relationally paired with educational psychologist in this setting. In this way, as 'parties to a referral meeting', the teacher and the educational psychologist comprise a standardised relational pair of categories (Sacks 1972b). Standardised relational pairs (like, 'husband-wife', 'parent-child', 'doctor-patient') are such that to mention one part of the pair is to have the other programmatically present, entails that incumbents are related to each other, and not to others, and constitutes a locus for a set of rights and obligations. Additionally, 'to say that the pairs are "standardised" is to say that if a 'member X knows his(her) own position with respect to another member (Y), then X knows the pair position of Y with respect to him(her)self' (Sacks 1972b: 37). Incumbency of these categories is both a resource and an achievement of the parties' social interaction and, more specifically, their talk together. In the context of the referral meeting, therefore, to categorise the recipient of the request as a certain kind of person by virtue of the activities and tasks requested, is also to categorise the requestor as a certain kind of person, as one who can legitimately, sensibly and reasonably ask such a thing. In the context of referral meetings, 'recipient of educational advice' is a relevant category (mapped onto the category teacher).

Similarly, it is observable that the educational psychologist asks the Head Teacher whether she has 'contacted the parents', the Head Teacher confirming that this had been done on previous occasions.

Obtaining parental permission for the involvement of an educational psychologist with a child is an activity which is predicated of the Head Teacher in situations such as this.

This means that it is not that one category only is relevant for the situation/task at hand. Thus, the person's membership of the category 'teacher' does not cease to be relevant; rather that category becomes qualified, or has other category memberships 'mapped onto it'. Thus, teacher becomes 'teacher-as-referrer', where this entails a modification and contextual sensitivity of predicates. Categories are always 'in-context' in this way, such that 'teacher' is associated with a variety of contexts, for example, 'teacher-in-the-classroom', 'teacher-in-the staffroom', 'psychologist-in-the-referral meeting', or 'psychologist-in-the-case conference'. In each of these settings, different tasks and activities are performed, thereby making relevant different predicates. Alternatively put, it means that what the predicates of a category are is something that is context specific or relative.

The activities of discussing, describing, listening, recommending, advising and the rest are achieved not just any old how but in terms of a specific distribution of turns and turn types within this setting.

Topic: Nominating the Subject

The constitution of category membership is achieved not only through tasks, it is also achieved via the selection of *what* the parties talk about, that is the *topics* of their talk, and the sense of their talk. The matter of topical organisation is examined more fully in chapter six. For now, it is simply noted that certain 'appropriate' and 'relevant' topics are addressed and that they contribute to the category membership of the speakers for this occasion. For example, before description and discussion of referred pupils can take place, the identity of the pupil who is the subject of discussion has to be established. Of course, occasionally the parties may only have one pupil to talk about and his or her identity may have been established before the meeting. However, where more than one referral is to be considered, or when the identity of a single referral is not mutually known, then the child in question will have to be identified. The procedure for identification is the nomination sequence. This procedure is used for both the identification of the first referral to be discussed and any subsequent referrals on to which the talk proceeds later in the referral meeting.

Nomination of the subject involves naming the pupil to be discussed, if there is more than one referral. It also involves establishing an order for discussion. That is, nomination does not only occur at the beginning of meetings; it occurs with reference to each referral. Whenever it occurs it involves the psychologist doing the nominating and the teacher acknowledging it. The nomination sequence also often involves the use of the consistency rule in the identification of pupils. Sometimes pupils would be identified by name but often they were not. Instead, speakers used words and phrases such as 'this one', 'the other one', or the 'awkward' or 'clever' 'one'. Such references did not appear problematic for

members; they evidently found it a simple, common sense matter to recognise who was being referred to through such words and phrases. Consider, for example, the following two extracts, the first being the one already considered above in relation to *tasks*:

(3) RMSJ/1

1 Ep: ermm very quickly Kevin Dobson
2 Ht: ah
3 Ep: was he the one that went to Chestfield?
4 Ht: no no he's the one I wanted you to test but he wasn't
5 in school he his school attendance is appalling but we
6 got him in school over the last few weeks=
7 Ep: yeah
8 Ht: =on a fairly regular basis

(4) WJS/1

1 Ep: (here's the) ol' Phillip Boge business [err]
2 Mt: [yes] ah ha
3 (0.5)
4 Mt: oh he's the awkward one
5 Ep: (you) say-er he doesn't concentrate at all well (-)
6 ermm he=
7 Mt: no
8 Ep: = he appears unable to pay attention at times ·hhh ermm

Thus, the use of the consistency rule in relation to the device 'referrals' (a device occasioned by the meeting) provides for the intelligibility of references to persons within referral meetings as references to referrals.

Recognisable 'Ones'

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to examine fully the sequential organisation and achieved orderliness comprising this stage of the referral meetings. Instead, it is simply observed that 'stating the order' of referrals for discussion is another activity bound to, and constitutive of, the category of educational psychologist, whilst acceptance of that order is tied to and constitutive of the category, teacher. At this point in the discussion, attention is focussed on the intelligibility of references to the collection of referrals to be discussed.

In the corpus of materials to hand, such references to the collection of referrals to be discussed included, in particular, the use of the word 'one', as in 'the other one', 'the one who', 'the awkward one', 'the third one' and so on.

(5) RMSJ/1

1 Ep: ermm very quickly Kevin Dobson
 2 Ht: ah
 3 Ep: was he the one that went to Chestfield?
 4 Ht: no no he's the one I wanted you to test but he wasn't
 5 in school he his school attendance is appalling but we
 6 got him in school over the last few weeks=
 7 Ep: yeah
 8 Ht: =on a fairly regular basis

(6) WJS/1

1 Ep: (here's the) ol' Phillip Boge business [err]
 2 Mt: [yes] ah ha
 3 (0.5)
 4 Mt: oh he's the awkward one
 5 Ep: (you) say-er he doesn't concentrate at all well (-)
 6 ermm he=
 7 Mt: no
 8 Ep: = he appears unable to pay attention at times .hhh ermm

(7) WJS/7

1 Ep: who was the third one?
 2 Mt: umm Christine Williams
 3 Ep: (0.7)
 4 Ft: ((s.v.)) [right]
 5 Mt: [that']s right
 6 Ep: now what did we do about her last time?

Who, then, could these various 'ones' refer to? What are the resources used to arrive at a determination of the identity of these 'ones'? It seems clear and unproblematic for the participants that these 'ones' (in each case) are heard as referrals and not just any *ones*. Each 'one' does not refer to any old 'one' but to an occasion or category relevant 'one'. Each 'one' is a 'one' from some limited collection, a collection occasioned by the meeting itself. The collection is 'the referrals for discussion today'. The question therefore is: how is the recognisability of each 'one' as belonging to the collection 'referrals to be discussed today' arrived at? Three methods of membership categorisation analysis would seem to be in use here.

Firstly, and in part, these 'ones' are interpreted in the light of the 'omni-relevance' of the categories 'teacher' and 'psychologist' for this occasion. As has already been indicated, 'teacher' and 'psychologist' comprise the collection 'parties to a referral meeting', which is a standardised relational pair of categories. Each implies or has bound to it certain activities, attributes, obligations etc. In the context of the referral meeting, a category bound activity is referral talk, i.e. talk about referrals. That is to say, the activity of

discussing whatever referrals comprise the 'collection to hand' is a predicate of these membership categories that is operationally relevant for the referral meeting.

Secondly, each reference to a 'one' is 'co-selected' with references to other activities of the teacher and the educational psychologist on the one hand, and to activities of the person in question on the other. Thus, in extract (5) mention is made of the activity of 'testing' ('the one I wanted you to test'), and in extract (7) the question that is posed is: 'what did we do about her last time'. These activity references can be understood in terms of an 'orientation to category predicates' (cf. Hester 1992). 'Testing', as has already been discussed above, is readily recognisable as an activity bound to 'educational psychologist', thereby making available a resource for the inference that the person in question is 'one' who may be 'tested' by this 'party to the referral meeting'. The reference to 'do about her' is, of course, less informative, but in combination with 'last time' suggests an activity which the parties to the referral meeting engage in concertedly and as a part of a series of such meetings. 'Doing' in this context therefore would seem to mean 'making a decision' which, as such, is an activity bound to the parties to the referral meeting. Understood this way, such a reference would seem to provide for the inference that the 'third one' is a member of the collection 'referrals to be discussed today'.

Mention is also made of activities that are intelligible as activities bound to the membership category 'pupil'. Thus, in extract (5) the parties refer to 'school attendance', and in extract (6) 'concentration' and 'paying attention' are mentioned. In both cases, such activities provide for the recognition that the persons to whom reference is being made is not only a pupil but also a referral since such activities are bound to such categories of person.

The third method available for recognition that the 'ones' comprise the collection 'referrals' is the *consistency rule corollary* or *hearer's maxim* discussed in the review of the key concepts in membership categorisation analysis contained in Chapter Two. Thus, in brief, the consistency rule states that if two consecutively used categories (or categorisations) can be heard as belonging to the same collection or membership categorisation device, then hear them that way. Clearly, in the light of the above 'analyses', and in the absence of any 'instructions' to the contrary, the various references to 'one' can quite reasonably be heard that way. That is, if a first 'one' has been categorised as a member of a particular membership categorisation device, in this case the device 'referrals', then any subsequent 'ones' may also be so categorised, in the absence of a warrant for some alternative categorization. Further, to adapt the 'hearer's maxim' derived from the consistency rule: if the categories 'one' and 'other one' can be heard as categories from the same collection or device then hear them that way. Accordingly, in terms of the consistency rule, they *are* heard that way.ⁱ

Turns

Some tasks, within the context of referral meetings, are accomplished via particular types of turns. It is to the organisation of turn-taking, its distribution to different categories, and its role in the constitution of category membership that the discussion now turns. In identifying some methods for the recognisable accomplishment of the categorial identities particular attention is paid to the allocation of particular types of turns at talk. In so doing, the conventional division of labour between conversation analysis on the one hand, and membership categorisation analysis on the other, is avoided. The implications for the intersection of conversation or sequential analysis and membership categorisation analysis is taken up in the conclusion.

Analysis of the 'speech exchange systems' constitutive of forms of institutional talk has centred around the concept of 'adjacency pairs'. Numerous studies have sought to analyse institutional talk as comprising distinctive modifications of adjacency pair formats prevalent in 'ordinary conversation'. The inspiration for such work is derived largely from Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) claim that turn-taking in different contexts can be arranged along a continuum of variable degrees of formality. Formality is organised in terms of the pre-allocation of turns, turn types and so forth. Atkinson and Drew (1979), for example, indicate that courtroom interaction is organised differently from that of ordinary conversation. In particular, its relative formality consists in the restriction of or pre-allocation of certain types of turns (cf. McHoul 1978, 1990; Heap 1979). Similarly, in their study of news interviewing, Heritage and Greatbach (1991) argue that news interview turn-taking consists in a 'pre-allocated' and normatively ordered distribution of turn types between interviewer ('IR') and interviewee ('IE'), in which IRs pose questions and IEs supply answers. They argue that this 'base structure' takes an institutionally specific form. By comparison with ordinary conversation - in which the turn-taking machinery described by Sacks et al 'exerts a systematic pressure towards the minimisation of turn size' - news interview talk is characterised by an imbalance in turn size; IRs' questions typically are relatively brief by comparison with IEs' extended answers. Furthermore, whereas in ordinary conversation lengthy turns by one speaker are 'broken up' by 'continuers' and related speech actions by the other ('hmmhm', 'yeah', 'mmm', etc.), such actions are specifically absent in news interviews. Since IEs typically produce utterances containing many 'possible completion points', at which locations in ordinary conversation one finds 'continuers' placed, H&G argue that in news interviews such speech actions are systematically 'withheld' by the IR, thus giving news interview talk a sequential pattern distinctive from ordinary conversation.

Studies such as Atkinson and Drew's and McHoul's were the inspiration for a field of inquiry that Drew and Heritage named the 'institutional talk programme' (ITP). Central to this programme was the claim that distinctive sequential 'fingerprints' mark out the organisation of talk in certain settings of institutional interaction. However, against this idea, it can be argued that the recognisability of any stretch

of interaction as, say, a medical consultation, a news interview or a classroom lesson is not to be found in any *formal properties* of the talk in and through which these activities are conducted. Such recognisability is a *situated accomplishment*, and involves a reflexive relationship between utterances, situated identities and other circumstantial particulars. In its pursuit of linear formality, ITP neglects this reflexivity and thus misses the accomplished intelligibility of the phenomena. The recognisability of the talk as 'referral talk' lies in the identities of the participants and the particular content of the matters talked of by them. These circumstantial particulars are *presupposed*: It is the 'educational psychologist' who initiates the sequence by producing a first part in the form of a 'question' and the 'teacher' to whom this question is directed and who is thus the proper supplier of an 'answer' in the next utterance slot.

Furthermore, it would be misleading to say that there is a 'speech exchange system' for referral talk that is 'distinctive' from ordinary conversation in the sense that its features are to be found *only* in referral talk. On the contrary, as in other varieties of 'institutional talk', the speech exchange system for referral talk involves the selective use of sequential formats already available in other contexts of speech exchange. This involves a restriction or a modification of the organisational features of turn taking in ordinary conversation. However, the key point is that this is not the only feature that provides for the recognisability of referral talk. These other features include categorial identity, the sense of the talk and the taken for granted character of the context. Speech exchange systems presume the intelligibility of speech items, but this involves identity and context. Consequently, notwithstanding the contribution of conversation analytic studies to the illumination of the sequential organisation of talk, it would be a mistake to suppose that such illumination provides an adequate answer to the issue of the recognisability of activities and events and settings. In part this is because the sequential structures are not unique and in part because, with reference to the data corpus under examination, it is insufficient to allocate turns to identities as if this accounted for the character/intelligibility of 'referral talk' since this presupposes the intelligibility or recognisability of the identities 'teacher' and 'educational psychologist' in the first place.

The key point here is not that categorial identities should be allocated analytical precedence over other circumstantial particulars, but rather that the intelligibility and recognisability of any interactional activity is a situated accomplishment. Thus, any attempt to isolate the sequential dimension from other circumstantial elements, and treat this feature as somehow analytically privileged, cannot but reify form. This is not to deny the relevance of sequential matters, but to argue that no analytic privilege should be accorded to any one element in the reflexive circumstantial mix. Sequential order is itself *made available* in and through the ways in which talk is oriented to *circumstantially*. Members' circumstantial orientations, whether as participants (in medical consultations, news interviews and so forth), or as readers of textual data which recognisably reproduces such institutional occasions, provide them with resources for seeing such occasions for what they commonsensically 'are'.

Some Types of Turns

In Chapter One it was suggested that the division of labour between researchers into sequential considerations on the one hand and categorial concerns on the other can have certain negative consequences. This is not to say that disattention to categorial matters, say, cannot also have positive consequences (for the analysis of aspects of sequential ordering alone), but with respect to the recognisable accomplishment of identities *in situ* it is clear that such sequential considerations are significant oriented-to matters for the participants in referral talk. This is evident in the *types of turns* differentially distributed between these speakers. Furthermore, there is evidence that this differential distribution involves elements of asymmetry with respect to some types of turns. This can be appreciated by an examination of the following matters: (a) ordering the cases for discussion; (b) closings; (c) topic initiation (T initiates *after* an acknowledgement); (d) informancy and reciprocity.

In what follows, three types of sequences in which there is a categorial distribution of turns are identified. This is by no means an exhaustive list. It is designed, rather, to show the *sequential* character of categorial identity.

(a) The nomination sequence: ordering case-talk

As we have seen already, the nomination sequence includes the teacher asking the psychologist 'who he would like to discuss first'. This shows that the teacher has analysed the psychologist as one who decides the agenda or order of discussion, and it shows that s/he understands what it is that they (and the psychologist in particular) will be doing, namely engaging in the activity called 'discussing'. Similarly, the teachers and psychologist engage in information gathering and receipt, and the psychologist makes proposals (under reverse alignment) regarding next moves. In all these ways they display their orientation to the operational relevance of their particular category membership and its relation to the category membership of their co-participant.

In the context of referral meetings, the category relations can be seen, in some ways, to be asymmetrical. Thus, some standardised relation pairs (and other category relations) can be seen to be asymmetrical. That is, various rights and obligations are differentially distributed and are oriented to as so distributed. Consideration of how such asymmetries are accomplished permits investigation of how what passes for 'power' and 'domination' in sociological terms can be seen to be done. However, it is with caution that one needs to approach this area since whilst an asymmetry may be discernible it is a considerable conceptual leap to then render that sociologically as 'power' (cf. Hustler and Payne 1983). Thus, in an investigation of 'power in the classroom', Hustler and Payne (1983) argue that teacher instructions to do certain things 'in their own time' indicates the teacher's 'ownership of time' and

thereby his or her exercise of 'power'. Now, this may be one thing that sociologists mean when they talk of power, but it may not be what the parties to the interaction intend when they say such things. Various asymmetries are evident. The psychologist decides the order of cases for discussion. The psychologist closes the meeting, and rules out certain topics. It may simply be observed that 'stating the order' of referrals for discussion is another activity bound to, and constitutive of, the category of educational psychologist, whilst acceptance of that order is tied to and constitutive of the category of teacher.

(b) Assessment sequences

One distinctive phase of the referral meeting involves the gathering and giving of information. Consequently, a second method whereby the participants therefore are categorised as 'parties to a referral meeting' is by selecting each other as 'informant' and 'recipient'. This is achieved through the educational psychologist's invitations to the teacher to talk, the provision by the teacher of information about the referral, and the reception of that information by the educational psychologist. In other words, the participants *align* into the relational pair of categories of informant and recipient for the purpose of discussing the referral. Such an alignment is constituted in and as the concerted production of distinctive turn types and turn sizes (cf. Watson 1997). This can be seen in relation to the distribution between the participants of various types of turns comprising informancy and reciprocity. Recipient turns include questions, continuers and acknowledgements, and clarification requests (as discussed in Chapter Three).

As informants and recipients, the participants interactionally accomplish their co-membership of the device, 'parties to the meeting'. They do so through the production of particular turn types, that is in terms of a particular sequential organisation of the meeting, thus providing an example of the interconnectedness of sequential and categorial considerations. The intelligibility of the conduct of the participants is displayed in the sequential coordination of their talk, just as their categorial membership provides for such a sequential organisation in the first place.

In the rest of this section these turns and their relation to the constitution of category membership in the referral meeting are considered. A first method for aligning as informant and recipient is through an adjacency pair of utterances, namely a question and an answer. Several different types of question were used. For example:

(8) WJS/1

1 Ep: what about umm (-) you know (the) relationship with
2 Ft: other kids there in the class? How does he get on with
3 them?
4 mm thh well here again you see (-) er(-) very often (-
5)umm (-) the sort of thing that I hear (0.8) is (-) umm
6 (0.5) 'Please Sir' umm 'Peter Brown just punched me'.

(9) WJS/2

1 Ep: ummm and (0.6) what about attain(-) well no let's just
2 say umm (1.2) what is the main problem then?
3 Mt: .thh well I would say i-it's mainly behavioural [it's]
4 this p-er it-it is this problem of the=
5 Ep: [mhmm]
6 Mt: =fact that he cannot settle for very long
7 Ep: mhmm
8 Mt: that in the process of not settling he d-disturbs too
9 many other children
10 Ep: mh[mm]
11 Mt: [so] much of the time

(10) AH/89

1 Ep: mmhmm yeah I see and does he any friends in the
2 Ft: classroom?
3 they like him he's likeable the like him even when the
4 throws chairs they go back which is peculiar but they
5 do they got this (-) they think Ralph's fantastic he's
6 a hero in the class
7 Ep: yeah

In each of these extracts, then, the psychologist specifies some topic which topic that he wishes the teacher to address. In the first extract, the aspect is 'relationships with other kids in the class', in the second it is 'the main problem' and in the third it is 'friends in the classroom'. In specifying these topics, the psychologist selects the teacher to speak and thereby provides for an alignment in which the teacher will be speaker for that topic and the psychologist the recipient of topical talk.

A second type of question involves the use of 'candidate categorisations'. These are questions in which the psychologist supplies a categorisation and asks the teacher to confirm or disconfirm it.ⁱⁱ Before considering examples of such questions, it is useful to be reminded of Sacks' discussion of 'correction-invitation devices' Sacks (1992a: 21ff):

Where one wants to get, from the person one is talking to, an account of something - why they did something or why they have something - one way you can do it is by saying "Why?"

Another way you can do it is by asking with the name of the class of things you want. For example, a woman is talking to an officer from the juvenile division of the police force. Her 14-year-old daughter hasn't been coming home at night. The woman called the police, the police found the daughter, and now they're talking to the woman. And they say, "Have you ever had this kind of trouble with?" That is, 'this kind of trouble' is the name of the class. She can then say, "No I haven't had this kind of trouble," she can say "Yes" and then give some instances, or she can say "No I've had other kinds of trouble".

Furthermore, according to Sacks (1992a: 22), 'the construction of these correction-invitation devices ...[is] ... based on the fact that, using a range of classes, you can refer to one member to get another member'. The following extracts contain questions of this sort:

(11) WJS/146

1 Ep: so well in-in that case errm you-you: feel pretty happy
 2 that that's at least where he is?
 3 Mt: that's at least where is yeah

(12) WJS/16

→ 1 Ep: do you mean coordination er(-) in the sense of his
 2 he's=
 3 Ft: [well he's so gawky]=
 → 4 Ep: =he's clumsy and yes (0.5) yeah mmhmm.
 5 Ft: =[you know] (-) [yeah he is really(-)] quite clumsy.
 → 6 Ep: But he is also restless?
 7 Ft: Yeah very.
 8 Mt: Mm.
 9 Ep: Mmm.

These examples contain three candidate categorisations. In extract (11) the psychologist asks whether 'you feel pretty happy that that's at least where he is?' and in extract (12) seeks clarification as to whether the pupil 'has coordination problems' in the sense of being 'clumsy' and whether he is 'also restless?' In each case, the psychologist can be heard to seek confirmation of these 'assessments'.

Similarly, in the following extract (13), the educational psychologist can be heard to propose for confirmation/disconfirmation, the candidate categorisation of the child as having 'average intelligence'.

(13) RMSJ/10

1 Ep: yeah I seem to remember he's at least average
 2 intelligence isn't he?
 3 Ht: oh yes about average (1.6) something like that

Likewise, in the following extract (9), the educational psychologist seeks confirmation of the candidate categorisation that the referral disturbs others 'when he's not working':

(14) WJS/13

- 1 Ep: Th-when they say er disturbing others is that when he's
2 not working?
3 Mt: Mm(-) well (0.7) mainly ye-heh-heh-yes I-I was goin'
4 to=
5 Ep: [yeah]
6 Mt: =although even when he is working he do' this is it he
7 doesn't get down to his work qui-he he'll do two or
8 three and then
9 Ep: [mm]
10 (0.8)
11 Mt: I dunno h-he gets fed up with it doesn't want to do it
12 anymore
13 Ep: mmhmm

In each of these extracts, then, the psychologist provides the teacher with a candidate categorisation for disconfirmation or confirmation. These categorisations may be produced as formulations of prior talk on the part of the teacher, drawing on materials already produced in the referral meeting, or they may be produced as topic initiations - new aspects of the referral to be discussed.

A third type of question through which the participants align as informant and recipient involves the use of a *choice* of candidate categorisations. This type is evident in the following extracts.

(15) MP/1000

- 1 Ep: is he::-is dull generally or: is mathematics a tch(-)
2 particularly difficult area?

(16) MP/134

- 1 Ep: and is he one of these generally (-) clumsy kids or is
2 he just slow to pick it up?

Thus, in extract (15) the psychologist offers the teacher a choice between a categorization of the pupil as 'dull generally' and an assessment of him as having particular difficulty with mathematics. Similarly, in extract (16) the choice is between an assessment as 'generally clumsy' and 'just slow to pick it up'.

(c) Extended informancy and passive reciprocity

Besides the distribution of questions and answers between psychologist and teacher, it is also observable that use was made of what can be called 'multiple references' in their 'extended' descriptions in which a rich variety of categories and predicates, stories and exemplary incidents, and so forth, is used to describe referrals. For now, attention is drawn to the methods through which turns were extended. Thus, turns were extended in two main ways. The first involves the production of 'long' turns involving multiple references and multiple transition relevance points at which turn transition does not occur.

A second way in which turns are extended involves the coordination of a series of 'short' turns with continuers or acknowledgements on the part of the recipient of the descriptive turn. Such acknowledgements serve to 'encourage' the current speaker to continue talking.ⁱⁱⁱ This variety of the extended turn is evident in the following extract:

(18) AN/1/4

- 1 Ht: well I asked her when she was in if she'd had any
 2 health visitors when I talked to her
 3 Ep: mm
 4 Ht: about referring him to you and she said no (-) so I got
 5 the impression that she hadn't taken him anywhere or
 6 seen anybody
 7 Ep: mm hm
 8 Ht: about er his his lack of development
 9 Ep: mm hmm
 10 (3.0)
 11 Ht: we've had to take him to the toilet change his pants
 12 (...) ermm
 13 Ep: mm hmm mm hmm
 14 he's got now that he most of the time he-he says when
 15 he wants to go to the toilet he'll say toilet and (...)
 16 Ht: wee wee and he never sends (...) but at least er
 17 mm hm
 18 Ep: we're not having so much trouble with that
 19 Ht: (5.0)
 20 mm hm
 21 Ep: and he keeps running away apparently he's been running
 22 Ht: away this morning
 23 Ep: mm hmm
 24 Ht: down the corridor

Turn transition at transition relevance points therefore does occur in the short turn but takes the form of a display of 'passive reciprocity'. Each received short turn contains at least a single reference to the

topic at hand. The desirability of further description of the referral is, then, evidenced by the recipient's responses to the prior turn. Such responses take the form of a minimal, transitory utterance such as 'uh huh', 'a ha', 'mm' or 'mm hm'. Such utterances are designed, firstly, to indicate that the categorisation has been received. Secondly, however, such acknowledgements may also be seen to comprise a class of utterances which, according to Jefferson (1984: 4), 'can themselves be deployable devices with consequences for the shape of the interaction'. Thus, the type of acknowledgement token operative here involves and exhibits what Jefferson calls 'passive reciprocity' in that its user is proposing that the co-speaker is still in the midst of some course of talk and shall go on talking. Through the use of such tokens the psychologist can be heard to be 'aligning as recipient' and proposing to the teacher that he or she continues to talk about the pupil. It is a way of recognisably yielding the floor at possible completion points in the teacher's turn and where, therefore, transition to the psychologist becomes relevant. It is a way, in other words, of getting the teacher to continue to categorise the pupil.

Similar observations have been made by Schegloff (1981) in his discussion of 'continuers'. These (Schegloff, 1981: 81) are 'utterances which are used to exhibit on the part of their producer an understanding that an extended unit of talk is under way by another, and that it is not yet or may not yet be (even ought not yet be) complete'. Further, utterances comprising this class display 'the stance that the speaker of that extended unit should continue talking and in that continued talking should continue that extended unit'. Utterances such as 'uh huh' and 'mm hmm' and other minimal vocalizations demonstrate this understandings, and take this stance, by passing the opportunity to produce a full turn at talk and instead return the floor to the other speaker. The continuers or acknowledgements are turns that return the floor to the previous speaker in order to elicit further talk from them.

In both of these ways, then, the participants can be recognised as having selected activities for themselves and each other that are predicated of the categories 'teacher' and 'educational psychologist' as 'parties to a referral meeting'.

(d) Next moves: instruction sequences

The organization of 'next moves' and remedial intervention talk is taken up more fully in Chapter Seven, where two particular features of such talk are considered: first, instruction sequences and secondly, informancy and reciprocity. Discussion of these features is postponed until then.

Conclusion

For ethnomethodology, the issue of context provides for a focus on 'the in situ production of the local visibility of recognisably everyday activities and settings' (Cuff and Sharrock, 1985: 149). The availability, therefore, of 'referral meetings' as a 'social facts', however, serves as a point of ethnomethodological departure. In understanding the accomplishment of referral meetings, the key point is that the social identities of the 'parties to the referral meeting', the sense of their talk, and the intelligible accomplishment of the referral meeting itself are reflexively constituted. This reflexive constitution involves, firstly, the selection of categories for the participants. This, as was shown in the first part of this chapter, is achieved in the selection of activities which are bound to these membership categories for this occasion. To this, it must be added that such selection is done, and including the activities which constitute the category membership so selected, is done *because* the occasion *is* a referral meeting. The activities in question - advising, discussing, making recommendations, testing, etc. - and the identities to which they are bound, are relevant and sensible because the context is a referral. In turn, such identity displays and the performance of such activities serve to confirm and reflexively constitute the recognisability of the context *as* a referral meeting. Similarly, the sense of the talk as 'intelligible referral talk' both draws on a sense of the context just as it constitutes a sense of the context *as a referral meeting*.

In this chapter it has been shown that assessments of pupils are produced in several sequential settings and, in particular, elicitations of assessments were of various types. One type of elicitation involved referent aspect specification. It was noted that such specifications were 'taken up' in the next turn by the teacher, i.e. responding teachers addressed the aspect specified in the educational psychologist's elicitation. This observation prompts the question of how this 'addressing' occurred. One answer is sequential in character in that the response consisted of an answer to the question. A second type of answer is in terms of the resources which resources that are category-related. Thus, a variety of resources were used in formulating the assessments, including membership categories, activities, attributes, etc. These resources, it is suggested, are not used randomly. Rather, there is not only a sequential ordering to the production of descriptions of referred pupils, but there is also a categorisational ordering. In Chapter Five I will consider several aspects of this categorisational ordering in making sense of deviance in schools.

Endnotes

i

It may be noted that 'one' not only refers to 'referrals', it also activates the identities of the speaker and hearer, i.e. 'one' for whom, an identity relevant 'one', thereby reflexively constituting the identities of the parties to the referral meeting.

ii

They are 'correction solicitors' as evident in doctor-patient interaction (cf. Anderson and Sharrock, 1984).

iii

The question of obtaining the floor and being able to speak at length is discussed in relation to the organisation of stories in ordinary conversation by Sacks *et al.*

Chapter Five

Members' Models of Deviance and Their Uses

Introduction

Children who are referred to the School Psychological Service are described by teachers and educational psychologists in referral meetings. The use of these descriptions informs the reasoning which accomplishes the referral. As with all descriptions in social interaction, these descriptions are constructed for the occasions of their use. In other words, they are selections from alternatives and they are recipient designed. There are five key features of these selected descriptions which can be heard to accomplish the referral. These are: (1) the referrals are deviant in some way; (2) their deviance is mundane; (3) it is extreme, compared to that of the ordinary deviance of other children; (4) it is general; and (5) it is irremedial. The description of the deviant as having these features is recipient designed; these features are selections from alternatives and can be heard to implicate the intervention of the psychologist, as requests for educational psychological help. In this chapter, the focus is on how the referrals are described as deviant.

Deviance is a routine feature of life in schools. Much of the time, deviant conduct by students is handled by the teaching staff within a school as part of the everyday management of the classroom (see Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor 1975; Macbeth (1990; 1991); Hammersley and Woods, 1976). It is only in specific instances that the deviance is of sufficient magnitude to be deemed a 'problem case', and then only when such a case is sufficiently serious that the school requires outside support is a student referred to the School Psychological Service. Without a problem of deviance, there would be no grounds for referral in the first place. The distinction between routine deviance and referable deviance is accomplished in and through occasioned descriptions; the ways that students and their conduct are described in the referral process.

A central topic for analysis, then, is how deviance is described. In this chapter, the analysis is organized in three parts. In the first part it is shown that deviance is described in terms of two basic models of deviance: the norm-infraction model and the developmental model. In the second part it is shown that various components of membership categorization are used in achieving these descriptions and that these are deployed in relation to each other in orderly and methodical ways. Finally, in the third part, the method of explication by which categories become collections is discussed.

Two Models of Deviance

It was pointed out in Chapter One that the sociology of deviance and criminology have preferred two main theoretical models of deviance: the realist and the social constructionist models. As discussed in Chapter One of this book, these models pertain to the theorist's choice of assumption regarding the ontological status of deviance; it is either assumed to be an objectively given, behavioural phenomenon or it is assumed to be something subjectively problematic and socially constructed (Rubington and Weinberg 1987). The referral meeting data also displays an orientation to two models of deviance, but rather than theorists' elections these are members' models, constructs of reasoning used practically to make sense of students and the conduct they display. In broad outline, the selected descriptions employed by teachers and psychologists indicate that the referrals were described as deviant either in terms a *norm-infraction model* or a *developmental model*, or in many cases in terms of a combination of these two models.

To describe these models of deviance as 'members' models' does not mean, of course, that they cannot be found to inform sociological thinking about deviance. In line with the ethnomethodological view that professional sociological reasoning is almost always mundane, commonsense reasoning 'writ large', it comes as no surprise that the norm-infraction model of deviance has enjoyed popularity within the sociology of deviance for a long time. It is the model of deviance which focuses upon the *behaviour* of the deviant. It is central to both realist and social constructionist conceptions of deviance. Therefore, before turning to the data and examining its use in referral meeting talk, some discussion of its use in sociological theorising is in order.

The model's pivotal concept is that of social *rules* or *norms*. For the realist, the emphasis is on *rule-breaking behaviour*, as an objectively real thing in itself. For the social constructionist, the norm-infraction or rule-breaking remains central because even if deviance is socially constructed through 'labeling' (cf. Becker), it is 'rule-breaking' that is attributed to the person so labeled. Becker (1963: 9-10) makes this clear as follows:

From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather the consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label. ... What, then, do people who have been labeled deviant have in common? At the least, they share the label and the experience of being labeled as outsiders. I will begin my analysis with this basic similarity and view deviance as the product of a transaction that takes place between some social group and one who is viewed by the that group as a rule-breaker.

Whilst the majority of studies in the sociology of deviance and criminology have deployed the norm-infraction model in relation to criminal *laws*, such a conceptualization of deviant behaviour (whether objective or ascribed) does not exhaust the kinds of norms or rules that offenders may break. Over the years, under the auspices of the norm-infraction model, some effort was expended in exploring the wider range of domains of deviance and social control, including mental illness (Goffman, 1961; Scheff, 1966), obesity (Laslett and Warren, 1975), mental retardation (Mercer, 1973), hyperactivity (Box 1982; Conrad, 1976) and, of course, deviant behaviour in schools and classrooms (Hargreaves, 1967; Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor, 1975).

For the norm-infraction model, the collection includes a huge range of rules which offenders may break. The rules are of different sorts. There are rules about classroom behaviour, about relationships between pupils, and so on. There have been a number of attempts to typologize and taxonomize these rules. It is not my intention here to attempt to typologize or taxonomize the variety of rules the infractions of which constituted, in part, the grounds for referral. The main reason for this is that the key issue for the achievement of referral is not what the rules were but how departures from them were described. In any case, any attempt to taxonomize the rules will necessarily involve abstracting them from the settings in which they are invoked. Such abstraction brings in its train a whole host of problems pertaining to coding practices in the social sciences, which have been explored by Garfinkel (1967) and summarized in Sharrock and Anderson (2011 [1986], chap. 4; see also Hughes and Sharrock 2007). Part of the problem, of course, is that there is never a one-to-one correspondence between what persons do and say in the course of their naturally occurring social interaction and the codings that the social scientist may produce of aspects of the activities. One key point in *Deviance in Classrooms* was that the same utterance could invoke a variety of rules. The same action can be subsumed under various headings or classifications of rules. Disturbing others, for example, could break a rule about movement or time, or about relationships with other pupils. The coding exercises are arbitrary in this sense. It is more important to describe how the parties themselves describe deviance than to invent arbitrary codings of the rules, abstracted from the descriptions of deviance in which they are embedded. Taking them out of context of their description and putting them in a list is unlikely to afford much insight into how referrals are actually said to have broken and be described as having broken rules.

Whilst the norm-infraction model pertains to the normative organization of behaviour, the developmental model is used to order children's lives in terms of their developing competence. The key to the developmental model is the 'stage of life' membership categorization device. The stage of life device is an example of what Sacks (1974a) calls 'positioned-category devices', wherein the

constituent categories of the devices are arranged in positions relative to one another. For some devices, such as 'football team' the categories are arranged horizontally, so to speak, with no implied inequalities in rights, obligations or other predicates of the categories. For other positioned category devices, the arrangement is a vertical, even hierarchical one, with various activities, attributes, rights and obligations being predicated of the different positioned categories. In the case of the stage of life device, the constituent categories are of several varieties. One of these contains the membership categories: 'baby', 'toddler', 'child', 'adolescent', 'teenager', 'young woman', 'middle aged man', 'old woman' and so on. A second variety contains the age categories such as 'one year old', 'six year old', 'forty year old' and so forth. A third variety contains the 'age classes' such as 'young', 'old,' 'oldest', etc, which can then be used as modifiers to yield categories such as 'young girl', 'middle-aged woman' and 'old man'. Predicated of these categories are attributes and activities such as 'crying', 'eating solids', 'walking', 'starting school', 'leaving home', 'getting married', and 'dying'.

The second important feature of the competence model is that with respect to these different stages of children's lives – as measured in terms of age categories - there is a normal range of 'development' relative to various competences that children acquire as they get older. This 'developmental scheme' is widely used in assessing children and in this context it provides a major way through which what is normal and deviant in children can be distinguished and established. In a chapter entitled, 'Sacks's Conjecture: Kids' Culture', Garfinkel *et al.* (1982) write:

There exists as a feature of the community of adults an overwhelmingly prevalent view of the nature of children, their ways, and their talk. We shall speak of this view as the "Developmental Scheme." The developmental scheme is known to and used by and for adults, be they parents, teachers, linguists, or sociologists. In their hands the developmental scheme constitutes a reasonable account. By this we mean that its use by adults is morally required; that it is used exclusively by adults and its use is witnessed by adults as the objective presence of adult community; and its witnessed use by adults exhibits and specifies adult responsibilities in the recognition, identification, and responsiveness to the natural, normal facts of life of childhood, children, their lives, their ways.

What then is the developmental scheme? It is as follows:

Children are not adults; they are different from adults; they are "adults-in-becoming." They are incompetent in the ways of adults. Child training practices are ways of socializing children. These consist of ways of bringing persons who are incompetent adults under the auspices, the

jurisdiction, and the discipline of the adult administered orders of everyday responsibilities. The society has the massive and standing problem of producing its persons, forming them from culturally malleable, unformulated, developing, developable biological origins and pre-existent cultural stuff, and of developing those persons and personalities who, because they will have become competent adults from incompetent children will be able to staff the society's positions in orderly persistence, continuity and change of the society's social structures.

What then, is the upshot of this conjecture? Garfinkel mentions one, as follows:

The upshot, says Sacks, is that instead of the “developmental” point of view being treated as an account of what the ties are between kids and adults, one might better approach it as the competent adult's version of the encounters between kids and adults. In other words, address it as a reasonable account of the normal, natural adult-child interactional facts of life... The developmental point of view is to be viewed as a most important and consequentially reasonable account of kids' ways, but kids' ways seen from the point of view of an adult member. In contrast one can have *that* account read from the point of view of the two cultures in culture contact, related to each other more or less as non-communicating communities in much the same way that the anthropologist might talk of the culture contact of superior and subordinate tribal arrangements, or super and subordinate cultural arrangements, where the point of culture contact between the members of these disparate communities is the family.

Accordingly, then, ‘the developmental view of kids as incompetent adults is a reasonable account which is to be treated and taken seriously *only as a datum* – as another way in which members of a society can act – but it is not to be taken seriously as a sociological account of what the orderly character of those arrangements are involving children.’

The developmental scheme is the central constituent feature of what Speier (1976) refers to as ‘the classical formulation of socialization’. Speier describes this as follows:

I treat it as classical because it is a formulation that is rooted in adult folklore and commonsense understanding of children. Adult professionals doing sociological studies of children have oriented their work around a set of implicit conventions.

Speaking of sociological work that makes use of the classical model, Speier (1976: 98) delineates its ‘five main ideological conventions’. These are:

1. Children are adults in the making

2. Children get socialized or 'made' into adults mainly by adults who teach culture, i.e. 'norms', 'values', 'roles', 'behaviour systems', etc.
3. Children progressively develop into competent social members.
4. Children's development can be either successful as they grow up through stages of life or it can be deviant anywhere along the way.
5. Children are defective social participants by virtue of precompetence or incompetence at behaving appropriately.

Children become visible and describable as deviant in terms of this model when their competences depart from what is considered normal for a child of their age. The model is, of course, not restricted in its scope of operation to sociology. The notion that children's competence is developmental and where the stages of that development comprise the categorical order of the stage of life device, is not just a routine aspect of everyday commonsense reasoning (Atkinson, 1980), it also has been a pivotal feature of a range of professionals' work with children for many years. As Frank and Foote (1982: 116) say, 'pediatric and child psychological practice provide for such contrasts by making available standard measures of physical and socio-psychological development, along with measuring instruments which can be used to contrast the child in question with the norm' (just so). Furthermore, a range of such measures, yielding presumptions about what is normal for a given age are available and are mapped onto the stage of life device (cf. Watson and Weinberg, 1982), for example, stage of academic development, maturity, stage of emotional development, reading age and stage of language development. They are 'mapped onto' the stage of life device in the sense that each 'stage' in these devices corresponds to a given age or stage in the stage of life device. Children of particular ages are thus expected to have attained certain levels of speech, reading, motor control, physical development, etc. There are certain 'stages' of physical, social, emotional and psychological development through which children are judged to have or not progressed. By a certain age children are expected, given 'normal courses of development,' to have attained typical competences, attributes, features, abilities, interests and proclivities for typical activities, and so on. Such normal courses of development offer readily available standards for comparing children and for evaluating their relative progress. It is terms of these standards that children may be described as 'underdeveloped', 'behind' and 'backward'. These 'normal courses of development' which are organised in terms of the stage of life device, operate in a similar fashion to the 'territory of normal appearances' discussed by Sacks (1972b) in connection with the police assessment of moral character. They function, in other words, as a background scheme of interpretation in terms of which the unusual, the abnormal, in short, the 'deviant' may 'stand out' and be 'marked out'. Children who are seen to remain functioning, in the sense that they perform activities, display

attributes and demonstrate levels of competence normally bound to categories of children positioned lower in the stage of life device, may have their competence, progress and development called into question.ⁱ

There is a long history of assessment, and variations in the kinds of categories used to document it, in relation to the developmental model (cf. Ford et al (1982) and Tomlinson (1981)). There is also the issue of the difference between the two models; the first clearly implies wrong-doing and moral censure, the second is more concerned with deficiencies in the normal complement of competence; they are closer to the mentally ill, the pathological and hence a medical model of deviance (cf. Scheff (1966) on residual rule-breakers).

Describing Deviance: Components

We can now turn to the use made of models of deviance in referral meeting talk. A first point to make is that while both models can be seen, their use is not mutually exclusive. A referral may be deemed to have broken one or more rules at the same time as they are described as having fallen short of one or more standards of normal development. Descriptions of deviance in terms of these two models are achieved via the use of a wide range of components.

In using the norm-infraction model to describe deviance, persons do not say, in so many words, that a child has broken this or that rule. The rule broken is an inference from other kinds of description. Prominent amongst these are descriptions of *activities*, *attributes*, and *categories of rule-breaker*. The basic unit of the norm-infraction model is the activity of rule-breaking or deviant behaviour. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that one major way in which deviance from norms, i.e. norms infraction, is described involves descriptions of behaviour, i.e. the sorts of things that the child *does*. Some examples of this can be seen in the following extracts:

(1) AN/1/1

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | Ep: | mm hm |
| 2 | Ht: | and he keeps running away apparently he's been running |
| 3 | | away this morning |
| 4 | Ep: | mm hmm |
| 5 | Ht: | down the corridor |

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(2) AN/1/2

1 Ht: and he talks to his mum in this sort of gibberish which
2 she understands but nobody else does at all and she
3 replies which means he isn't being stimulated at all to
4 try to talk
5 Ep: [yeah mm]

(3) RMSJ/197

1 T: I mean I did have a message ohhh about two or three
2 weeks ago that he had been badly beaten up outside of
3 school
4 P: yeah
5 T: by some of the boys in this school (1.5) uhmmm
6 certainly he came the next day with quite a bruise on
7 his cheek
8 P: mm
9 T: I tried to find out what had happened though really and
10 legally I can't do anything about what happens outside
11 the school but I do
12 P: mm
13 T: uhmmm and you know when I when I got down to brass
14 tacks it was a usual Robert deliberately tormenting
15 boys calling them names using bad language spoiling
16 their game
17 P: mm

(4) RMSJ/311

1 P: yeah
2 T: so I won't give you the whole story, ahmmm but in a
3 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated, they can't
4 trust him in the house at all on his own, even if they
5 pop up to the shops the house is in a mess when they
6 come back and he's stealing, he's been caught three
7 times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
8 P: mm

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(5) AH/1/LM

1 Ep: mm hmm yeah I see does he have any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ht: (.....) January when I came into the class Barry was very
4 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
5 situation but I think all children do with a new
6 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
7 round the room screaming 'I'm taking no notice, I'm not
8 bothered (...) I don't care what you say' and if you
9 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
10 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
11 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
12 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
13 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
14 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
15 kick them or swear at them

Thus, 'running away', 'running away down the corridor', 'talking gibberish', 'tormenting boys', 'calling them names', 'using bad language', 'spoiling their game', 'making a mess in the house', 'stealing', 'running round the classroom screaming', 'punching other children', 'kicking them' and 'swearing at them' can all be understood to refer to different kinds of acts of rule-breaking committed by children.

A second component is also used. Sometimes, the things that the child does are summed or formulated in terms of an *attribute*. For example,

(6) MP/48

1 T: I've had him now since-s:err last September
2 P: mhmm-hm-hm
3 T: [an]:d (0.8) ((r.v.)) up till () errgh Easter (0.6)
4 though-i-his attitude to: to teaching he-er (.) to me
5 particularly (we have gathered from what is it)attitude
6 to teaching (.) is one of (.) utter noncooperation and
7 content
8 P: mmhmm

(7) MP/49

1 P: ((s.v.)) mmhmm mmhmm
2 T: errm (0.5) at the moment I've taken him from his
3 classroom down in the gym waiting for Joseph to come
4 down .hhh but it's reached such a stage with me: that-
5 errm you know I find that the boy's completely
6 uncooperative

(8) WJS/20

1 T1: he's a bit of an anomaly, isn't he, Peter because I
2 think he's (.) got maturity=
3 T2: [oh he is]
4 =problems he's got a very (0.5) errm acute=
5 P: [mm]
6 T1: =brain really=
7 T2: =mmhmm oh yes
8 T1: [but he]'s got a very poor attention span
9 P: mm hm

Descriptions of deviance using attributes are adjectival descriptions. The attributes so described imply the activities or behaviours that constitute them. In the above examples, various attributes – having an ‘attitude of utter noncooperation and contempt’, being ‘completely uncooperative’, and having a ‘very poor attention span’ can be understood to refer, at least indirectly, to rule-breaking of one sort or another: not cooperating with the teacher, being contemptuous of the teacher, and not paying attention.

Occasionally, both activities and attributes may be used in combination, as in the following example:

(9) WJS/22

1 Ep: ummm and (0.6) what about attain(-) well no let's just
2 say umm (1.2) what is the main problem then?
3 Mt: .thh well I would say i-it's mainly behavioural [it's]
4 this p-er it-it is this problem of the=
5 Ep: [mhmm]
6 Mt: =fact that he cannot settle for very long
7 Ep: mhmm
8 Mt: that in the process of not settling he d-disturbs too
9 many other children
10 Ep: mh[mm]
11 Mt: [so] much of the time ·hhh an th-thing is that in my
12 classroom situation it's very difficult to isolate
13 anybody

As the teacher says, in response to the psychologist's inquiry as to what the ‘main problem’ is, it's a ‘behavioural problem’ wherein the child, on the one hand, has the attribute, ‘cannot settle,’ and on the other hand, acts in such a way that he ‘disturbs too many other children’.

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Activities and attributes, of course, can be heard as predicated of membership categories and so it is that sometimes the descriptions make use of these rather than the activities and attributes that constitute them. For example:

(10) MP/51

1 T1: I don't suppose that (0.5) physically (0.6) that he:
2 errgh (1.6) ((s.v.)) errgh (..) couldn't have_have a
3 reasonable:_punch up with anybody re:ally but it's just
4 except that other people ·hh would start to: amongst
5 the kids anyway who would stand back from the lad jus:
6 because he looks big (0.7) now the other side which I
7 see of him is that (0.7) he's a thief (0.7) ((s.v.))
8 you know he'll pick up anything y'know errgh

(11) WJS/5578

1 Ep: mhmm
2 Ft: she' the oldest girl in the school and she's very
3 mature 8l.5) and errm she doesn't really mix with other
4 children of her own age group y'see=
5 Ep: =mm=
6 Ft: =but she just bullies them and they're all very
7 frightened of her
8 Ep: mm
9 Ft: and she mixes with children from Southbend sixteen
10 years olds, fifteen year olds
11 Ep: mm hmm
12 Ft: and we're a bit concerned about that side of it because
13 it's mainly boys as well
14 Ep: mm hmm

In the first of these two extracts (extract 10), the teacher thus describes the referral as a 'thief' – 'the other side which I see of him is that (0.7) he's a thief', and in the second (extract 11), the referral is described as a 'bully'. Both of these membership categories can be understood to mean that the child engages in some activity that involves theft or stealing; the category implies the predicate.

Categories, Activities and Attributes

As has been shown in the previous section, the selection of descriptions in terms of the two models involves the use of three main types of component: firstly, *membership categories*, such as ‘thief’, ‘bully’, ‘truant’ and ‘two year old’; secondly, *activities* which are recognizably constitutive of and bound to such categories, for example, stealing, thumping a child smaller and/or younger than the perpetrator and not attending school; and thirdly, *attributes*, for example, being ‘two years behind’ or being ‘worse than remedial.’ Now, on the face of it, some of these descriptors can seem to be quite specific in their meaning, for example, ‘thief’, ‘bully’, ‘truant’, ‘two year old’, ‘slow learner’, ‘stealing’, and ‘not attending school’. In these cases, there seems to be a clearly recognizable link between the descriptor and the rule or standard in terms of which the descriptor is used to indicate deviance. These selections may be hearably members of a collection of descriptors pertaining to some aspect or rule. Thus, for the rule proscribing ‘theft’, a describer might choose ‘thief’ (membership category), stealing (activity), or likes to steal things (attribute). In these cases, a componential rule might be: choose a component from the collection pertaining to and made available by the rule in question. So, if the collection is ‘theft’, choose (a) a category – thief; (b) an activity – stealing; or (c) an attribute – likes to steal things. Rules imply rule-breakers, and the rules provide for categories of rule-breakers, which in turn have predicated of them that they break the rules associated with their categories.

Each rule can have its infraction described with the components – membership categories, activities and attributes. For the rule prohibiting theft, for example, choose thief, steals or likes stealing; for the rule against bullying, choose bully, bullies or likes bullying; for school non-attendance, choose truant, doesn’t come to school and prefers to stay away, and so forth. However, describers may also make use of descriptors with far wider range, whose utility in making descriptions is more flexible; there are descriptors that appear to be much more inclusive and wide ranging in their potential meaning; they will do the job of referencing various categories of rule-breaking. The category ‘nuisance’ is one such descriptor. ‘Nuisance’ might mean disruption in the classroom, it might mean excessively attentive and it might mean leaving litter on the floor for somebody else to pick up. In each case, the category ‘nuisance’ conveys a different sense in which a person might be a nuisance. The category ‘nuisance’ may therefore have different predicates, depending on what it means *this time*.

In the case of a category such as ‘nuisance’, the ‘same’ category can be used in various senses and can therefore be said to belong to various devices. The category-words do not have stable, uni-referential meanings. So, we can have the same category-word belonging to different devices and meaning different things on different occasions.

It might be thought, then, that a describer can describe deviance with either specific or more general categorizations. However, there is a problem with approaching the issue in this way, with comparing descriptors in terms of their potential scope and applicability, that is, in terms of the potential specificity or generality of a descriptor. This is that such a procedure is grounded in a decontextualised view of the use of these various descriptors. It implies that some 'specific' categories and predicates will always have the same meaning, irrespective the context in which they are used. However, meaning is irremediably contextual; expressions are ineluctably indexical (Garfinkel 1967). It is not difficult to recognize that if one looks a little more closely at apparently 'specific' categories such as thief, one finds of course that these too may apply to different kinds of rule-breaking; so-called specific categories can mean more than one thing. 'Theft' can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including burglary, shoplifting, stealing from other children in the school, from libraries, and so forth. Thus, the preceding discussion of components has taken the descriptors out of context. There is no one-to-one correspondence between rule and descriptor, such that for a given rule-infraction the same category is always used, or that some category can only be applied to certain rules. A rule infraction can be described with various descriptors, and a particular descriptor can be applied to various rule infractions. The first of these alerts us not only to the fact that rules can be broken in various ways - theft, for example, could be broken by shoplifting, burglary, stealing from home, stealing from school, stealing school equipment, stealing other children's property, etc., - but also to the fact a specific type of rule infraction can be described with various descriptors. Thirdly, it serves to remind us that some descriptors can be put to wide-ranging use

As regards the components and the developmental model, examples from the data include: 'he cannot settle', 'he's got maturity problems', 'he cannot speak much at all', 'he doesn't know the names of common objects', 'she's two years behind', 'he wants to play little boy games'...

(12) AN/1

1 Ht: now, when she brought him in she said er e-e wasn't a
2 good talker
3 Ep: mm hm
4 Ht: and er I think I said was there anything else wrong
5 with him and er she said no
6 Ep: mm hm
7 Ht: and (-) I asked her as usual you know her first name,
8 her husband's first name
9 Ep: yeah
10 Ht: so she gave her husband as Paul and she's Pauline
11 Ep: mm
12 Ht: I accepted this er

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13 Ep: mm hm
14 Ht: quite happily (...) and er we his birth certificate but
15 it wasn't very long before we realised that it was more
16 than just a poor speaker, he-he can't speak very much
17 at all he-he doesn't know the language, he doesn't
18 know=
19 [.....]
20 Ep: [mm hm]
21 Ht: The names of common objects, no responses to various
22 simple instructions such as 'stand up'. 'sit down',
23 he's really functioning like an=
24 Ep: =mm hmm=
25 Ht: =eighteen month or two year old baby
26 Ep: mm hm

In this extract, teacher reports that a mother had described her child as 'not a good talker' and that she 'accepted this quite happily.' However, 'it wasn't long', she continues, before it was 'realised that it was more than just a poor speaker'. The inapplicability of the mother's categorisation is then demonstrated via a listing of the child's linguistic deficiencies: he cannot speak very much at all, he does not know the language, and does not respond to simple instructions. Finally, the teacher formulates the case by categorising the child's linguistic 'functioning' as that of an 'eighteen month or two year old baby'. The upshot is that the child's language development is hearably designated as a problem. Such recognisability as deviant depends upon a contrast between what is expected in terms of the predicates of the stage of life category to which the child belongs, namely 'four year old', and what is received, namely a level of competence ('functioning') which is typical of the category 'two year old' instead. As a member of the category 'four year old' the child is expected to have certain attributes and to be able to function in ways whichways that are bound to such a category. However, this child is functioning in ways more typical of a different category, namely a two year old. By implication, 'normal' children do not display predicates of categories of children younger than themselves. Instead, they display and are expected to display predicates of the categories to which they ostensibly belong. By being categorised as a two year old, it is being said that the child does not display what is normal for incumbents of the category 'four year old'. Hence, this child, being a four year old, may be heard as deviant.

Perhaps the important thing to stress here is that whilst categories are used in describing deviance in terms of the developmental model, unlike the norm-infraction model they refer overwhelmingly to the stage of life device and they are typically comparative in nature, that is, the under- or over- developed child is described in terms of categories higher or lower than the age category to which he or she belongs by virtue of their age.

Rule-breakers, furthermore, typically break more than one kind of rule and were often deviant in terms of both models.

(13) AH 1/2

1 Ht: (.....) January when I came into the class Barry was very
2 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
3 situation but I think all children do with a new
4 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
5 round the room screaming 'I'm taking no notice, I'm not
6 bothered by you' 'I don't care what you say' and if you
7 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
8 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
9 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
10 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
11 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
12 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
13 kick them or swear at them ·hhh and if that didn't work
14 y'know if I didn't jump up immediately and (...) straight
15 to Barry he'd pick up the chairs and start throwing
16 them across the classroom and (...) eff off
17 Ep: mm hmmm
18 Ht: and he was just really trying to show that he wanted
19 attention all the time

In this extract the teacher again uses the norm-infraction model to describe the child as deviant. This is accomplished via, firstly, a contrast between what the referral was like when the teacher first came into the class (in January) and what his subsequent behaviour turned out to be. At first he was 'quiet' and 'shy', just like 'all' i.e. normal children, when they are given a new teacher. However, whilst most children, by implication, 'settle down', in the case of this referral, he took to a pattern of behaviour that involved 'running round the room screaming' various things at the teacher, namely that he would take 'no notice' of her, that he was 'not bothered' by her and that he 'didn't care' what she said. The actions described can quite clearly be heard as examples of norm-infraction: 'screaming' at the teacher can, by itself, be heard as an infraction of norms pertaining to the manner in which children should speak to their teachers, and so may the particular things screamed at her be so heard. It is normative for pupils, after all, to be 'bothered' about the teacher, to care what he or she says and to take notice of their teacher. The teacher's extended account continues, and as the descriptions of the referral accumulate, it also turns out that the referral breaks rules about how to relate to other pupils, specifically rules about non-violence, about

appropriate behaviour towards classroom furniture and about how to respond when she does not pay exclusive attention to him.

Components in Context

In the previous section it has been shown that a variety of different components are used in describing deviance. However, it should not be concluded at this point that descriptions such as these are all that is said about deviance in this context. In fact, these abbreviated and decontextualised descriptions are embedded in extended turns and sequences of talk-in-interaction; they have been taken out of these contexts simply to illustrate the kinds of categorical resources used in describing deviance in this setting. In actuality, they are not used in isolation, as the previous discussion might have been thought to imply. Rather, they comprise parts of what are *multiple* descriptions of deviance. Indeed, this observation was made earlier in the discussion, in Chapter Three, of aspects of the sequential organization of referral talk. At this point, then, the discussion will proceed to look more closely at these multiple descriptions, not only in order to re-contextualize the components just considered in the previous segment but to consider some aspects of the organization of their use in relation to one another. Four issues will be discussed: (1) components are not used in isolation; descriptions of deviance use multiple components in combination with one another; (2) co-selection; these combinations stand in explicatory relationships to one another; (3) they are positioned relative to one another; (4) they are sometimes part of larger contrast classes.

The Multiplicity of Components: Accumulations

The key point, however, is not the measurable range of usage or the degree of ambiguity of descriptors; diversity and range is not the whole story. Returned to their contexts, it also transpires that categorizations are not used in isolation. Viewed in context, it is clear that multiple descriptions are produced, both individually and collaboratively. Be that as it may, what is plainly the case is the descriptors, in the context of their actual use, are not deployed alone. The key point is that these are not used in isolation but are combined with one another. The teachers do not simply make assertions about the children, they go into detail; the psychologists, as has been shown, seek that detail through follow-up questions and through their use of continuers. Thus, this is what ‘focusing in’ and ‘shifts in focus’ are all about. This has been discussed under the rubric of granularity in Chapter Three.

The Positioning of Components

Now that it has been shown that descriptions of deviance consist largely of *combinations* of descriptions that are assembled in orderly ways, and that such descriptors frequently stand in an explicative relationship, we can turn to the issue of how such descriptors are positioned relative to each other. Categories, for example, initiate combinations of descriptions which descriptions that are then explicated, or they are used to formulate the character of previous descriptions. In the preceding example, the description began with a membership category, 'thief'. This was then followed by (a) an explicative activity descriptor – 'he'll pick up anything' and then (b) an illustrative story of the referral's refusal to be an informant on other thieves in which the type of theft is made known – 'pinching stuff from the science labs'. As this example indicates, the description of the referral as a 'thief' begins with a membership category; the category is positioned at the outset of the descriptive segment, and is then followed by descriptions of activities that constitute it. Furthermore, the activity descriptions begin with a generalized gloss – 'he'll pick up anything' – which is then followed by a specification – 'pinching stuff from science labs'. This has the same structure as: 'he's stealing' – 'he's been caught three times stealing from supermarkets'. The difference is that in the second example, there is no membership category. In the case of 'nuisance,' the segment began with the announcement that the child was a nuisance, and this was then explicated.

We have seen that some categories can be applied in a number of different ways (nuisance), where predicates are tied to them situationally. The reverse is also true: activities and attributes are mentioned and then the category is used to sum up what these various categories amount to; that is, they are then predicated of the category. This suggests that 'predication' is a practice that works in two ways: either the category is used at the outset of the description, and its predicates (what are then hearable as its predicates) are mentioned, there being a reflexive relationship between category and predicate, (as that is the predicates document the underlying matter – the category – just as the category informs the sense of the predicates), or the category is used as a means to formulate the items already mentioned as predicates of the category.

Component Combinations: Co-Selection and Explication

Not only were descriptions multiple, they were also explicative. This is accomplished via a variety of explicative structures. The point is that they explicate their descriptions. This is done, as has been shown, through follow-up questions or clarification requests, and through the practice of continuation. However, the point here is that in doing this explicative work they position the components relative to one another. They have their meaning, both specific and non-specific, explicated. This may have something to do with the fact that the meaning of single descriptors is often less than clear. They are explicated and elaborated.

This applies not only to things like ‘nuisance’, it also applies to theft. Of course, issues of clarity and ambiguity may not be the reason. Whatever the reason, the participants engage in explication and in so doing they use the components in relation to one another. Rather, it is that these components are rarely used in isolation; they are instead used in combination with one another in orderly, explicative and formulative ways. There is an evident orientation to explication and specification on the part of referral meeting participants.

To anticipate the discussion, generalized glosses are explained. Several practices whereby this is done are identified. Alternatively, particulars may be described and then have their upshot formulated. These various categorizations, then, are not used randomly; they are used in orderly ways. They don’t just make assertions; they explicate, elaborate and explain them. There is an orientation to evidence and detail about what the facts of the case are. They may be asked to do this by the psychologist or they do so of their own accord. Membership categories, for example, are not simply offered and then left unexplicated. The grounds, so to speak, for the use of the category are provided. This demonstrates an orientation to ‘evidence’. This point, rather than going in chapter four, can be included here with reference to the non-randomness of category and other selections to describe the child.

Perhaps it can be said (a) that descriptors are not used on their own, (b) that they are used with others and these uses reveal an orientation to the explication of the meanings of particular categorizations, which in turn is related to the question of assertion and evidence. This would seem to relate to the inherent ambiguity of any categorization such that parties, and especially parties concerned with facts and evidence, have a concern with clarifying what they mean. This is what they do in their expansions and elaborations.

Some examples of explication

1. Nuisance

One way to explicate categories is by naming and specifying the activities that are constitutive of it them on this occasion. A good example here is that of the teacher’s description of the referral as a ‘nuisance’. In the following example, ‘nuisance’ can be understood as, i.e. is made to mean, ‘continuous disruptive element’ in the classroom. A ‘nuisance’, it turns out, is someone who breaks rules controlling how pupils speak to their teachers and how they behave in class, such that they are continuously disruptive.

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(14) PW/MP/981

1 T1: heh (-) everythin'
2 T2: well (0.8) as I see it (0.5) er he always has been a
3 nuisance I mean I hear from other people who've had him
4 you know from the time when he was in the first and
5 second year that's the way he spoke to teacher in the
6 way he behaved in class
7 Ep: mmhmm
8 T2: you know a continuous disruptive element in the class
9 Ep: mmhmm
10 T2: I've had im now since last September
11 Ep: mmhmm mm hm
12 T2: and (0.8) up till err Easter (0.6) though-i-his
13 attitude to: to teaching he er(-) to me particularly
14 (we have er(-) gathered from what it is) attitude to
15 teaching is one of utter noncooperation and contempt
16 (0.7)
17 Ep: mmhmm
18 T2: and (0.5) but (0.9) this was only in the in the manner
19 of you know he wasn't prepared to work (0.5) he-e
20 wasn't as far as I was concerned up till this term
21 positively disruptive
22 mmhmm
23 Ep: and in the last few weeks he has turned into being
24 T2: disruptive
25 mm hmm
26 Ep:

In this extract, the teacher begins his description with 'as I see it' and offers, as a first component the membership category 'nuisance'. Hearers, at this point will not know what this membership category means; a child can be a nuisance in a whole host of different ways, and so, unsurprisingly, the teacher commences an explication of what the category means on this occasion. Indeed, he actually follows his use of the category with 'I mean'. What he means is that the referral is a nuisance in two senses: (a) in the way that he spoke to the teacher and (b) in the way that he behaved in the classroom. Just how these 'ways' constitute being a nuisance is not, however, available from these descriptions of the referral's activities. The meaning of the category 'nuisance' has not yet been specified. The teacher then follows these 'vague' descriptions with 'you know', that is, 'you know what I mean', and then an explication of how these 'ways' constitute being a nuisance: the referral is 'a continuous disruptive element in the class'. A membership category 'nuisance', whose meaning is less than clear, though it involves 'ways of speaking' and 'ways of behaving', has now been replaced with a more explicative category, 'continuous disruptive element in the class'.

Clearly, the category ‘nuisance’ could have various meanings, be constituted in various ways, have various predicates. In any particular case, just what these are remains to be established, i.e. assembled on this occasion. The teacher explicates the category and the category constitutive predicates, not for their own sake but in order to explain what he means and just what in this case the referral is like and what he has been doing, the sorts of thing that he does. In these ways, the referrer makes the referral accountable and understandable. These are rational properties of the referral, its *raison d’être*. At the same time, this descriptive work permits us to see how categories and predicates are linked together *in situ* – either by starting with categories and then delineating the predicates or *vice versa* – on just this occasion.

The previous category/predicate configuration applies to the knowledge of what other teachers ‘thought’ of the child. The teacher then speaks of his own personal experience with the referral, and it is here that he mentions two further norms. The first is about preparedness to work. A taken-for-granted normative aspect of classroom life is that the teacher sets work for the children to do and that the children then engage with the tasks involved. The norms are *comply with the teacher’s instructions* and *do the work that has been set* (or at least attempt it). Such norms provide for the possibility that some children may deviate from them: they may not so comply and they may play around, or worse, instead. This is the case here. Rather than obeying the teacher’s instructions and getting on with the work, the referral’s ‘attitude was one of utter non-cooperation and contempt’. He displays contempt for the teacher and the rule that he should comply with the teacher’s instructions. However, this kind of deviance is ‘only that he wasn’t prepared to work’. A much more serious norm-infraction came in the form of his being ‘actively non-cooperative’ and ‘positively disruptive’. It is not clear what norms of classroom behaviour the child may have broken here, as the teacher does not tell us; ‘active non-cooperation’ and ‘positive disruption’ may take a variety of forms. At the very least, however, he appears to have broken classroom rules concerning cooperation with the teacher and non-disruption of everyday classroom life.

2. Theft:

(a) Explicating ‘Thief’

It was noted earlier that such explication is not limited to these more ‘ambiguous’ categories and generalized glosses. Take for example, the category ‘theft’. Given this the range of rule infractions that are subsumable under the idea of ‘theft’, it is perhaps not surprising that any concern with precision and adequate description should lead to some further explication and specification. The point to be appreciated here (MP) is that the collection ‘theft’, as a type of rule-breaking or norm-infraction, collects a range of different types of theft. One can be a thief in various ways.

A similar explication is evident in the following extract:

(15) MP/51

1 T: I don't suppose that (0.5) physically (0.6) that he:
 2 errgh (1.6) ((s.v.)) erggh (..) couldn't have_have a
 3 reasonable:_punch up with anybody re:ally but it's just
 4 except that other people ·hh would start to: amongst
 5 the kids anyway who would stand back from the lad jus:
 6 because he looks big (0.7) now the other side which I
 7 see of him is that (0.7) he's a thief (0.7) ((s.v.))
 8 you know he'll pick up anything y'know errgh (1.3) if
 9 he has done it and he (1.2) and it's really closed down
 10 insofar as he knows that somebody has done it (-) that
 11 he: has done it ·hhh he will (1.4) give it back (0.5)
 12 he will retrieve it from wherever he's put it an' it
 13 will come back (0.7) often (0.5) you see he gets
 14 himself to a fantastic impasse which I have to go and
 15 see John Anderson who's Head of the science (0.9) where
 16 they've got to this huge confrontation point (0.5)
 17 because (0.6) there's been some pinching going on in
 18 one the science labs (1.2) and Wood stood there an'
 19 told John Anderson that he knew who had done it and in
 20 ((r.v.)) no way () would he tell John Anderson (-) who
 21 had done it (-) an' then he just became dumb insolent
 22 virtually at that point

In this case, then, the theft in question is not stealing from supermarkets, it's not shoplifting, it's 'pinching stuff' from school. In both cases, however, the category 'thief' and the activity 'stealing' are not offered without explanation. In both cases, there is an accompanying explication.

In the first case, the describer starts off with a membership category – 'thief'. Again, this is followed by an explication – 'he'll pick up anything' – followed by 'y'know'. Any hearer, at this point, would be entitled to say 'no I don't', since the meaning of 'pick up anything' is less than clear. In this case, there is no such prompt for further information but the describer nevertheless proceeds to elaborate the categorization. It thus turns out that if the referral knows that 'somebody' knows 'that he has done it' he will give back what was 'picked up'. On the other hand, if he has not 'done it' he will not inform on the person who has. The refusal to inform is described as 'getting himself in a fantastic impasse'. The hearer is then told that the describer was called by the 'Head of Science' because of a 'huge confrontation' in relation to some 'pinching' in the science labs. It is only at this point, then, that the type of theft is revealed.

(b) Explicating 'Stealing'

The point of this example is that the meaning of 'stealing' is explicated, just as in the other 'theft' example, the meaning of the category 'thief' is explicated.

(16) RMSJ/8

1 T: so I won't give you the whole story ahmmm but in a
2 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated, they can't
3 trust him in the house at all on his own, even if they
4 pop up to the shops the house is in a mess when they
5 come back and he's stealing, he's been caught three
6 times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace

In this case, the theft, or as teacher puts it, the 'stealing', is comprised consists of stealing from the supermarkets on the local terrace. In this way, the category theft is explicated as the kind of theft it is, namely shoplifting. However, it can be noted that even if this explication leaves open the possibility it may not be shoplifting but 'breaking and entering' instead. This potential ambiguity does not seem to trouble the psychologist, who receives the explication with the acknowledgement 'mm hm'.

The explication is different in the two cases. In the first, it consists of (a) the naming of an activity, (b) the report that he has been caught three times stealing, and (c) the naming of the place where he has been caught stealing and therefore the category of stealing that he has been doing. In the words of MCA, the initial reference to stealing sets up a collection of possible categories because there are, as is known in this culture, different ways in which the activity collected under this heading may be done. Via the report of where the activity the hearer is informed of the particular category of stealing that the referral has been doing.

A series of points can be made here. The first is that the rule against theft may be broken in different ways. The second is that, whatever sort it is, it can be described in different ways. There is no one-to-one correspondence between type of rule-breaking and descriptor. In the cases to hand, the descriptors used to describe the theft are (a) an activity descriptor and (b) a categorical descriptor. The third point is that whatever type of descriptor is used it is not left as an assertion, it is also explicated.

If we take 'deteriorating behaviour' we can make some points. The first is that the description of the referral's deviance begins with the reported assertion that his behaviour has deteriorated. This deterioration is then explicated by the description that the parents cannot 'trust' their child in the house. This report is then explicated by describing what the child is doing, that is, by naming two categories of behaviour that the child is presently engaged in and which constitute the evidential detail of why he cannot be trusted and hence his deterioration. These two categories of behaviour are (a) he makes a mess in the house when his parents

are out, and (b) he's stealing. The second of these categories of behaviour is then explicated via sub-categories of stealing, namely shoplifting and stealing from home. Stealing from home is then further explicated with further sub-categories (i.e. it branches and divides into further categories) which are (a) *what* he steals (money) and (b) *what* he does with it, namely he *hides* it, which in turn provides for a description of *where* he hides it. The latter, as a collection, is then constituted via the naming of two places where the referral hides the stolen money: in the toilet cistern and under the carpet.

The Method of Explication

We can see a general method of explication at work here. Categories become collections in a progressively detailed explication. This is the method of explication. It involves the naming of classes or categories, which then become collections of further categories and classes, which then become the collection names for further classes and categories, and so on. The method is one of progressive categorical specification and elaboration.

If this is the general method, we may be able to call it progressive classification or categorization. What I am trying to express here is that this involves the naming of categories of things that then become collections for further categories. This has been called the 'branching texture' of categories and collections. This was noted in Hester and Eglin (1997c)

There is a 'branching texture' to the organization of membership categories and membership categorization devices, in that, depending on context, a category may be used within a device or it may operate as a 'device' in its own right.

What needs to be established (or not) is whether this 'branching texture' comprises a method for the explication of generalized glosses and categorizations. The use of 'nuisance' (see below) can be a test case of these thoughts.

The preceding, then, is a build up to a (general) characterization of the child as having 'turned to being positively disruptive'. Like a membership category placed at the beginning we do yet know what this means, but we are now going to find out. Is this a method of telling the case? That is, does it involve some general characterization first and then an elaboration?

In the following extract, which follows on from Extract 15, above, Teacher 2 (T2) goes on to tell another story and this can be heard to then substantiate the earlier characterization of the child as having turned to being positively disruptive.

(17) RMSJ/9

1 T2: er today I told him ermm I have an arrangement with
2 John that he would go along to him for a while because
3 he knew about Paul's problems (0.6) he's settled in but
4 he's but he's taken away from: from me I haven't you
5 know m-it's a case of y'know highly unsettled life or
6 somethin' like that (0.6) errm but he refused to go out
7 (1.1) I came out to look for John an' when I got back
8 he was back in again (1.3) so I told him to go out
9 again (0.6) he refused to go until I actually went and
10 stood beside him and said look you bugger if you don't
11 get out of this room ·hh I shall have to forcibly
12 remove you from this room (1.4) an' I didn't but he
13 went at that
14 P: ((s.v.)) mmhmm mmhmm
15 T2: errm (0.5) at the moment I've taken (him from his
16 classroom) down in the gym waiting for John to come
17 down ·hhh but it's reached such a stage with me: that
18 errm you know I find that the boy's completely
19 uncooperative (1.0)

This is the climax or culmination of the story and the reason for the referral. It's preceded with a 'but' and described with an extreme case formulation: the boy is 'completely uncooperative'. This is followed up by a description of his irremediability:

(18) RMSJ/9

1 T2: that the boy's completely uncooperative (1.0) now I've
2 been teaching for something like twenty-five years
3 (0.5) an never have I had to (0.5) call on the help of
4 a year tutor or anybody else to assist me with a child
5 ((r.v.)) but in this one I must admit that I just don't
6 know what to do to handle him

We have then a combination here of (a) the extreme case formulation and (b) the assertion of irremediability. These two features of deviance descriptions will be examined in detail in Chapter Nine.

Conclusion

With reference to the two members' models of deviance discussed in this chapter, it might be thought possible to abstract and list various individual components and items of categorization in order to document the models. Thus it might be thought that deviance is described in terms of category predicates of the categories comprising the developmental model. For example, for two year olds, certain predicated developments are to be anticipated, and when they do not happen they are noticeably and normatively absent. Similarly, in specific contexts of social interaction, say in the classroom, departures from activities bound to the category 'normal pupil' are evidence of deviance.

However, such references or descriptions would be have been wrenched from their contexts. To reiterate the point made earlier, they are not used in isolation but in combination with each other, and they are embedded in 'larger' categorial structures and objects. These comprise collections of components and it is the object of this research to unpack these components and see what they are. These collections consist of various kinds of contrast structure or category contrasts. This chapter has considered some of these categorial objects in their use in meeting talk. The various aspects of such use will be considered in subsequent chapters.

Endnote

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One notable to exception (apart from Sacks) to the relative absence of studies of the use of the stage of life device is Atkinson (1980).

Chapter Six

Components and Structures of Story-Building

Introduction: Categorising Deviance in School

If previous studies of deviance in schools, and especially of referrals, are examined then an operative distinction between two aspects of deviance becomes apparent. Thus, on the one hand, descriptions of deviance may be investigated in terms of what they make reference 'to' (i.e. the kind of problem pointed to), whilst on the other hand there is the issue of what the designation consists 'of' (i.e. how it refers to the problem). Previous researchers have largely restricted their studies to the first of these aspects, that is, the kinds of 'problem' defined as deviant and for which the children are referred. In so doing, it would seem to be standard sociological practice to group members' vernacular categorisations into various analysts' classifications. One such classificatory scheme of 'reasons for referral' might include the following: (1) learning problems/problems of educational retardation; (2) problems of maturity/development; (3) attainment problems; (4) social problems; (5) behaviour problems; (6) emotional and psychological problems; (7) physical problems (see, for example, Barton and Tomlinson 1981; Ford, Mongon and Whelan 1982; Tomlinson 1981). Such a concentration on 'underlying' problems treats members' talk as a resource rather than as a topic of inquiry in its own right. Thus, such abstractions do not illuminate how the participants in settings such as this describe deviance *for each other*. Analysts' classificatory schemes, abstracted from the 'lived detail' of members' descriptive practices, entail a neglect of the phenomenon of 'deviance' as it is known, understood and talked about by members themselves. It was Garfinkel who emphasised that sociology's preference for generalised description entailed a neglect of the specifics of settings and activities: what he referred to as a 'missing whatness'. As Lynch (1993: 271) remarks: Garfinkel introduced his proposal to study the "missing what" of organised complexes of activity by crediting Harvey Sacks with an insight to the effect that virtually all the studies in the social and administrative sciences literatures "miss" the interactional "what" of the occupations studied; studies of bureaucratic case workers "miss" how such officials constitute the specifications of a "case" over the course of a series of interactions with a stream of clients; studies in medical sociology "miss" how diagnostic categories are constituted during clinical encounters; and studies on the military "miss" just how stable ranks and lines of communication are articulated in and as interactional work.

In terms of this conception, then, members' categorisations of 'deviance' require investigation as a topic in their own right.¹ Furthermore, in doing so, and in contrast to sociological approaches such as realism and social constructionism, the aim is not to theorise deviance but to describe and analyse what deviance is for the

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members of society. Thus, while for varieties of sociology such as these the nature of deviance is a matter of theoretical debate, for ethnomethodology deviance is not an issue about which any *theoretical stance* needs to be or should be taken. Rather, ethnomethodology seeks to examine the ways in which concerns with 'deviance' inform members' locally ordered practical action and practical reasoning. The concern is fundamentally a descriptive one. As was said in Chapter One, ethnomethodology; it seeks to “describe the mundane practices in and through which persons are oriented to issues of what is deviant and engage in its 'analysis' in the course of such activities as reporting, describing, questioning, interpreting, deciding and explaining what is or is not deviant.” The aim is to draw attention to the various locally situated ways in which deviance is identified, described, explained, understood, made sense of, and treated as the grounds for various kinds of remedial intervention. In short, its focus is on how deviance is *ordered* in specific sites of talk and interaction. In what follows, firstly, some methods used in making designations of deviance in referral talk will be examined. Attention will then be focused, secondly, on the issue of recipient design in relation to these designations.

Components and Structures of Description

In the last chapter, an initial analysis of the sequential organization of referral talk in which descriptions of deviance are produced was presented. It was shown how educational psychologists ask questions about and teachers address various aspects of the referral. Having described what these aspects are – attainment, relationships with other pupils, relationships in the home, etc. – two questions arise: first, what resources do participants use to do this?, and, secondly, how are these resources deployed to accomplish storyable descriptions of deviance? To anticipate the argument to be presented in this chapter, the answer to the first question involves discussion of such components as membership categories, activities, collections, attributes and so forth. Concerning the second question, how are these components deployed, several structures of story-building will be examined, including (1) contrast structures, (2) actions sequences, and (3) lists. These structures, as will be shown in this chapter, are used to accomplish descriptions that are general in character; they are used to describe what the child is like, what kinds of things he or she does, what he or she cannot do, both in general terms and in terms of what the child has done on a specific occasion. As we saw in Chapter Five, general descriptions are preferred, in the sense that when specific incidents are mentioned they are treated as illustrative of more general characteristics; A second point is that the components listed above are not used randomly but in a contextualized manner; A third key point is that these moreover are not used in

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isolation but are combined with one another. As was said there, “The teachers do not simply make assertions about the children, they go into detail; the psychologists, as has been shown, seek that detail through follow-up questions and through their use of continuers. Thus, this is what ‘focusing in’ and ‘shifts in focus’ are all about.” This is accomplished via a variety of explicative structures. The point is that they explicate their descriptions. This is done, as has been shown, through follow-up questions or clarification requests, and through the practice of continuation. However, before turning to relevant data a brief reiteration of the locally-organised nature of categorial talk is in order.

Categorical components in context

Conversation Analysis (CA) teaches that it is necessary to look at what is actually done with categories and their related components. The interest is in members’ practices and in relation to this MCA refers to the analysis of what members do, which may include how they use categories to analyse and make sense but where this is demonstrably so, and not just self-reflective, culturalist and promiscuous analysis. It is not necessary to reject ‘self-reflective’ analysis at this point, it will suffice to say that one route which may be followed after the identification of the various components is to consider their recognisability as descriptions of deviance. This is what is done in the self-reflective tradition. However, the point is well taken from Schegloff that Sacks shifted his position and that MCA, whatever else it may have been, should surely take into account how CA has developed, given that the context of the emergence of MCA was CA in the first place. So what has been learned? One thing is that the analyses must be grounded, demonstrably so, in the data. This argument, then, works quite well here as the basis for a consideration of the contextualized uses to which the components are put, here and in subsequent chapters. Furthermore, the argument that ‘demonstrable’ analysis needs to be in terms of members’ display of their understandings of what is being done with these descriptions can be addressed in terms of there being a ‘delay’ in the response which, in its delayed turn, demonstrates what the descriptions are doing, i.e. they are accomplishing referral and asking the psychologist to intervene and take action.

Later, in Chapter Eight, it will be shown how descriptions of deviance may be of various sorts and may range from the general to the specific. Specificity, furthermore, is done in the interests of establishing generality. In advance of that discussion, a related topic will be taken up now. It is one aspect of the fact that descriptions do not merely describe, they are put to particular uses and they occur in specific places. They

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are not, in other words, used to describe deviance in a decontextualised way. Whilst speakers may deploy categories to describe deviance in general terms, and hence in a decontextualised or perhaps better a transcontextualised manner, their deployment is itself contextualized. To anticipate the discussion, categories, for example, are used in initial positions and in final positions of descriptive segments or passages. In these sequential locations, categorizations are employed to accomplish accounts and formulations. Similarly, attributes, activities and so forth are also positioned and in particular are used to *elaborate* first position categories. They can also be themselves in initial position. Again, action sequences and instantiations *explicate* the more general descriptions composed of attributes, activities and so forth.

The descriptions, then, are produced in particular sequential environments. There is a first question, which may be open or closed. In response to the first question a first description will be selected. This will reflect the question. These issues – the relationship between components – will be addressed in this and ensuing chapters. The discussion begins with devices and categories.

One particular issue raised by Schegloff is the difference between a categorization and an attribution (or the use of an attribute). Whilst Schegloff's analysis appears plausible, it nevertheless needs to confront the issue, considered at some length by Sacks, that category membership can be inferred, implied, alluded to, established, warranted, etc. on the basis of a range of predicates, including activities, beliefs, dispositions and, of course, attributes. Furthermore, the question of what someone is doing when they use a description is not so much whether they are categorizing or attributing, i.e. whether they can be correctly described as doing some instance of an analytically defined action, but what they are doing in their own terms. With these points in mind, we can return to the data.

Building stories: Generalized glosses and explicative activities

It has been emphasised that components are not used in isolation but are deployed in the construction of stories. As shown in the previous chapter, answers are subject to expansion, both elicited via continuers and by unelicited continuations. Describers of deviance often start out with generalized glosses and become more specific in order to explicate the meaning of these glosses. To begin, consider the 'explicative pair'. Whilst the explicative pair is a 'minimal' explicative structure there are also other more complex explicative structures (of which explicative pairs may form a part). One of these consists of generalized glosses and explicative activities. This can be seen in the following extract, which picks up on the earlier statement that the referral

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was 'father's request' and the implied contrast between the referral's behaviour in school and at home:

(1) RMSJ/4

1 Ht: ahmm he's sometimes phoned me and I thought that
2 Terence's behaviour was improving slightly (-) ahh he
3 was going to the lake District with us this year
4 Ep: mm
5 Ht: and er at four days we were due to go to the Lakes
6 Terence came in with the remark that he wasn't going
7 mummy and daddy said he couldn't go and I thought well
8 possibly he hadn't paid all his money so there was some
9 financial=
10 Ep: =yeah=
11 Ht: =bother so I con-contacted father and said if there is
12 any financial trouble we could help him with this he
13 said no there isn't I want to come and see you anyway
14 and he came up and although his behaviour had appeared
15 to improve slightly in school in actual fact it had got
16 considerably worse at home
17 Ep: mm
18 Ht: ahh I think he would like to talk to you himself
19 Ep: yeah
20 Ht: so I won't give you the whole story ahmm but in a
21 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated they can't
22 trust him in the house at all on his own even if they
23 pop up to the shops the house is a mess when they come
24 back and he's stealing he's been caught three times
25 stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
26 Ep: mm hm

Here, then, the Ht begins to tell the story and to explicate what is meant by his original announcement that the referral was 'father's request' and by the generalized gloss, 'considerably worse at home'. She does so, firstly, by describing his behaviour as having 'deteriorated'. Still, we don't know what this means. She then increases the sharpness of her focus: 'they can't trust him in the house at all on his own even if they pop up to the shops the house is a mess when they come back and he's stealing he's been caught three times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace'. This description begins with the report that 'they can't trust him in

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the house'. Again, this begs the question 'why not?' We then get an explication of what he has been doing that apparently warrants the assessments (a) that his behaviour has deteriorated and (b) he cannot be trusted in the house 'at all' (extreme case formulation). This is: (a) even if they pop to the shops the house is in a mess when they come back and (b) he has been stealing from the local shops. The 'worse' behaviour has now been detailed.

In this case, then, the story consists of a progressively sharpening of focus from a class of behaviour, i.e. deteriorating behaviour to sub-classes of such behaviour, namely making a mess in the house and stealing from shops. So, we have a collection of things or objects comprising (a) (deteriorating) behaviour and (b) sub-classes of this: (i) makes a mess in the house and (ii) steals from the local shops. More precisely, with respect to (ii) we have (a) stealing and then (b) stealing from supermarkets. Furthermore, where the generalized gloss is in terms of 'deteriorating behaviour', the objects to which the sharper focus is applied are also forms of behaviour or activities.

In each case, then, we have an answer to the questions that might expectably and reasonably be asked, namely what kind(s) of thing are you talking about here, or what do you mean by these rather general descriptions? From deteriorating behaviour, the next item is the kinds of behaviour, and then from stealing the next item is the kind of stealing that is meant by the preceding description. In each case, then, we have a naming of a class of things, and then a listing of some things that go in the class. In this, then, we have gone from 'father's request' to 'behaviour that has got worse' at home to instances of behaviour – making a mess and stealing – to stealing from supermarkets. This is a progressively specific list of behaviours.

Categories may themselves be collections. To say of someone that their behaviour has deteriorated is to categorize them but the elaboration of the meaning of this categorization then transforms it into a collection of categories of deteriorating behaviour. This is the branching texture of membership categorization, from generalities to specificities. Some explications, as I have shown, are volunteered, they occur 'naturally' within the course of a descriptive turn. Others are elicited by the psychologist. For example:

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(2) RMSJ/383

1 Ep: yeah could be er what sort of when father says he can't
2 leave him at home when they come back what sort of
3 things is he doing while they're out
4 Ht: well he said th ho' he said the house is just a mess
5 when they come back every thing's been pulled out ahmm
6 I don't know

A couple of things are evident here: first the psychologist focuses in on a prior description by producing another question that seeks clarification on what has been said previously. The Ep is asking the Ht to explicate the meaning of 'can't leave him at home'. So, it is not just the Ht who volunteers explications, the Ep may request them. In this case the psychologist is asking for a class of objects or naming a class 'the things he is doing ...' (what sort of things is he doing) that constitute not being able to be left alone in the house or reasons why the child cannot be left alone or more specifically things or activities that the child is doing. That is, the psychologist is here interested in activities just as the teacher has previously explicated attributes by mentioning activities. The teacher answers with two objects of such activities: (a) the house is just a mess, i.e. the child makes a mess, thereby leaving open just what 'mess' means, and (b) explicates 'mess' with the description 'every thing's been pulled out'. That is, then, the descriptor (is a category or class of things?) 'mess' (as a category or class of things?) can mean different things; there can be different sorts or categories of mess. That is, it is indeed a class of objects that as yet leaves it unclear as to what particular objects make up the class in this case. She provides one. Generalised glosses then are rather like collections of things, and they are explicated by providing what can be heard as categories of things that belong in the collection. That is, activities themselves can be generalized glosses and subject to explication.

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(3) RMSJ

1 Ep: hm hm
2 Ht: and each time it's only mother and father going up and
3 having a word with manager which has saved from being
4 prosecuted they've talked to him they tried everything
5 under the sun to get through to him but he's still
6 stealing [and]=
7 Ep: [mm]
8 Ht: =he's also stealing from home they find that he steals
9 money and hides it in the toilet cistern under the
10 carpet you mention it he's doing it now I'm giving you
11 this story second hand
12 Ep: yeah mm
13 Ht: to my knowledge he has not stolen in school

The mention of 'stealing from home' is another generalized gloss that requires explication, and this duly occurs with the report that he 'steals money'. That is 'stealing from home', as an activity, might be constituted in a variety of ways. The nature of the activity, then, is clarified, by the naming of one sub-category of theft that belongs to that collection 'stealing from home'. Fourth, with respect to this activity of stealing money from home there then is offered a three-part list of items with respect to where the child hides the money: (a) in the toilet cistern, (b) under the carpet and (c) you mention it he's doing it (which is a 'generalized list completer' (Jefferson 1990)).

In all cases, then, there are starting points for descriptive packages, and all of these are followed by something, presumably by explications, i.e. going into detail.

(4) WJS/24

1 Ft: [mm] [there's one or two that he he] sort of rubs up
2 against that's err Paul isn't it Paul the blond one
3 ? th[at's] (.....Graham Black]
4 Mt: [yes the-the little one ye:s that's ri]ght yeah
5 Ft: Grah[am] (-) there's a fe[:w of them]
6 Mt: [mm] [·hhhhhhhhh]
7 Mt: well ac-well actually
8 Ft: ((r.v.)) bu-he's not malicious is he?
9 Mt:

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10 well I don't know you see (0.6) th-I-I-sometimes wonder
11 about this be:cause umm you see (-) we've had reports
12 Ft: in of err:m after breaktimes [when] Philip has been=
13 Mt: [yeah]
14 Ft: =bullying (0.6) umm I'[ve] (thin)-I mentioned
15 Mt: [yeah]
16 Ft: somewhere there [(0.9)] there
17 Ep: [mm]
18 Mt: mhmm
19 umm (1.9) early on very early on in-I um in the year
20 'bout (0.7) middle of September (-) (an-d) after one
21 break he came in: and it turned out that er-er in the
22 breaktime he had um (0.5) punched one of the infants (-
23) I mean really given him a sound thump (-) you know
24 Ep: this sort of [thi]ng (-) and um caused considerable=
25 Mt: [mm]
26 =distress ·hh and umm (0.8) oh (0.5) ((whispers)) tri-
27 hh-ed to fi-hhnd out what's wrong you see w-wh-hy did
28 you do it Philip and er () oh the little one did
29 something when he called him a name or something like
30 this ·hhh (0.5) but whatever he'd done it certainly
31 didn't warrant the-the retaliation the-the-that Philip
32 took you know I [thi[nk] this has got something to di
33 Ep: perhaps with his size [ermm] b-because he is=
34 Ft: [mm]
35 Mt: [(.....)]
36 Ep: [physically quite (.....)]-er large
37 Ft: [very (-) tall (-) yeah]
38 Mt: m[mm]
39 Ep: [and] umm
40 Mt: biggest in the class
41 r-yes a ha he is (0.7) he's one of the biggest in the
42 Ep: year group in fact
43 mm (1.4) has he had this sort of history behind him in
44 the Infants School have you had a chance to discuss
with err

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In this extract the Ft can be heard to specify the nature of ‘rubs up against’ – that is, she proposes the description, ‘but he’s not malicious is he?’ The Mt calls this into question and tells the psychologist that there have been reports about Philip’s behaviour at breaktime. The reports are that Philip has been ‘bullying.’ This generalized gloss – an action descriptor/categorization – is positioned prior to an exemplar or instantiation which consists of the report that he had ‘punched one of the infants’. Given the age difference, this is then heard as serious, i.e. the category membership of the victim lends the punching its quality as ‘bullying’. Furthermore, in case there is any question about it, the meaning of the ‘punch’ is clarified with ‘I mean really given him a sound thump’.

Consider another example:

(5) AH/1

1 Ht: (.....) January when I came into the class Alan was very
2 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
3 situation but I think all children do with a new
4 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
5 round the room screaming ‘I’m taking no notice, I’m not
6 bothered (...) I don’t care what you say’ and if you
7 didn’t (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
8 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
9 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
10 you didn’t notice him he would go and punch, there’s
11 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
12 more than anyone else and he’d go and punch them or
13 kick them or swear at them ·hhh and if that didn’t work
14 y’know if I didn’t jump up immediately and (...) straight
15 to Barry he’d pick up the chairs and start throwing
16 them across the classroom and (...) eff off

As noted before, the teacher begins with a contrast between the situation in January when she first came into the class and what happened later. As she says, ‘he started running around the room screaming’. What, it may be asked, did he screamed? She fills us in with a three-part list of things he screamed: “I’m taking no notice”, “I’m not bothered by you”, and “I don’t care what you say.” This, then, is an instance of an occasioned collection of things. It is followed shortly thereafter by another: ‘if you didn’t notice him’. This collection is

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a bunch of conditionals: things that would happen if he wasn't taken notice of. Again, there are three: 'he'd go and punch them or kick them or swear at them'. Finally, the third collection is: 'if that didn't work y'know if I didn't jump up immediately and (...) straight to Alan'. Its members are again three: 'he'd pick up the chairs and start throwing them across the classroom and (.....) "eff off".'

(6) AH/22

1 Ep: mm hm
2 Ft: and he just was really trying to show that he wanted
3 attention all the time
4 Ep: mm hm
5 Ft: but he'd come in some mornings and he was really good
6 and he'd write a story and he could write about two
7 sides and it was really interesting it was fluent it
8 was really good his art work's good when he wants to
9 other mornings he'd come in he'd say 'I'm doing nothing
10 I'm not going to do an effing thing' and he won't no
11 matter what you do you can cuddle him you can talk talk
12 to him nicely you can sit him down if you (got him away
13 if) we have the supernumary if she can take him out and
14 if he doesn't want to that day he'll do absolutely
15 nothing (1.0) now the other children have started
16 following in the same things he's decided 'I'm going
17 home' so I had a stage where I had to more or less
18 stand by the door for part of the lesson because 'oh to
19 hell' the book'll go off in one direction pencil in the
20 other the crayons'll (...) little boys always (.....)
21 thrown across the room and off he'd go to the door and
22 if you didn't get there quick enough he'd be out and
23 over the yard he's gone once the auxiliary had to go
24 and bring him back .hhh and he's very disruptive really
25 but there again on the odd day he's beautiful
26 Ep: mm hmm

Again this extended turn contains a contrast and a number of collections. The contrast is between 'some mornings' and 'other mornings'. There are three items in the 'some mornings' collection: 'he was really good and he'd write a story and he could write about two sides' and then a further three in the second

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collection pertaining to his writing: 'it was interesting, it was fluent, it was really good.' In the 'other mornings' collection there are several sub-collections: firstly 'what he said' comprising "I'm doing nothing" and "I'm not going to do an effing thing"; secondly, 'no matter what you do' comprising 'you can cuddle you can talk to him nicely you can sit him down'. We can see here how the teacher is assembling collections of things. She then formulates the upshot of this:

Ep: mm hmm
Ft: we've just got the two extremes

One particular type of generalized gloss is the use of membership categories. These are positioned at the beginning and at the ends of explicative structures.

(7) WJS/23

1 Ep: .th-when you say er disturbing others is that when he's
2 not working?
3 Mt: ummm(-) well (0.7) mainly ye-heh-heh-[yes] I-I was
4 goin' to: mainly although=
5 Ep: [yeah]
6 Mt: =even when he is working he do' this is it he doesn't
7 get down to his work qui-he he'll do (-) two or three
8 minutes
9 Ft: ((s.v.)) mm=
10 Mt: =and then (0.8) I dunno h-he gets fed up with it
11 doesn't want to do it anymore
12 Ep: mhm
13 Mt: and he'll kick the lad next to him just for fun you
14 know to break the monotony [I suppose] ·hhh [umm]
15 Ft: [heh-hhh.] [he does]
16 h-heh
17 Mt: an:d-er and that starts it all o'course 'cos-o-the lad
18 next to [him] isn't goin' to er=
19 Ft: [mm]
20 Mt: =take that so he retaliates: and erm (1.0) we've a-an
21 immediate small problem so you [calm] them down (-)
22 Ft: [mm]
23 Mt: and they are all calm again [for] another=

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24 Ft: [mm]
25 Mt: =three or four minute[s] and the same thing ha[ppens
26 (.....)]
27 Ft: [mm] [there's
28 one or two the he he] sort of rubs up against that's
29 err Paul isn't it Paul the blond one

The psychologist offers the candidate answer – when he's not working? – and the teacher agrees, though qualifies this with 'mainly' and then with the report that he disturbs others when he is working as well. We then get an exemplar of what he does – a description of how he behaves: he works for a couple of minutes, gets fed up, kicks the lad next to him just for fun, and that starts a 'small problem' because the one he has kicked retaliates. This is a sequence of actions that is reported, with the Ft offering supportive continuers, without the intervention of the psychologist. The following extract contains another explicative action sequence:

(8) WJS/25

1 Mt: r=yes a ha he is (0.7) he's one of the biggest in the
2 year group in fact
3 Ep: mm (1.4) has he had this sort of history behind him in
4 the Infants School have you had a chance to discuss
5 with [err]
6 Mt: [no] I haven't discussed it very much in the
7 Infants School th-the brief discussion that I had with
8 um (0.5) with Mrs James who is his previous teacher
9 [um] indicates that this: sort of thing in one form=
10 Ep: [mm]
11 Mt: =another has been going on (0.6) fairly regularly [(-)]
12 um so it's not something that=
13 Ep: [yeh]
14 yeh
15 Mt: =has just started I don't think
16 Ep: what about umm you know (the) relationship with other
17 kids [there] in the cla[ss? ho]w=
18 Mt: [mm] [.thh]
19 Ep: = does he get on with them?
20 Mt: well here again you see-er-very often (-) umm (-) the
21 sort of thing that I hear (0.8) is (-) umm (0.5)

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22 'Please Sir' umm 'Philip Boge just punched me' (0.9)
23 he's just got up sometimes y'know (-) wandered across
24 and thumped somebody
25 Ep: mhm
26 Mt: w-how desperate this really actually is you know I mean
27 I haven't even nobody's actually been into (-) tears in
28 the class[: or]anything like that so far so he=
29 Ep: [mhm]
30 Mt: =obviously (0.8) perhaps it's minor irritation
31 sh[all] we say ·hhh but this sort=
32 Ep: [mm]
33 Mt: =of thing does happen fairly frequently
34 Ep: yeah

Thus, the Ep focuses in by asking about history. Later in response to the Ep's question (referent aspect specification) the Mt offers a description of the 'sort of thing', i.e. it is a typical and categorical object: somebody complaining that he has been hit by Philip Boge. Furthermore, the action sequence that preceded the complaint was: (a) gets up, (b) wanders across the classroom and (c) thumps somebody, leading to (d) the victim's complaint.

The Positioning of Membership Categories

Membership categories are one example of generalized glosses. They are positioned at the beginnings and at the ends of descriptive segments. At the beginning they 'set up' what is then explicated; at the end they formulate what has just been explicated. They operate rather like two bookends.

Membership categories in initial and last description positions

To use language drawn from a different tradition, one might say that the teachers make their pitch and then substantiate it. This is what happens when the first questions are 'open', which constitutes an invitation to tell the story about the child. As already noted, a frequent pattern is that some general characterization of the referral is made (and this is done in various ways) and then is subsequently elaborated. This elaboration may be left in the hands of the teacher or there may be requests for clarification and other follow-up questions along the way.

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We are moving towards a characterization of the shape of these stories, and one thing about them is the placement of the ‘reasons’ for the referral. In this regard, it may be instructive to consult Sacks (1992a; 1968):

Now, one matter to be considered at some length is the placement of the announcement of a reason for a call. One characteristic place is at the beginning of a call. When people announce a reason for a call they do it, if not in the first utterance (which may be ‘hello’), then often in their second. And when one announces a reason for a call, then apparently one is not simply saying – and is not treated as simply saying – that somewhere in the call this reason should be considered, but one is proposing it as what should be talked of now. A reason for a call, then, can be considered as something like a sub-class of the class ‘*floor seekers*’, *seekers*’, i.e., it proposes a next topic. And in that regard then, there are various similarities between ‘reason for a call’ and other topic-beginners, which involve, e.g., that announcing a topic can permit a recipient to monitor when that topic will have been finished, and what should be said when it is finished, in the same way I mentioned a while back about story beginnings or story pre-beginnings.

The point here is that the teacher does not have to ‘seek the floor’, so to speak. The arranged referral meeting and the invitation to speak ‘gives the floor’ to the teacher. In this regard, then, there is not the same ‘urgency’ in placing the reason for the referral, as a topic, right at the beginning, since the parties already know why they are there. Sacks (1992a; 1968) has this to say on this matter:

We want to note that: That something is a reason for a call for its recipient is apparently not controlled by the fact that it was announced as a reason for a call. It seems that people can report that someone called for X reason, without them having said that that was the reason. It seems plain, then, that some things which will be seen as the reason for the call at hand, are not announced specifically as ‘the reason I called’, and others are announced as the reason for the call. Now what sort of difference is there between them? Is it the case, e.g., that for findable reasons for calls, which are not announced as such, it is a more equivocal situation as to whether they are the reasons for the calls? I think it’s the reverse. That is to say, there are clear items which stand as reasons for calls and less clear items which stand as reasons for calls. And one makes a less clear item clearer by announcing it as the reason for the call, whereas for others there’s no such issue involved. Their placement, say, at the beginning, can provide that they are reasons for the call.

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It is, then, 'perfectly clear' what the general reason for the referral and the referral meeting is: the school has a problem or the parents have a problem; the specifics of the problem are not yet apparent but that there is a problem cannot be doubted since the referral would not have been made unless there was a problem, and a problem that it is the business of the educational psychologist to assist with. As I indicated in connection with the preface to the referral, the making of the referral in the first place, projects the kind or class of things that will be talked about. What needs to be elaborated is the discussion of 'pre-beginnings'. That class is 'referral problems' and there are sub-classes of such problems that get specified in the referral meeting as the specific reasons for the referral.

If the class is 'referral problems' then what are the sub-classes? They are many and various, but they all involve some sort of norms. The norms may be developmental or behavioural. In the official 'coding sheet' of the SPS they were listed as 'causes for concern'. Picking up one point here, these are selections from alternatives. That is to say, there are many things that could be said about this kid but only some are tellables, that is relevant for as referral meeting. Other matters, some subsidiary, so to speak, are mentioned later under the auspices of checklist information, and perhaps as 'saving graces'.

Consider the following example:

(9) AN/028

1 T: and (-) I accepted this er
2 P: mm hm
3 T: quite happily (...) and er we his birth certificate but
4 it wasn't very long before we realised that it was more
5 than just a poor speaker, he-he can't speak very much
6 at all he-he doesn't know the language, he doesn't know
7 the names [of]=
8 Ep: [mm]
9 T: =common objects, no responses to various simple
10 instructions such as 'stand up'. 'sit down', he's
11 really functioning like an=
12 Ep: =mm hmm=
13 T: =eighteen month or two year old baby

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The categories in this extract emerge in a story that the teacher tells about what was said when the child was first brought into school and then what was subsequently discovered about the child's problems. If the entirety of this extract is considered, from the point where the teacher reports what the mother said, upon bringing the child to school, then it can be seen that the mother is reported to have used the membership category 'poor speaker' to describe her son. This categorization is then said to have been followed by the question, 'is there anything else wrong with him?' and the mother's answer 'no'. The initial categorization and the affirmation that there was nothing else 'wrong' with the child is then said to have been 'accepted quite happily' by the Head -teacher. However, there then occurs a shift via 'but' to what they (the teachers) then 'realized'. That is, the description is built from a prior description of the mother's that had been happily accepted. Thus, he was 'more than a poor speaker'. That is, there are two points here. The first is that the teacher's use of a membership category occurs as correction of the mother's membership categorization. The second is that the membership category is then elaborated and explicated. That is, it occurs in a first position as a *precursor* to its subsequent elaboration and in a second position with respect to its use as a *correction* of a prior categorization.

With respect to its first position as a precursor to its subsequent explication, the question is: what does this mean? To say of someone that they are 'more than just a poor speaker' may serve to contradict and call into question some prior categorization with which it is contrastively paired, but such a contrast amounts only to a declaration that the previously mentioned categorization is incorrect. It begs the question, if the person being categorized is not an X, or in this case, is 'more than an X', then, 'what is that person'? It is then incumbent upon the corrector to provide grounds for their declaration, to substantiate their assertion. There is, possibly, a preference for explication in this kind of context. Assertions of this sort are 'unfinished' and 'incomplete'; they may be argumentative rather than being informative. And so, there is evidence to suggest that in relation to such categorizations they are standardly followed by explications, which may be produced as a matter of course or may have to be elicited. As this extract indicates, this membership category – as a generalized gloss – is then progressively explicated: (a) he doesn't know the language, (b) doesn't know the names of common objects, and (c) no response to simple instructions like 'sit down' and 'stand up'.

As can be seen from this extract, the three part, progressively explicit and specific list is then summed up with another generalized gloss, this time in the form of a membership category drawn from the stage of life device. Membership categories, as generalized glosses, like generalized glosses generally speaking, may be

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positioned after explicative descriptions. That is, then, they are not only positioned at the outset of explicative descriptions but are also used to terminate such descriptive segments. Or are other types of generalized glosses used to do this?

(10) WJS ()

1 Mt: [yea (-) well [thi]-this is this is a [possibility]
2 Ft: [mm] [he's a bit]of
3 an anomaly, isn't he, Philip [because] I think he's
4 (-) he's got maturity problems=
5 Mt: [oh he is]
6 Ft: =he's got a [ve]ry (0.5) errm acute brain really=
7 Ep: [mm]
8 Mt: =mmhmm [oh yes]
9 Ft: [but] he's got a very poor attention span
10 EP: mm hm

The Ft can be seen to have analysed the conversation about hearing as being now complete because she produces an incipient speakership token prior to then volunteering a new categorization: 'he's a bit of an anomaly'. Again, this categorization is a generalized gloss positioned at the outset of the descriptive turn: it begs the question as to what sort of anomaly he is, what does this categorization means.? That is, the generalized gloss categorization comes at the beginning of a string of items that then explicate and elaborate its sense. Its indexicality is 'repaired'. Thus, the teacher then says that (a) he's got maturity problems, (b) he's got an acute brain and (c) he's got a very poor attention span. It would seem to be that it is his 'maturity problems' that are what is anomalous about the child because for most children as they mature, if they are bright they develop their attention spans. Here, then, the Ft explicates the meaning of her categorization without being asked; the categorization is positioned at the start of an assessment string or series; the problematic item – the thing that makes him an anomaly – is preceded by the word 'but'.

Formulating/Summing Up with Categories

The following two extracts contain examples of how a category is used to sum up what went previously:

(11)

1 T: aher trouble's basically that she's backward in the
2 academic sense ... there's nothing wrong with her
3 personality or behaviour or anything she's a very canny
4 little kid

Referring to 'canny little kid' it can be seen that this is positioned at the end of the descriptive turn; it is a way of finishing off and formulating what was meant by the previous description.

(12) WJS/II/449

1 SW: I think as a family they are a wee bit on the road too,
2 you know she tends (-) well, I was there an' talkin'
3 outside one day ·hh and=
4 Ep: mmhmm
5 SW: suddenly she sort of collected her brood together ·hh
6 an' got them in because there=
7 Mt: mhm (0.6) yeah
8 Sw: =was somebody outside who was (0.3) you know, shouting
9 or something and she was trying to=
10 Mt: mhm (0.3) I can believe that (0.3) I think (-) I think
11 James=
12 Sw: =protect them (0.4) you know
13 Mt: =has (-) has probably suffered from that
14 Sw: she's a wee bit over protective, you know=
15 Mt: I would s-I would=
16 Sw: =(-) yes
17 Mt: =think so (0.3) you know

Note here how the inserted illustrative story began with a membership category ('as a family they are a wee bit in the road too') which the ensuing story was designed to illustrate (we hear this story as illustrative) and

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then ends with the attribute categorization ('she's a wee bit over protective'). The story, in other words, is 'framed' by these categorizations in the sense that they are used to initiate and terminate the story or illustrative incident. That is, the story follows a categorization which categorization that it hearably explicates. The speaker began to explicate what was meant by 'a wee bit in the road' by stating what the mother 'tends' to do. She then stops and re-works her explication with the story whose events can be understood as illustrating the tendency.

In extracts 13 and 14 we can see further examples of categories as initial formulations that are then explicated:

(13)

1 Ht: yeah-s (0.5) I don't (0.3) if James is a loner (-) as I
2 think he is (-) you know=
3 Mt: I think he is too
4 Ht: =as he appears to be (0.7) I don't think it-s because
he's unsociable
Sw: mmhmm
Ht: I mean he's quite a (-) an outgoing (0.5) sociable
(0.5) sort of (...) character
Mt: oh yes (0.6) I think he'd just pre-kind of prefer to be
the victim
Sw: mmhmm
Ht: y'see with James I think errm (0.7) it's (0.4) mainly
that his peers don't like him
Ep: mmhmm right
Ht: not that James isn't sociable
Mt: yeah, that's what it is
(0.3)
Ht: you know, he's not very acceptable

(14) RMSJ/420

1 Ht: whether they're taking the right attitude I don't know
2 apparently he doesn't believe in keeping himself very
3 clean ahmm
4 Ep: mmhmm
Ht:

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and if he's been playing football for the school and he comes in in a muddy mess and mum says you know go get washed or go into the bath and take your football kit and put it in the washing be, [he doesn't do it], [he'll get in with his muddy things on], which is a bit crazy, you know, a ten year old is not that stupid and Terence is not stupid

In the following extract, the teacher's reference to the child's 'lying' occasions a story from the psychologist about his own experience:

(15) RMSJ/575

1 Ht: He's a child you just can't tell whether he's lying or
2 not
3 Ep: mm
4 Ht: most of the time I must admit I think he is lying but
5 you try, you would never get him to show it
6 Ep: mm
7 Ht: and yet mother insists that he always tell the truth
8 (and admits) he's done anything wrong, but he doesn't,
9 he
10 Ep: mm
11 (2.5)
12 Ep: tch I used to have a kid that I taught like that and he
13 always told the truth, ermm and in a way he got smart
14 after about eighteen months because he'd come in and
15 you'd say, you could say to him, 'did you steal this?'
16 although he he never did steal but it was something
17 like that and he always got himself into trouble
18 because he owned up to it whereas he he saw other kids
19 who said 'no, no, no'
20 Ht: mm
21 Ep: and there was always enough doubt to where they got
22 away with it
23 Ht: mm
24 Ep:
25

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26 and er and by the time I left the school which was errm
27 Ht: about eighteen months after I'd started taking him you
28 Ep: could see that he was starting to get wise to this
29 Ht: mm
30 and he wasn't telling the truth anymore
31 Ep: well, possibly this is what Richard's doing, I don't
 know
 yeah

The EP's story about the 'kid like that' that he 'used to have' as a teacher, is occasioned by the preceding talk about Richard's alleged lying. The story subject matter is linked to this prior talk through the membership category 'kid like that', for which we understand 'child who tells lies'. The story has several notable features, including a 'before' and 'after' format, a time-span and a contrast structure between 'this kid' and 'other kids'.

The use of a contrast structure can also be seen in the following extract:

(16) AN/1

1 Ht: now, when she brought him in she said er e-e wasn't a
2 good talker
3 Ep: mm hm
4 Ht: and er I think I said was there anything else wrong
5 with him and er she said no
6 Ep: mm hm
7 Ht: and (-) I asked her as usual you know her first name,
8 her husband's first name
9 Ep: yeah
10 Ht: so she gave her husband as Paul and she's Pauline
11 Ep: mm
12 Ht: I accepted this er
13 Ep: mm hm
14 Ht: quite happily (...) and er we his birth certificate but
15 it wasn't very long before we realised that it was more
16 than just a poor speaker, he-he can't speak very much
17 at all he-he doesn't know the language, he doesn't
18 know=
19 [.....]

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20 Ep: [mm hm]
21 Ht: The names of common objects, no responses to various
22 simple instructions such as 'stand up'. 'sit down',
23 he's really functioning like an=
24 Ep: =mm hmm=
25 Ht: =eighteen month or two year old baby
26 Ep: mm hm

This extract begins a first category which is attributed to the mother: 'when she brought him she said er e-e wasn't a good talker'. This, then, is a first version of the child, a first characterization or categorization. It is one attributed to the mother. The teacher's response to this is then reported. She acknowledged the categorization and asked if there was anything else 'wrong' with him. The answer was 'no'. This version was, furthermore, accepted 'quite happily' at first 'but' then 'we' realized. This, then, is a description that is assembled in terms of a categorization provided by the mother and then a calling into question of the categorization via what was 'realised'. It is a contrast between what the mother *said* and what is *in fact* the case (Smith 1978; Hester 1991). To realize is to discover what was there all along, and this is that it was 'more than just a poor speaker'. The contrast, then, is between (a) what the mother said and (b) what we realized, where (a) is mother's categorization using a membership category and (b) 'our' categorization, where mother's categorization is opinion and the school's factual.

The categorization is then positioned at the beginning of the sequence. It is then elaborated. Basically, it's a categorization via category contrast: she said it was an X, but we realized it was a Y. It is then elaborated, in the same way that a single category will be elaborated. The elaboration is in terms of a collection of attributes and a summing category:

He can't speak very much at all
He doesn't know the language
He doesn't know the names of common objects

And in sum, he's really functioning like an eighteen month or two year old baby.

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(17) WJS/20

1 Ft: he's a bit of an anomaly, isn't he, Peter because I
2 think he's (.) got maturity=
3 Mt: [oh he is]
4 =problems he's got a very (0.5) errm acute=
5 Ep: [mm]
6 Ft: =brain really=
7 Mt: =mmhmm oh yes
8 Ft: [but he]'s got a very poor attention span
9 Ep: mm hm

(18) WJS/5578

1 Ep: mhmm
2 Ft: she' the oldest girl in the school and she's very
3 mature (1.5) and errm she doesn't really mix with other
4 children of her own age group y'see=
5 Ep: =mm=
6 Ft: =but she just bullies them and they're all very
7 frightened of her
8 Ep: mm
9 Ft: and she mixes with children from Southbend sixteen
10 years olds, fifteen year olds
11 Ep: mm hmm
12 Ft: and we're a bit concerned about that side of it because
13 it's mainly boys as well
14 Ep: mm hmm

The problem here, then, is not one of deficient competence or performance, it is one of excess. The child exceeds the normal complement of attributes and engages, or at least presents the prospect of engaging, in activities 'beyond her years'. The child is being downgraded not because she is failing to reach some standard but because she is *exceeding* it. A surfeit can be as noticeable and possibly problematic as a deficiency. The child is described as a 'mature', a description which can be heard to pertain to both her physical development and her relations with older boys. Her relative 'maturity' serves as a category contrast with the predicates of other children of her age. In this way, she is 'marked out' as deviant.

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A third device which is mapped on to the stage of life device is the *stage of education* device. This device may be invoked in various ways, including references to year of schooling (as in first year, second year, etc.) or type of school attended (as in Infant, Primary, Junior etc.). In the following extract (7), the child is designated as being 'two years' behind'.

(19) MP/20

1 T1: I've known remedial children (-) in me other school (-)
2 doin' better work than that (-) look at this
3 Sw: ((s.v.)) mmhmm
4 T1: all wrong
5 (3.7)
6 T1: that's his number sense, you look (0.5) there
7 Ep: can I actually read a page of this lad's (-) I=
8 T1: four right
9 Ep: =can (can't beat you at somethin' (.....))=
10 T2: fair enough
11 Ep: =some written work
12 T1: hhehh
13 T2: look at this abysmal figure (.....)
14 T1: english language
15 Ep: could I have a look at that?
16 T1: the last school term
17 (2.4)
18 T1: ((r.v.)) organisation of ideas note () (-) that's what
19 err his English teacher was saying, isn't it? (1.1)
20 he's not done very well in anythin' really
21 Ep: ((s.v.)) mm (-) right
21 T1: ((s.v.)) (.....) to it
22 yeah
23 T2: well, he's not, he's (-) two years behind

'Two years behind' invokes categorial order or 'standard' relative to stage of schooling for a given child's age. Furthermore, 'remedial' children is a category of child defined in terms of the receipt of special educational provision within school, i.e. remedial help. Incumbency of the category 'remedial' suggests various predicates including being in 'need of help', 'being behind', etc. To say of a child, they need remedial help

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is to ascribe incompetence to them; to say they are doing *worse* than remedial is to mark them out as in need of extraordinary, that is 'outside' help.

In the next extract the teacher begins by telling a story about the child – what he was like in the beginning, when he first came to school and then how he changed. The story is as follows:

(20) AH/1/LM

1 Ep: mm hmm yeah I see does he have any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ht: (.....) January when I came into the class Barry was very
4 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
5 situation but I think all children do with a new
6 teacher .hhh initially (-) then he started running
7 round the room screaming 'I'm taking no notice, I'm not
8 bothered (...) I don't care what you say' and if you
9 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
10 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
11 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
12 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
13 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
14 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
15 kick them or swear at them

Here, then, it can be seen that a membership category is used after a description of attributes and activities exhibited by the child when he first came to school: he was quiet, shy and he was assessing the situation. These attributes and this activity are then said to be those of 'all young children', the inference being that the child is question was typical and normal for children of this age and in this situation. 'All young children' is used to mark the typicality or normality of the attributes and activities just mentioned. This sets up a contrast between this and what comes next. The implication is that this is normal settling in. Just as kids do things on specific occasions (cry, play etc.), so also do they do things over a period – they grow up, they settle in, they get used to things. So, here the child does not follow the usual settling down pattern. That is, the 'all young children' do X description provides for a category contrast.

Conclusion

Descriptions of deviance may be of various sorts, as the preceding analysis has shown. Thus, descriptions range from the specific to the general and they are of various sorts. Thus, descriptions range from the specific to the general and they are of various sorts. At the same time, it is important to recognize that they do not merely describe, they are put to particular uses and they occur in specific places. They are not, in other words, used to describe deviance in a decontextualised way. Their deployment is itself contextualized. Categories, for example, are used in initial positions and in final positions of descriptive segments or passages. Attributes, activities and so forth elaborate first position categories but these can be themselves in initial position. Action sequences and instantiations explicate the more general descriptions. The descriptions are produced in particular sequential environments. There is a first question, which may be open or closed. In response to the first question a first description will be selected. This will reflect the question. These matters will be further addressed in subsequent chapters.

Endnote

i

There is also the issue of how members' vernacular descriptions are understood *as descriptions of 'deviance'*. See Hester (1992) for an analysis of this issue.

Chapter Seven

Action Sequences and Contrast Sets as Story-Building Resources

Introduction

In the previous chapter some brief discussion was made of two structures of story-building: action sequences and contrast sets. Since these structures are deployed repeatedly in referral talk and are central to the accounts that participants give of referral children and the problems they present, they merit more extensive consideration. In the first part of this chapter I will examine the use of action sequences, before turning in the second half to look at contrast sets.

Action Sequences

Whilst generalized glosses and lists of activities provide one kind of extended structure, action sequences involve more systematic relations between the explicative components. They are not just lists of activities but activities-in-a-sequence. That is, these are not just activities that are collectable but are activities that are linked and conventionally so, in a series or sequence. Here is an example:

(1) WJS/23

1 Ep: .th-when you say er disturbing others is that when he's
2 not working?
3 Mt: ummm(-) well (0.7) mainly ye-heh-heh-[yes] I-I was
4 goin' to: mainly although=
5 Ep: [yeah]
6 Mt =even when he is working he do' this is it he doesn't
7 get down to his work qui-he he'll do (-) two or three
8 minutes
9 Ft: ((s.v.)) mm=
10 Mt: =and then (0.8) I dunno h-he gets fed up with it
11 doesn't want to do it anymore
12 Ep: mhm
13 Mt: and he'll kick the lad next to him just for fun you
14 know to break the monotony [I suppose] ·hhh [umm]
15 Ft: [heh-hhh.] [he does]
16 h-heh
17 Mt: an:d-er and that starts it all o'course 'cos-o-the lad
18 next to [him] isn't goin' to er=

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19 Ft: [mm]
20 Mt: =take that so he retaliates: and erm (1.0) we've a-an
21 immediate small problem so you [calm] them down (-)
22 Ft: [mm]
23 Mt: and they are all calm again [for] another=
24 Ft: [mm]
25 Mt: =three or four minute[s] and the same thing ha[ppens
26 (.....)]
27 Ft: [mm] [there's
28 one or two the he he] sort of rubs up against that's
29 err Paul isn't it Paul the blond one

The psychologist offers the candidate answer – when he's not working? – and the teacher agrees, though qualifies this with 'mainly' and then with the report that he disturbs others when he is working as well. We then get an *exemplar* of what he does – a description of how he behaves: he works for a couple of minutes, gets fed up, kicks the lad next to him just for fun, and that starts a 'small problem' because the one he has kicked retaliates. This is a sequence of actions that is reported, with the Ft offering supportive continuers, without the intervention of the psychologist. Throughout the data, one can find many examples of exemplars being elaborated as sequences of actions. This one is a *multi-part action sequence*, itself composed of a two-part action sequence (aggression/retaliation).

An Action Sequence Exemplar:

1. subject works quietly for two or three minutes
2. gets fed up
3. doesn't want to work any more
4. kicks lad next to him for fun/break the monotony
5. lad retaliates
6. creates small problem
7. teacher calms them down
8. three or four minutes later: repetition of action sequence.

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In this case, the action sequence is provided in response to a clarification request from the psychologist. The request has sought clarification regarding the activity of 'disturbing others'; the psychologist asks whether this occurs when he is not working. The teacher partially agrees with the candidate answer provided here but then disagrees, stating that even when he is working he doesn't actually persist in working. It is then that the disturbance occurs. This, then, is where the action sequence is produced; it is designed to illustrate what happens when he stops working; it is a typical sequence of events that results in a 'small problem' of disturbance in the classroom. Action sequences, then, as per this example, are positioned and used in order to explicate a previously (in this case, just) mentioned generalized description of an activity.

Here is a second example:

(2) WJS/25

1 Mt: r-yes a ha he is (0.7) he's one of the biggest in the
2 year group in fact
3 Ep: mm (1.4) has he had this sort of history behind him in
4 the Infants School have you had a chance to discuss
5 with [err]
6 Mt: [no] I haven't discussed it very much in the
7 Infants School th-the brief discussion that I had with
8 um (0.5) with Mrs James who is his previous teacher
9 [um] indicates that this: sort of thing in one form=
10 Ep: [mm]
11 Mt: =another has been going on (0.6) fairly regularly [(-)]
12 um so it's not something that=
13 Ep: [yeh]
14 yeh
15 Mt: =has just started I don't think
16 Ep: what about umm you know (the) relationship with other
17 kids [there] in the cla[ss? ho]w=
18 Mt: [mm] [.thh]
19 Ep: = does he get on with them?
20 Mt: well here again you see-er-very often (-) umm (-) the
21 sort of thing that I hear (0.8) is (-) umm (0.5)
22 'Please Sir' umm 'Philip Boge just punched me' (0.9)
23 he's just got up sometimes y'know (-) wandered across
24 and thumped somebody
25 Ep: mhm

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26 Mt: w-how desperate this really actually is you know I mean
27 I haven't even nobody's actually been into (-) tears in
28 the class[: or]anything like that so far so he=
29 Ep: [mhm]
30 Mt: =obviously (0.8) perhaps it's minor irritation
31 sh[all] we say 'hhh but this sort=
32 Ep: [mm]
33 Mt: =of thing does happen fairly frequently
34 Ep: yeah

Thus, the Ep focuses in by asking about history. Later in response to the Ep's question (referent aspect specification) the Mt offers a description of the 'sort of thing', i.e. it is a typical and categorical object: somebody complaining that he has been hit by Philip Boge. Furthermore, the action sequence that preceded the complaint was: (a) gets up, (b) wanders across the classroom and (c) thumps somebody, leading to (d) the victim's complaint. Consider the following example:

(3) RMSJ

1 Ht: so I won't give you the whole story, ahmmm but in a
2 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated, they can't
3 trust him in the house at all on his own, even if they
4 pop up to the shops the house is in a mess when they
5 come back and he's stealing, he's been caught three
6 times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
7 Ep: mm hm
8 Ht: and each time it's only mother and father going up and
9 having a word with the manager which has saved him from
10 being prosecuted

This extract actually raises another issue regarding the composition of these descriptions. This has to do with '*character appears on cue*'. That is, it seems perfectly reasonable, given a report that the boy has been 'stealing', that he has 'been caught three times' and that he has been 'saved from being prosecuted'. When an offence has been committed, it is utterly unremarkable that the possibility of being caught should be mentioned, and in the case of one who has been caught the outcome of that event is a relevant next utterance. Its unremarkability consists of the nature of the connection between the items in the sequence. In Sacks's analysis of this the first item is an offence and the second is a reaction to that offence by the

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police.

The first of these – the offence – can be said to project the next (‘if you can’t do the time, don’t do the crime’), namely the reaction to the offence. In this case, however, there is mention of mother and father intervening in order to save him from this reaction (prosecution). Just as there is a categorical relationship between the offender/reactor pair so there is also a categorical relationship between the child-as-offender and the parents-as-savers. That is, it only to be expected that parents would seek to help their children when they are in trouble (cf. the case of the brother charged with drug trafficking in Brannigan and Lynch [1987]). These are conventional action sequences involving categories in particular sets of circumstances. They comprise a ‘grammar’ of action given certain categorical relationships, such that one is not surprised at the mention of the second given the occurrence of the first. Thus, if a brother were in trouble it would be unsurprising and expected that his brother would offer help.

These are only ‘possible’ stories; there’s nothing inevitable about them. But when they occur there’s nothing surprising about them; they may be anticipated, but there’s always a range of possibilities. They are like conventional story lines. They involve grammars of action.

This case of ‘character appears on cue’ is an instance of an ‘action sequence’. In this case it is an offence/reaction pairing.

(4) RMSJ

1 Ep: mm hm
2 Ht: and each time it’s only mother and father going up and
3 having a word with manager which has saved from being
4 prosecuted they’ve talked to him they tried everything
5 under the sun to get through to him but he’s still
6 stealing [and]
7 Ep: [mm]=
8 Ht: =he’s also stealing from home they find that he steals
9 money and hides it in the toilet cistern under the
10 carpet you mention it he’s doing it now I’m giving you
11 this story second hand
12 Ep: yeah mm
13 Ht: to my knowledge he has not stolen in school

Here, what is observable is how the mention of remedial intervention is a ‘**natural next**’ in the sequence of descriptions: after being caught, and being saved from being prosecuted, then what the parents have tried to

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do about it should be mentioned. These are ‘unsurprising’ ingredients in such stories of deviance. They appear on cue as ‘characters’ might in a play. People commit offences, they get caught, they can go to court or their parents may save them. These are familiar ingredients of stories about deviance.

(5) WJS/17

1 Ep: (here’s the) ol’ Phillip Boge business [err]
2 Mt: [yes] ah ha
3 (0.5)
4 Mt: oh he’s the awkward one
5 (1.0)
6 Ep: (they) say-er he doesn’t concentrate at all well (-)
7 ermm [he]=
8 Mt: [no]
9 Ep: =he appears unable to pay attention at times ·hhh ermm
(0.5) are you worried about hearing in fact?

Several points can be made about this extract. Firstly, the psychologist nominates the child to be discussed; second, the teacher accepts the nomination; third, the teacher volunteers a first assessment, which is ignored; fourth, the psychologist initiates the discussion by referring to some previous knowledge – what the teacher wrote on the referral form; fifth, the psychologist focuses in on this description. Sixth, this topicalization of this previous description is received with a confirmation; this is a **description/confirmation pair**.

(6) WJS/18

1 Ep: =attention a times ·hhh ermm (0.5) are you worried
2 about hearing in fact?
3 Mt: well I was [(-)]umm as a-again you see now-what-m_I
4 must admit=
5 Ep: [mmhmm]
6 Mt: =that-um this has been entirely my fault ·hh these
7 orig-the original referral umm (-)_I-I started filling
8 in forms (0.6) about I can’t remember the exact time
9 but it’s about four weeks a-ago

What is noticeable about this is that in response to the psychologist’s question, the teacher starts to tell a

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story. He begins with 'I was', setting up a contrast to be told about the present state of affairs. It is insufficient for him to just state this; he has to go into detail, to explain. So, what is projected is a story about how he *was* worried but is now no longer. As was indicated in Chapter Three, this story is told collaboratively. The upshot of the story is:

(7) WJS/18/2

- 1 Mt: ... I now find that I'm less bothered about it because
2 (0.5) I realize sort of i-in the intervening period (-)
3 that in fact (-) I don't think that there is anything
4 wrong with his hearing I think that at the time he was
5 just being bloody minden
6 Ep: mm[hmm]
7 Mt: [that's] what it came down to you know (0.6) .thh
8 although as I say at the time (-) er it was:: th-th-the
9 (-) few occasions I must admit it wasn't (a-) very
10 often but on the few occasions where he did (-) um
11 exhibit this particular tendency (-) er not to pay
12 attention (-) I really thought i-it was almost as if-e
13 was actually hard of hearing
14 Ep: mm [hm]
15 Mt: [um] he would be on the other side of the classroom
16 (-) his head might be (0.8) turned away from [me] and
17 su[chlike] and I would call his name I-I loudly=
18 Ep: [mhm]
19 [mhmm]
20 Mt: =I mean I haven't got a quiet voice (0.8) it tends to
21 be quiet when I want to speak but when I speak to
22 Philip Boge I don't use a quiet voice (0.8) and he paid
23 not the slightest scrap of attention he might well have
24 been deaf
25 mhmm
26 Ep: and r-not until I'd called him (-) loudly (0.5) twice
27 Mt: three times perhaps (-) would I get any response

It is incumbent, then, on the teacher to go into detail, to explain why the child has been referred, what the cause for concern is. Here, the teacher explains why he thought the child might well have been deaf. He

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offers an example of a ‘scene’ from classroom life: the child is on the other side of the classroom, the teacher calls his name loudly, he explains what he means by ‘loudly’ – he has a loud voice – he offers a measure of the loudness of his voice; given the lack of response to a calling out of this particular measure, the conclusion could be drawn that he was deaf. That is, he describes in detail what he means by ‘calling him loudly’. This is an explication of the description, to clarify the nature of the interaction for the hearer. Given a loud voice one would expect a particular response (summons) but this is noticeably and unusually absent. In other words, he describing a pattern of interaction that is unusual – he had to repeat the utterance ‘two or three times’. The sequence did not go as he would have liked or expected. There is also a suggestion that this is extreme behaviour (not the ‘slightest’ scrap) and it is unexpected and non-routine. So, he goes into detail about a particular scene.

(8) WJS/19

1 Mt: =I mean I haven't got a quiet voice (0.8) it tends to
2 be quiet when I want to speak but when I speak to
3 Philip Boge I don't use a quiet voice (0.8) and he paid
4 not the slightest scrap of attention he might well have
5 been deaf
6 Ep: mhmm
7 Mt: and r-not until I'd called him (-) loudly (0.5) twice
8 three times perhaps (-) would I get any response
9 mmhmm
10 now: and at present-errm I don't seem to have that
11 problem [he] it it seems to be=
12 Ep: [yes]
13 Mt: =.thh don't know for want of a better word a phase that
14 he went through earlier on w-w-which is now passed over

There are a couple of points here. A first is the contrast with ‘then’ and ‘now’. A second is the description of it being a ‘phase that he went through’ positioned at the end of the segment. It hearably brings to a close the story or explanation. It's a summative description. It is composed of an **action sequence**: (a) calls child, (b) no response, (c) repeats call/raises voice. This is like replaying a piece of interaction to make his point. This is a sub-type of action sequence.

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(9) WJS/21/2

1 Ep: [mm]
2 Ft: so maybe he's not being stretched enough to a certain
3 extent but at the same time (0.8) er[r]
4 Mt: [po]ssibly
5 (1.1)
6 Ft: but he is quite bright [isn't he (-) very (-) err]
7 Mt: ((r.v.)) [oh yes he is-he is quite]

Again, there is a matter of measurement here – is the child being ‘stretched enough’ where stretching is tied to restlessness by virtue of lacking of stretching (i.e. stimulation and challenge) as a possible motive or explanation of restlessness. However, the ‘but at the same time’ suggests the speaker wishes to qualify what she has posed as the explanation for his restlessness – the lack of stretching is not the whole story about it. She hesitates and in to the porous place the Mt inserts a partial agreement with her proffered explanation. This seems to throw her off her track and she comes back with an agreement/re-assertion that he is quite bright. What is hearable here is that whatever else might be the explanation of his restlessness the important thing here, the thing that rises to the top of the pile, the thing to emphasise is that he is ‘quite bright’.

Note the account ‘not being stretched enough’ is itself another type of action sequence: (a) failure to stretch and (b) gets restless. Another one is ‘when I speak to Philip Boge I don’t use a quiet voice (0.8) and he paid not the slightest scrap of attention he might well have been deaf’. This describes a scene and an action sequence within the scene. Then there is an account in terms of an attribute. Again, then, the activity is embedded in an action sequence, and this is then accounted for in terms of an attribute.

Returning to the analysis of ‘what about relationships with other kids there in the class how does he get on with them’, it can be seen that the answer to this question is in terms of ‘the sort of thing that I hear’ and where this is a reported incident, ‘Philip Boge just punched me’. This is a typical incident. This, at first sight, seems unusual in that action sequences do not ordinarily occur in first position after a question. How then is this apparently anomalous location of a typical action sequence/incident to be accounted for? What sorts of considerations led to its production at this point?

One way to understand this, is in terms of ‘well here again’. The upshot is that the incident is not in first position at all. Thus, the ‘here again’ invokes a locally and temporally operative collection. That is to say, it has already been established that the ‘main problem’ is ‘behavioural’ and this has been explicated in terms

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of disturbing others and a typical action sequence. That is to say, to understand 'here again' and the placement of the typical incident at this juncture, it is necessary to inspect what went before. Thus, earlier, the psychologist sought clarification of 'disturbing others'; this clarification established, put on the table, the pupil's violence. This is picked up by the other teacher in terms of who the child 'knocks up against', i.e. who he fights with. She then proceeds with an attempted characterisation of this 'fighting' – the child is not malicious. That is, the fact that he fights may be one thing but the inference should not be drawn that he is malicious; it does not flow from such a feature of his character. However, this is then questioned by the citation of reports that the child has been 'bullying' and a particular incident is then mentioned. The typicality of this is then addressed: does he have 'this sort of history?' The answer is that 'this sort of thing' has been going on for some time. This establishes, then, that this fighting with other children is the collection of things on the table. So, the 'here again' is used to refer to another one of the same, another member of the collection; thus, his relationships with 'other' kids fits the general pattern that has been established. It is evidenced by an action sequence. This is another illustrative case of what has been talked about so far. In this sense it is not a first description but a further description.

In Extract 8, the first description is of the referral not paying attention, and this is explicated. The grounds of the description – the 'evidence', so to speak, is provided. That is descriptions are not merely asserted, they are backed up with explications, instantiations. In this case the description explication involves the description of a 'pattern' of interaction whose deviance consists in the unusualness of the sequential organisation of the pattern of interaction, showing that social interaction can be analysed by the participants for what it reveals or may reveal about them. Thus the 'normal' pattern is the initiation/response/evaluation (IRE) where the standard I is a teacher's question, and the standard R is a pupil's answer (see Francis and Hester 2004: 123-128), the two comprising an adjacency pair. The failure in this case to produce the second pair part is an accountable matter. It is noticeably absent. In this case, the account is that the child may be deaf. So, two points: (a) it is an 'odd' piece of interaction and (b) it is an accountable matter. There must be a reason; in this case the child has a disability.

Contrast Structures

The concept of 'contrast structures' was coined by Dorothy Smith in a classic paper (Smith, 1978). In that paper Smith explored the ways in which an account of a case of 'mental illness' was constructed by means of contrasts between 'normal' and 'abnormal' behaviour. Contrast structures consist of two classes that contrast with one another. There are several varieties of contrast types observable in the data. On the one hand, there are 'situational contrasts', contrasts between what a situation was like 'then' and what it is like 'now' (or between what occurred then and now). On the other are 'knowledge/experience contrasts', between what was known (or 'thought') then and what is known now. This latter type may take several forms, such as 'at first I thought, then I changed my mind', or 'other people have said and/but my experience is...', or again 'she said it was an X, but we realised it's a Y'.

There are numerous examples of temporal contrasts in the data, in which descriptions of a situation or state of affairs when the teacher first had experience of a student is contrasted with what later transpired. This earlier and this later comprise a contrast pair whose relationship consists in the latter situation being more seriously problematic or offensive than the former. Such contrasts are 'occasioned devices', devices containing two contrasting parts whose purpose is to describe in a minimally narrative fashion the development or change in this particular referral. At time A he was X but at time B he became Y, where X and Y stand in a relationship of escalation, deterioration and increasing or increased seriousness.

There is not space to consider all the contrast structures to be found in the data, so a few examples must suffice.

(1) She said ..., [but] we soon realized

This type is nicely exemplified by Extract 12, cited above. Here it is, as a reminder:

(10) AN/1

1 Ht: now, when she brought him in she said er e-e wasn't a
2 good talker
3 Ep: mm hm
4 Ht: and er I think I said was there anything else wrong
5 with him and er she said no

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6 Ep: mm hm
7 Ht: and (-) I asked her as usual you know her first name,
8 her husband's first name
9 Ep: yeah
10 Ht: so she gave her husband as Paul and she's Pauline
11 Ep: mm
12 Ht: I accepted this er
13 Ep: mm hm
14 Ht: quite happily (...) and er we his birth certificate but
15 it wasn't very long before we realised that it was more
16 than just a poor speaker, he-he can't speak very much
17 at all he-he doesn't know the language, he doesn't
18 know=
19 ? [.....]
20 Ep: mm hm
21 Ht: The names of common objects, no responses to various
22 simple instructions such as 'stand up'. 'sit down',
23 he's really functioning like an=
24 Ep: =mm hmm=
25 Ht: =eighteen month or two year old baby
26 Ep: mm hm

The teacher describes the situation as one in which she started out with somebody else's category, then called this into question and replaced it with a more descriptive adequate category. The story begins with the report of the mother's categorization. The child was a 'poor speaker'. Four year olds can be poor speakers; this is acceptable. However, this categorization does not apply. There is a contrast to be made here between the mother's categorization and the 'facts of the matter'. The contrast between 'not a good talker' and 'just a poor speaker' and what was 'realized,' and what is contrasted with the predicates of a child of this age, is evidenced via the description that he can't speak much at all, he doesn't know the language and he doesn't know common words. So, the contrast is a contrast between the child's linguistic abilities and what the norm is for a child of his age. It is summed up with the use of the membership category, 'he's really functioning like an eighteen month or two-year-old baby.'

(2) *At first, [but] then*

Another practice is to start out with activities – X, Y and Z – which are then predicated of ‘normal child’ – ‘I think all young children are...’. The practice is (a) describe how the normal child would be in respect of a given activity and then (b) how, in contrast, this one does it. For example, normal children lie transparently whilst the deviant child does not. This is the working up of a contrast set.

Note that this contrast type may overlap with the previous one and with others. Thus, then/now overlaps with normal/deviant; then/now overlaps with their view/my experience; then/now overlaps with non-serious/serious; then/now overlaps with what she said/what we realised. Then/now overlaps with he seemed ok in school/but has got worse at home, and with what appeared to be the case and what actually is the case. This suggests that the fundamental contrast class is then/now onto which are mapped a variety of other contrast classes.

Appearance and Reality

Turning to RMSJ, the teacher tells the psychologist that as far as the school was concerned, the child was difficult and not very intelligent but that neither of these furnished grounds for being referable. Rather, the referral has come about because of the child’s behaviour at home. As the teacher says,

(11) RMSJ/2

- 1 Ht: ...and he came up and although his behaviour had appeared
2 to improve slightly in school in actual fact it had got
3 considerably worse at home
4 Ep: mm
5 Ht: ahh I think he would like to talk to you himself
6 Ep: yeah
7 Ht: so I won’t give you the whole story ahmm but in a
8 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated they can’t
9 trust him in the house at all on his own even if they
10 pop up to the shops the house is a mess when they come
11 back and he’s stealing he’s been caught three times
12 stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
13 Ep: mm hm
14 Ht:

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15 Ep: and each time it's only mother and father going up and
16 Ht: having a word with manager which has saved from being
17 prosecuted they've talked to him they tried everything
18 under the sun to get through to him but he's still
19 Ep: stealing [and]=
20 Ht: [mm]
21 =he's also stealing from home they find that he steals
22 money and hides it in the toilet cistern under the
23 carpet you mention it he's doing it now I'm giving you
this story second hand

It is evident that there is overlap of other contrast classes with the appearance/reality contrast. One of these is 'school/home'. As can be seen in this extract, the teacher uses the device 'behaviour in school/behaviour at home' to commence the description. She announces that his behaviour has 'got considerably worse' at home. This is another case of commencing with a generalized gloss (cf. Jefferson, 1985). Such generalized glosses can be membership categories (e.g. nuisance; much more than a poor speaker; she's a good bully; he's a bit of an anomaly) or generalized descriptions of activities and attributes. In this case, the generalized gloss refers to the child's behaviour – it has deteriorated. In the same way that many membership categories provide little information and are therefore followed by explication, so also is it the case with such generalized descriptions of behaviour. In this case, the teacher goes into progressive detail. First, the child is said to have deteriorated in his behaviour. Second, this is explicated as 'they can't trust him at all in the house'. Third, the explanation comes in the form of what he's been doing in the house: he makes a mess; and his stealing.

This 'unpacking' of the gloss often takes a story format, as in 'at first we thought, then we discovered' or 'at first he was X, then he started doing Y'.

Before moving on to consider the teacher's experience, as opposed to the referral's reputation, it can be noted that there is a categorically organized format for producing these descriptions. It is one thing to say that the descriptions of the referral are categorically organized in the sense that they stand in explicatory relations to each other, where those explications involve the uses of class/sub-class, back and forth, prospectively and retrospectively realized relations, it is another to say that the teachers make use of various categorically organized devices in the sense of contrasts between (a) what was said and (b) what I know; or (a) at first I thought, then (b) I realized; or, (a) she said, then (b) we discovered; (a)

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at first, (b) then.. Sometimes these are clearly contrast structures, diametrically opposed to each other; other times they are pairs that support each other.

Reputation and Experience

In the case of PW (MP) the teacher uses this contrastive organization by stating at the beginning what he had heard from other teachers about the referral. This establishes an initial categorization. He then refers to his own experience. This again is divided into two phases during which the child's behaviour changed, i.e. became more serious. At first he was only not prepared to work, then he became positively disruptive. Sacks has something to say about this sort of thing, as does Jefferson (2004) in her analysis of 'at first I thought'.

The 'not being prepared to work' does two things. It explicates the meaning of 'utter noncooperation and contempt' by limiting these attributes to a particular kind of context. It also serves to collect these two things as members of the collection, 'not being prepared to work'.

From what was established in history, in the past, we now move to the future. This is a commonly used 'contrast structure'. This is what he was like in the past, now I am going to tell you about the present. This is done, firstly, with 'how I know this', that is the source of the upcoming description is the teacher's own knowledge, it is not other people's reports.

(12) MP/981

1 T2: I've had him now () since-err last September
2 Ep: mmhmm

Again, the way this is done is with a contrast structure. It is a contrast between how he was up to Easter and what he is like now:

(13) MP/978

1 T2: an:-d (0.8) ((r.v.)) up till: () (0.5) ergh Easter
2 (0.6) though-i-his attitude to: teaching he er - to me
3 particularly we have gathered from what-it-is attitude
4 to teaching is one of utter noncooperation and contempt
5 (0.7)
6 Ep: mmhmm

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7 T2: and (0.5) ((r.v.)) but this was only in that in the
8 manner of you know he wasn't prepared to work (0.5) he-
9 e-wasn't as far as I was concerned up till this term
10 Ep: m[hmm]
11 T2: [umm] (0.5) actively non-cooperative [you know]
12 positively disruptive (0.5) and in the last=
13 Ep: [mmhmm]
14 T2: =few weeks he has turned to being positively disruptive

Thus, the child, up to Easter, displayed 'utter noncooperation and contempt' towards teaching 'but this was only in that in the manner of you know he wasn't prepared to work'. The situation is now different in that 'he-e-wasn't as far as I was concerned up till this term ... actively non-cooperative [you know] positively disruptive' whereas 'in the last few weeks he has turned to being positively disruptive'. The 'story' reaches its climax with the 'pitch' that things reached.

Contrast Sets and the Intelligibility of Descriptions of Deviance

However, there remains work to do. Tacitly, for the elaborated descriptions to mean what they mean, that is, to be heard as descriptions of deviance, a contrast set must be developed. This development involves (a) the description at hand and (b) the background contrast of conformity (norm-infracton model) or normal range of development (competence model).

This would seem to be related to the point that indexical expressions such as these require 'work' in order for their intelligibility to be achieved and for them to do the job of describing deviance. In particular, background contextual features, taken for granted, have to be 'applied' in order to hear the descriptions as descriptions of deviance. The tricky point to resolve is that some categories – such as 'thieving' or 'bullying' – are routinely and commonly used to describe deviance. They *can* have other meanings, and their *precise* meaning will always be contextual, but there is a sense in which they are readily understandable as descriptions of deviance. All the same, they will unavoidably be used in a specific context and it is only there that they will be part of some description of deviance. Consequently, the issue resolves itself in so far as the task is to show how categories are used in context. It is pointless to get involved in issues such as: are some categories less ambiguous than others?

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The point of this section is the following argument. The descriptions of deviance discussed so far are not inherently or objectively descriptions of deviance. They require ‘work’ for them to be heard that way. Descriptions of deviance are indexical expressions whose intelligibility as ‘descriptions of deviance’ rests upon and requires the *in situ* development and application of a ‘contrast’ or contrast set between the case at hand and what is assumed to be normal for some course of described activity or attribute in some situation or context or for some described incompetence of children of a particular age. This background has to be ‘filled in’ or taken into account in order to yield a sense of what is being described as comprising one part of a contrast pair or set and hence a sense of the descriptions *as being* descriptions of deviance. This is the argument of Hester (1992), augmented with Frank and Foote (1982).

Deviance in terms of the two models described in the previous section is described and therefore made available for the hearer via the use of what Sacks and Frank and Foote (1982) have called ‘contrast sets’. Speaking of child abuse cases, Frank and Foote (1982: 116) write:

The warranting of abuse thus rests on the hypothesized difference between the team’s idealization of a normal, healthy child, and its presentation of the child in question as somehow not normal and not healthy. In Sacks’s terms, a ‘contrast set’ (1966: 60) must be developed, in which aspects of the child in question are made understandable through their opposition to attributes of a normal child.

Sometimes an explicit contrast set is produced by the describer, referring to what is ‘normal’ and ‘usual’ for a given situation or age; the teacher explicitly formulates a contrast set through descriptions of what normal children do *in contrast* to the case at hand. Such explicit contrasts can be seen in AH/1.

(14) AH/1/LM

- 1 P: mm hmm yeah I see does he have any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 T: (.....) January when I came into the class Alfred was very
4 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
5 situation but I think all children do with a new
6 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
7 round the room screaming ‘I’m taking no notice, I’m not
8 bothered (...) I don’t care what you say’ and if you

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9 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
10 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
11 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
12 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
13 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
14 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
15 kick them or swear at them

The first long quote develops and contains not one, but several contrast sets. The first is a contrast between what the child was like at first and what he was then like later. In between 'at first' and the later 'then' is a period during the course of which children normally settle down. At first, at the beginning of this period, AH was like 'all young children with a new teacher' in that he was quiet, shy and wary. However, where normal children settle down and get over their reserve, AH did not settle down. However, it was not that he remained shy and reserved, whilst the rest of the class lost their inhibitions. Rather, it was that he began to behave in a disruptive and abnormal manner in a very different sense. Thus, he started to run round the room 'screaming ...'

The point is that there is not just one contrast being made here, not just one contrast set being developed here. There is, rather, an accumulation of contrast sets, possibly within an overarching contrast between the normal/deviant. There are, within this, specific contrasts with respect to particular items, such as how children respond to a lack of attention. The contrast set of normal/deviant is built up from specific contrast sets in relation to specific items of behaviour.

The first part of this extended turn contains a description of what the child was like when, in January, the teacher came into the class:

T: (.....) January when I came into the class Alfred was very
 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
 situation but I think all children do with a new
 teacher ·hhh initially

This utterance can be heard to 'normalize' the quietness and the shyness. Since all children are reserved with a new teacher, then the particular shyness and quietness of the referral is not a problem. Note also how 'but I think...' serves to forestall any implication that might be understood by the report of

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his shyness. It seems to be saying, 'now you might think that this is a problem' or sounds like a description of a problem, 'but' it's not. The 'but' sets up a contrast between what might be possibly implied and concluded and what she thinks is actually the case. His behaviour, in other words, does not constitute a departure from norms; rather it actually exhibits conformity to them.

It is not just the case that 'all children do with a new teacher' which makes the child's behaviour normal. Note also that the teacher finishes her utterance with 'initially' after a brief outbreak. The 'initially' can be heard to suggest that a time frame is significant here. This is 'at first', i.e. initially, and then there is 'later' or 'what comes next'. The normal shyness and quietness is tied to a stage in a sequence of some sort. 'All children' are *initially* shy and quiet with a new teacher but, presumably, they get over it, they become accustomed to their new teacher and things settle down in the classroom. What is then described/reported by the teacher is not a normal settling; the 'normal sequence of events' did not occur. Far from it:

T: then he started running round the room screaming 'I'm
 taking no notice, I'm not bothered (...) I don't care
 what you say'

There is then a contrast set being drawn between what happened initially and what happened after that. The story or narrative is one told via the use of the temporal contrast set 'at first ... then'. (It bears a resemblance to 'at first I thought but then ...') A distinction can therefore be made between what is being contrasted and the particular means or method that is used\to accomplish the contrast. This kind of method or structure is a commonly used one.

By means of this structure, then, a contrast is then produced between what is normally the case and what happened in this case. Where it is normally expected that children settle down, in this case he did not. 'Initially' they would be shy and reserved, and the referral conformed to the norm, but would be expected to settle down. However, the behaviour which he 'then' began to do contrasts with what is implied by the process of normal settling in. Running round the room screaming the things he screamed can be heard to contrast with what is normally expected from children when they have settled in.

The teacher starts to say what happened 'if you didn't take notice of him' but instead elaborates the motive supplied here. That is, 'if you didn't take notice of him' can be heard\to offer an account of what

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the child then did. She says that the running round the room screaming was the result and an expression of him wanting attention. Again, she normalizes the motive, the desire for attention – all young children do – *but* in this case – and the contrast is built with this contrast marker – all young children want attention (that's normal) but what is not normal is the child's reaction to a failure to get it. Another contrast is then developed, namely between the normal response to not getting attention and the response of this particular child.

So, we have a number of contrast sets being deployed here to depict and describe the child as deviant. Firstly, there is normal settling in and abnormal settling in. Then there is the normal response to not getting enough attention and the deviant response to this problem.

There is then a third contrast set provided in terms of what the child did. This is deviant in itself. That is, the contrast set is done in terms of how children should relate to each other. Punching and kicking are clearly in contrast to the normal way that children should interact with each other. The contrast is made simply by describing the behaviour that contrasts with the norm. Of course, we have to 'fill in' the norm implied by the description of the behaviour. Likewise, the child picks up and throws chairs about, something that again contrasts with the norm. For given activities, for given object, in particular contexts, there are normal ways of behaviour. To describe them as doing things in contrast to these norms is to describe them as deviant. Smith (1978) makes a similar point regarding common objects.

On the other hand, many of the contrast sets are implicit in the description of the child in question. These contrasts require the hearer to 'fill in' the contrast between the present case and the normal child, where the detail of the present case stands as the deviation from the normal. The normal has to be supplied in order to hear the present one as deviant (see Hester 1992).

It is more often the case, however, that the background normality or rule-following is left implicit in the description of the deviance, whereupon the hearer must supply the assumed contrast with what is being described. In these cases, the recognisability of the descriptions as descriptions of *deviance* requires that the 'background' of normal conduct and development be filled in so that the conduct being described is recognizable as deviant.

Maturity is another example of a device that may be mapped onto the stage of life. There are two basic categories in this device, 'mature' and 'immature', though they are frequently subjected to various modifiers such as 'very', 'completely', 'rather' and so on, thereby providing gradation levels for making finer distinctions in the terms of the contrast class mature/immature. Furthermore, the categories 'mature' and

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'immature' are not particularly informative in the absence of their being tied to the age of the person to whom they are applied because, like age classes, they may be used independently of age. Thus, a twelve year old may be described as 'mature' (for his or her age) whilst a thirty year old may be categorised as (relatively) 'immature'. The sense of these categories depends on knowing the age of the person being categorised (and also on the relative age of the person doing the categorisation [cf. Sacks 1992a: 45]). The following extract is an example of the use of categories from the maturity device.

(15) WJS/11

1 Ht: you see he's the sort of boy who you will meet on the
2 corridor (-) at breaktime chasing around in an immature
3 sort of way
4 Mt: mmhmm
5 (0.4)
6 Ep: mmhmm

In this case the sense of 'immature sort of way' as a complaint depends upon, and reflexively invokes, background knowledge of the child's age (he is a nine year old).

Thus, the answer to the question, 'how are contrast sets developed', and the prior question, 'how is deviance described' (the answer to which is the 'development of the contrast set'), is that they are developed both explicitly and implicitly. By means of the contrast set – deviant/normal – the child is shaped up as a deviant child. But deviance by itself is not enough. Other contrast sets are deployed, including between ordinary/extraordinary deviance, manageable/unmanageable deviance and single/general deviance. These are the 'recurrent features' that are the normal stock-in-trade of referral talk. It is to these features that the next chapters will turn.

Categorising Deviance in Referral Talk: Category Contrasts

Category contrasts are 'occasioned' devices for describing deviance in that they are constructed for the local situation at hand, to make *just this* point. They comprise two parts, elements or items that are hearably contrastive in some way. Several varieties of the method of *category contrast* are observable in the data to hand. Consider, for example, the following extract.

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(16) RMSJ/550

1 Ht: he's he's such a ahm you know so many children if they
2 are telling you lies you it [stands] out a mile the
3 lying but with=
4 Ep: [mm mm]
5 Ht: =Robin
6 Ep: he's good
7 Ht: ((s.v.)) he's very good
8 Ep: he's quite I can't remember the the exact assessment
9 Ht: he's very good and so innocent looking
10 Ep: yeah I seem to remember he's at least average
11 intelligence isn't he?
12 Ht: oh yes about average (0.5) something like that
13 Ep: he's not he's not (...) no
14 Ht: yeah yeah but er
15 Ep: yeah
16 Ht: he's a child you just can't tell whether he's lying or
17 not
18 Ep: mm
19 Ht: most of the time I must admit I think he is lying but
20 you try
21 Ep: mm
22 Ht: you would never get him to show it
23 Ep: mm

In this extract, then, the category contrast consists of 'so many children' and the particular pupil under discussion ('Robin') with respect to the observability of the activity of 'telling lies'. The Head teacher (HT) can be heard to make a distinction between what may be called 'normal lying' and the 'abnormal lying' of this child. Thus, with 'so many children ... it stands out a mile', but the referral is 'a child you just can't tell whether he's lying or not'. Furthermore, it is observable that this category contrast is collaboratively produced. Thus, HT states what can be heard as the first part of the contrast - 'so many children if they are telling you lies you it stands out a mile the lying' - and then offers the contrast or transition marker, 'but' and then 'with Robin'. This hearably incomplete contrast is then completed by its recipient, the educational psychologist, with the candidate categorisation 'he's good', which in turn is confirmed and upgraded by HT to 'he's very good'. In this way, the

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contrast between 'so many' and 'Robin' is developed into a contrast between 'bad liars' and 'good liars', some of whom, like this one, happen also to be 'very good' at this particular activity.

To return to extract (26), repeated here, a similar category contrast is made between 'all children' and the particular referral in question.

(17) AH/1/LM

1 Ep: mm hmm yeah I see does he have any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ft: (.....) January when I came into the class Alfred was very
4 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
5 situation but I think all children do with a new
6 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
7 round the room screaming 'I'm taking no notice, I'm not
8 bothered (...) I don't care what you say' and if you
9 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
10 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
11 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
12 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
13 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
14 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
15 kick them or swear at them

The category contrast here is one between the typical behaviour of children in general ('all young children') and the behaviour of the referred child in relation to the 'normal' process of adjusting to a new teacher. Whereas all children initially 'weigh up' the situation and then 'settle down', the referral acted unusually in so far as he did not follow this typical pattern. Instead, he became uncooperative and violent. In this, as in the previous extract, the referral can be seen to be 'marked out' as different, as deviant, by virtue of their 'failure' to display the kinds of activities, attributes, and other predicates bound to the category 'pupil'. The referrals 'stand out' because of this category contrast.

This extract is significant for several other reasons. Firstly, the teacher begins her answer with what can be heard as the beginning of a story, in that she mentions a time (January), a place (the class) and a description of the child's behaviour, which contrasts with what he did subsequently. The transition from January to 'then' involves a category change, from being 'quiet,' 'shy,' and 'always weighing up the situation' to 'he started running round the room screaming...!' Secondly, the contrast is constructed or built with *lists*. Thus, the first part of the

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contrast comprises a collection or device that consists of three items. As Jefferson (1990) points out (cf. Atkinson 1984), lists are archetypically constructed with three parts. Here, there is a three-part list consisting of two attributes - quiet and shy - and an activity - he was always weighing up the situation. Thirdly, the three-part list is followed by an assessment or post-formulation of it - 'but I think all children do with a new teacher'. That is, the teacher formulates the character, in this case 'normal' character of the listed items. Fourthly, the second part of the contrast is also composed of a three-part collection, 'what he screamed,' which consists of (a) 'I'm taking no notice', (b) 'I'm not bothered by you', and (c) 'I don't care what you say'. This is made accountable in terms of 'he wanted your attention', which in turn is assessed as 'normal' with 'fair enough *all* young children do want attention sometimes'. However, what is noticeably and accountably contrastive is the child's reaction if such attention is not forthcoming. Thus, the child would 'go and punch them or kick them or swear at them,' a list which, once again, is composed of three items.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered two descriptive devices in and through which descriptions of deviance are constructed: action sequences and contrast sets. These devices are employed in ways which make possible complex, multi-faceted descriptions of the student. This is of critical importance since 'deviance' is not a simple or immediate judgement but involves contextualised judgements. Thus, action sequences enable courses of action occurring over time to be explained, such that the emergence of patterns of deviant conduct are made apparent. Similarly, by means of the contrast set – normal/deviant – the child is shaped as a deviant child. But deviance by itself is not enough. Other contrasts are developed, notably between ordinary and extraordinary deviance, between what we can deal with and what we cannot. The deviance so depicted is, furthermore, general rather than singular. That is, the so-called recurrent features' are built via contrast sets.

So, the key features of these descriptions are that they are used in context in two main senses. The first is that they are used in relation to one another and the second is that their intelligibility *as* descriptions of deviance rests upon and requires filling in the context in which they are deployed. In particular, it involves the development of a contrast set in which the background of conformity to norms is invoked relative to the content of the description at hand.

Chapter Eight

Accomplishing Generality

Introduction

In a previous chapter, it was shown how children were so described as to achieve a sense of their departure from various norms, i.e. as deviant. Their accountability as deviant was demonstrated in a variety of ways. These included their lack of category predicates and in particular competences bound to particular age categories. However, their accountability as a referral involves more than the mere fact of deviance.

In criminal trials, defendants are examined about particular offences, and the purpose of a trial is to arrive at a verdict of guilt or innocence with respect to that particular offence. Similarly, in police interrogations, the suspect is questioned about specific events, the object being to decide whether to charge the suspect with a specific act. Finally, in calls to the police, the talk with the dispatcher is standardly about some event that requires attention and help. In contrast, within referral meetings the parties are not explicitly concerned with guilt or innocence, nor are they focused on particular acts. The central point is that unlike other settings in which descriptions of deviance are produced, such as courtrooms or police interrogations, the concern of both describer and recipient is not with specific acts but with generalities. That is to say, the descriptions of deviance produced in referral meetings are predominantly general in character. The concern is with how the referral is generally deviant and not with particular acts that he or she may have committed. The descriptions tend to be descriptions not of particular offences but descriptions of what the referred children are generally like: the knowledge that is sought and produced is categorical knowledge; the concern is with types of behaviour, general dispositions, sorts of activities, typical incidents, etc. Furthermore, even when specific acts do come up in the discussions, it is invariably the case that these are offered or formulated as typical of the way that the child behaves.

This is not to say that general descriptions are not substantiated and backed up by evidence in the form of particular instances. As has been shown in Chapter Six, generalized glosses are routinely explicated via the provision of particulars that serve to illustrate, explicate, elaborate, exemplify and substantiate them. However, rarely is it the case that particulars are left to stand alone without the underlying matter that they document being brought into play. It may be the case that the particulars are assembled or formulated in an underlying general matter, what they amount to, what they show to be the case. In general, the descriptions are categorical. That is to say, they are overwhelmingly concerned with the types, sorts, i.e. categories of person, activity, attributes, etc., that are applicable to the child. As previous studies have shown (e.g. Mehan,

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1979), 'sorting' students involves allocating them to categories that are of a general character. Sorting does not mean distinguishing but allocating students to different categories, types or sorts. The question for analysis here is how these general descriptions/sortings are done.

The Generality of the Educational Psychologist's Questions

The generality of deviance in the descriptions is accomplished in various ways, using a variety of components. In the first place, it is important to note that at the outset of any discussion about a particular student, the questions asked by the educational psychologist are formulated in general terms. The generality of the phenomenon described is a central preoccupation of the educational psychologist's questions that analyse the teacher's reports. They have a concern with the sort of child and the sorts of thing that he or she does. This 'sorting' comes in various forms. There are different sorts of children and they do different sorts of things. These sorts are types or categories of person or thing.

The psychologists' questions are of two main types. They are general activity questions and general attribute questions. General activity questions seek information about what the child does. Some of them are quite open, as in questions about what 'sorts of behaviour' does the child engage in. However, most are more specific with respect to particular forms of activity. They nevertheless seek to establish whether or not the child does something, generally speaking. General attribute questions seek descriptions of what the child is like. In the next part of the analysis some examples of each type will be presented, starting with general activities questions.

Seeking general activities

The most common general question asked by the psychologist concerns the type of conduct displayed by the student:

(1) RMSJ/355

- 1 P: what sort of behaviour first of all is it is this
2 primarily his behaviour at home that's causing the
3 concern rather than his behaviour at school?
4 T: well it has been yes I-I thought his behaviour...

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This question asks for the 'sort of behaviour' that is 'causing concern' and offers a choice of answers as to the location of where this 'primarily' occurs. In the next two extracts the educational psychologist's question is slightly less open-ended:

(2) AH/211

- 1 P: when he actually gets down to doing some work what's
2 his work like?
3 T: very good...

(3) AH/225

- 1 P: what sort of things does he talk about?
2 arhmm not much about his family he talks about his
3 T: mother e-e's only mentioned 'is father to me once

In numerous exchanges, the educational psychologist asks a general activity question that seeks a description of the 'sorts of things' that the child is doing:

(4) RMSJ/396

- 1 P: er what sort of when father says he cannot leave him at
2 home when they come back what sort of things is he
3 doing while they're out
4 T: well, he said th' he-he said the house is just a mess
5 when they come back everything's been pulled out ahmm I
6 don't know

The concern with general patterns of behaviour or activities is reflected in the answers teachers give to the psychologist's questions. Often such responses offer descriptions of behaviour that is a general, persistent and present feature of the pupil. Such generalized references are contained in the following extracts:

(5) AN/1

- 1 Ht: and he talks to his mum in this sort of gibberish which
2 she understands but nobody else does at all and she
3 replies which means he isn't being stimulated at all to
4 try to talk
5 Ep: [yeah mm]

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(6) AN/1

1 Ep: mm hm
→ 2 Ht: and he keeps running away apparently he's been running
3 away this morning
4 Ep: mm hmm
5 Ht: down the corridor

(7) WJS/22

1 Ep: umm and (0.6) what about attain (-) well no lets just
2 say umm (1.2) what is the main problem then?
3 Mt: hhh well, I would say i-it's mainly behavioural
4 Ep: mhmm
5 Mt: it's this p-er it-it is this problem of the fact that
6 he cannot settle for very long
7 Ep: mhmm
→ 8 Mt: that in the process of not settling he d-disturbs too
9 many other children
10 Ep: mmhmm
11 Mt: so much of the time ·hhh an th-the thing is that in my
12 classroom situation it's very difficult to isolate
13 anybody

(8) RMSJ/311

1 Ep: yeah
2 Ht: so I won't give you the whole story, ahmmm but in a
3 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated, they can't
4 trust him in the house at all on his own, even if they
5 pop up to the shops the house is in a mess when they
6 come back and he's stealing, he's been caught three
7 times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
8 Ep: mm

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(9) AH/1/LM

1 Ep: mm hmm yeah I see does he have any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ft: (.....) January when I came into the class Barry was very
4 sort of quiet, shy, he was always weighing up the
5 situation but I think all children do with a new
6 teacher ·hhh initially (-) then he started running
7 round the room screaming 'I'm taking no notice, I'm not
8 bothered (...) I don't care what you say' and if you
9 didn't (-) take notice of him (-) he wanted your
10 attention, fair enough all (young) children do want
11 attention sometimes, some more than others, (...) but if
12 you didn't notice him he would go and punch, there's
13 two children in the class that seem to be picked on
14 more than anyone else and he'd go and punch them or
15 kick them or swear at them

Sometimes these generalized descriptions of activities can be heard as descriptions of '*dispositions*'. These are typically formed with iterative verbs such as 'he tends ...' or 'she wants ...' or 'he likes ...' followed by the naming of some activity, as in the following extract:

(10) WJS/13

1 Ep: this sort of silly running about and silly (0.3)
2 playing about he's got lots of energy
3 Ft: mmhmm
4 an' he has sort of err little boy=
5 [mmhmm]
→ 6 =tch ·hh he wants to play little boy games of running
7 around the corridor

Activities were also used in '*sort categorizations*'. These make reference to activities of the referral, where the activity exemplifies the kind of sort of child the referral is, typically taking the form, 's/he is the sort of child who [engages in an activity]'. This descriptive component is used in the following extracts.

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(11) WJS/11

→ 1 Ht: you see he's the sort of boy who you will meet on the
2 corridor (-) at breaktime chasing around in an immature
3 sort of way
4 Mt: mmhmm
5 (0.4)
6 Ep: mmhmm

Another sub-class of these behavioural references consists of references to particular incidents which are treated as typical of the referral. For example:

(12) MP/55

1 Mt: yeah well look I-I-I'll say what happened today then
2 before you got 'im Derek because he must have been high
3 as a kite by the time you got 'im today it's wet
4 weather
5 (0.7)
6 so the school's in difficult turmoil CSE examinations
7 are goin' on so they can't go to their normal ports of
8 call in wet weather ·hhh an:d
9 (0.5)
→ 10 in the dining hall today he was messing around
11 (0.6)
→ 12 doing ridiculous things
13 (0.7)
→ 14 throwing some potato at somebody
→ 15 Mt2: yeah that's him

(13) RMSJ/197

1 Ht: I mean I did have a message ohhh about two or three
2 weeks ago that he had been badly beaten up outside of
3 school
4 Ep: yeah
5 Ht: by some of the boys in this school (1.5) uhmmm
6 certainly he came the next day with quite a bruise on
7 his cheek

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8 Ep: mm
9 Ht: I tried to find out what had happened though really and
10 legally I can't do anything about what happens outside
11 the school but I do
12 Ep: mm
13 Ht: uhmmm and you know when I when I got down to brass
14 tacks it was a usual Robert deliberately tormenting
15 boys calling them names using bad language spoiling
16 their game
17 Ep: mm

Returning to the psychologist's questions, a variation on the general activity question is one which employs an iterative verb to specify the focus of the question. The form here typically asks: is he 'doing' this activity, not has he 'done' it?

(14) RMSJ/436

1 Ep: do you know if he's breaking things at home rather than
2 just pulling things out is he smashing things
3 Ht: I don't know

In other exchanges the format [general activity question] [iterative verb] is employed to focus on 'how often' the child displays some form of behaviour:

(15) AH/054

1 Ep: and now this behaviour you've described is it more
2 often than () less. I'll start that one again sorry,
3 does he do that more often throughout the week than he
4 doesn't do it, like [he's]
5 Ft: [he's] more often disruptive than
6 he is a good boy
7 Ep: he's yeah err and that's every day?

As this extract shows, general questions can be focused upon the frequency or 'quantity' of the deviant behaviour. Responses to such frequently will offer some estimate of the amount or regularity of the behaviour. Here are some further examples of this:

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(16) WJS/11

1 Ep: um do you think he was particularly avoiding you or do
2 you think that was a style that he shows with um y'know
3 sort of throughout the school in some ways
4 T: umm I th. I-it could be general I-dun-m-have you ever
5 met him because he's not in your group y'know umm

(17) AH/173

1 Ep: you would say you would say it's more per week extreme
2 behaviour than not extreme behaviour
3 T: that's it

(18) AH/176

1 Ep: and how long does this extreme behaviour go on for when
2 he starts doing it?
3 T: could be days
4 Ep: no I mean in the classroom itself
5 T: in the classroom?
6 Ep: he'll come in not do anything then he'll start throwing
7 things around
8 T: mm hmm
9 Ep: will he do that all day or will he just do it for half
10 an hour?
11 T: no he'll do it and in the end I have to restrain him
12 and if it gets really awful I have to take him out of
13 the class

Seeking general attributes

A second type of general question concerns the student's attributes. In addition to questions about behaviour, the psychologist may also ask about the general attitude or demeanour of the student.

(19) RMSJ/1

1 Ep: ermm he is difficult is he?
2 T: he's proving as difficult as ever he used to be yeah

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Here, then, the psychologist asks about a general attribute or characteristic of the referral. The question contains a candidate answer which is a generalized attributional categorization, that is, it uses as an attribute: 'he is difficult', to which confirmation is sought with the tag question, 'is he?'.

It is notable, therefore, that where a description is offered of the deviant qualities or attributes of the individual pupil, these may be expressed in terms of qualities, properties, features, in short, *attributes*, including problems, inabilities and incompetences, which the individual pupil 'is' or 'has'.

(20) PS/21

→ 1 Ep: r-really I think Peter is a totally amoral
2 T1: mhmm
3 Ep: [ch]ild
4 T2: [ye]s
5 T1: [mm]hmm
6 (0.5)
7 totally
8 T2: Yes this is what I said

(21) MP/49

1 P: ((s.v.)) mmhmm mmhmm
2 T: errm (0.5) at the moment I've taken him from his
3 classroom down in the gym waiting for Joseph to come
4 down ·hhh but it's reached such a stage with me: that-
→ 5 errm you know I find that the boy's completely
6 uncooperative

(22) MP/48

1 Mt: I've had im now since-s:err last September
2 Ep: mmhmm mm hm
3 Mt: an:d (0.8) up till () err Easter (0.6) though-i-his
→ 4 attitude to: to teaching he er(.) to me particularly
→ 5 (we have gathered from what-is-is) attitude to teaching
→ 6 (.) is one of (.) utter noncooperation and contempt
7 Ep: mmhmm

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(23) WJS/20

→ 1 Ft: he's a bit of an anomaly, isn't he, Peter because I
2 think he's (.) got maturity=
3 Mt: [oh he is]
→ 4 =problems he's got a very (0.5) errm acute=
5 Ep: [mm]
6 Ft: =brain really=
7 Mt: =mmhmm oh yes
→ 8 Ft: [but he]'s got a very poor attention span
9 Ep: mm hm

(24) MP/1

1 Mt: I know Lucy's not even (as:) (.) w-with this lad Dean
2 Smith (.) err (.) hh.
3 (1.4)
4 he (.) really has (1.6) the general background of him,
5 Lucy y'know (.) feel free to but in cos you: probably
6 know as much about it as-(a) (.) m'self
7 (1.1)
8 err (0.5) there (-) nobody's s-s:poken of this lad as a
9 discipline problem (.) as such if anything he's rather
10 introverted (0.5) err
11 (1.5)
12 there have been (.) comments which were made to me:
13 when I fir:st became involved which said e-is-his
14 mathematics are atrocious
15 (1.4)
16 his: number concepts seem to be: (-) so poor (-) that
17 (0.7) he shouldn't be in the maths class (-) the
18 teacher didn't know really what to do with the lad (-)
19 because he just couldn't things now event at this stage
20 he wasn't disruptive (0.8) but obviously he was gaining
21 nothing from (0.6) class time

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(25) WJS/20/2

→ 1 Ft: [.hhh] and then he has err (-) coordination problems in
2 a sense that he can't sit still for two minutes and he
3 can't .hhh err physically root himself (-) for more
4 than ten (-) I-h mean=
5 Mt: [no, that's true]
6 Ft: =(-) that's too long, isn't it?

(26) MP/66

→ 1 Mt: see the thing the thing is-sz-is in fact he is an'
2 without any doubt a very serious problem within this
3 school
4 Sw: mm: .chh

In some exchanges the psychologist's question is concerned with a general attribute, such as friendliness, ability to concentrate, physical co-ordination or intellectual ability:

(27) AH/089

1 Ep: mmhmm yeah I see and does he any friends in the
2 classroom?
3 Ft: they like him he's likeable the like him even when the
4 throws chairs they go back

(28) WJS/17

1 Ep: you say er he doesn't concentrate at all well ermm
2 [he] appears unable to pay=
3 T1: [no]
4 Ep: =attention at times .hhh ermm (0.5) are you worried
5 about hearing in fact?

(29) WJS/21

1 EP: do you mean coordination er(-) [in the sense of hi]s
2 he's= clumsy=
3 Ft: [well he's so gawky]=

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(30) WJS/212

- 1 Ep: Mm hmm ((raised voice)) ert-well yes I mean you err
2 your impression is that err::m he seems to be an
3 average sort of lad in terms y'know ability?

As the following extract indicates, attributes may involve selections from a continuum of attributes pertaining to some measurable aspect or feature of children. One such aspect is intelligence and there is a wide range of terms that are deployable to make reference to perceivable variations in it. As the extract shows, one way to do this is in terms of variations in 'brightness', with respect to which pupils may be said to 'below average', 'average', 'above average' etc.:

(31) RMSJ/1

- 1 Ht: ahmmm Terence does not appear to be very bright I think
2 he's a good average actually he just er (2.5) he just
3 lacks any initiative [to] want [to] work at all
4 Ep: [mm] [mm]

Thus, in extract (31) it is not the case that Terence happened to appear to be or in fact was 'very bright' on some particular occasion but rather that he is not very bright *generally speaking*. The description 'does not appear to be very bright' can be understood, quite clearly, to mean that it is a general feature, characteristic or attribute of Terence that he is not very intelligent. Further, the description of him as being 'a good average actually' can be heard to qualify, in a general way, the description of him as 'not very bright'. Thus, he is *generally* 'average', not average with respect to a particular occasion. Likewise, his lack of 'initiative' does mean that he happened to lose such a quality on some particular occasion; rather, he does not *have* such initiative, as a general attribute. Is this, then, to speak 'categorically'? Is it to say what kind of person he is, not what he happened to do on some specific occasion. Yes, the talk about the referrals is categorically organized in this way. They speak *categorically* about the referrals, and one way they do this is by speaking in general terms.

In some exchanges both activities and attributes of the student are referred to, either by the psychologist or by the teacher. In the following extract, from the same discussion of the student 'Terence', it is observable that following the first question, which is an 'open question', the answerer constructs her

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answer as a story whose culminating focus is the problem or cause for concern and the reason for the referral. Furthermore, the focusing on this problem is preceded by the use of the word 'but':

(32) RMSJ

→ 1 Ep: right right now what about this other one Terence
2 Ht: Clark
3 Ep: Clark
4 Ht: Terence Clark mm hmm well ah this is father's request
5 Ep: yeah
6 Ht: ahmm Terence for about the last eighteen months his
7 behaviour has been quite difficult just behaviour wise
8 he's not very good academically but ahmm nothing that I
9 would refer him to you for
10 Ep: yeah
11 Ht: ahh the father and mother are sensible enough ahmm when
12 I've sent for father and said again a bit like Richard
13 you know (we err) we think you should know this situation
14 that's happening in school
15 Ep: mm hmm
16 Ht: ahh I had his telephone number at work at er from work
17 any particular day
18 Ep: mm
19 Ht: ahmm he's sometimes phoned me and I thought that
20 Terence's behaviour was improving slightly (-) ahh he
21 was going to the lake District with us this year
22 Ep: mm
23 Ht: and er at four days we were due to go to the Lakes
24 Terence came in with the remark that he wasn't going
25 mummy and daddy said he couldn't go and I thought well
26 possibly he hadn't paid all his money so there was some
27 financial=
28 Ep: =yeah=
29 Ht: =bother so I con-contacted father and said if there is
30 any financial trouble we could help him with this he said
31 no there isn't I want to come and see

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As Drew (2006: 662) remarks, in the case of open questions in trials, ‘open questions often invite narratives’. So it is here, where the open question, ‘what about ...’, is followed by an answer that has a narrative or story-like structure to it. The teacher begins by stating that the referral has been made at the request of the father, then moves on to speak of how Terence’s behaviour has been ‘difficult’ over the past eighteen months but that this was not serious enough to warrant referral by the school, then the mother and father are described as ‘sensible’ and it is reported that there was an arrangement in place for contact between school and the father in case Terence was causing problems, then there is the report that he was improving, then that he was going to Lakes with the school (a sign of his improved behaviour), then that he was refused permission and then finally the reasons for this.

Components of Deviance Attribution

The above extract exemplifies an important point. It is one thing to show that the generality of answers reflects the generality of the questions which precede them, but this is not the whole story. The answers may be general but they are built out of various components, the generality of which varies. It is not the point here to measure the generality of the answers, but to show how the various components relate to one another. That is, even though the teacher may start with a specific incident this will be coupled with a formulation of its general significance. With reference to the documentary method of interpretation (Garfinkel, 1967), we can say that the referable deviance constitutes the underlying pattern with respect to which the particulars provided in the referral meeting are evidences. The underlying pattern illuminates the particulars; the particulars constitute the underlying pattern.

It was noted in Chapter Six that while deviance is described, i.e. attributed to the referral, using a wide range of components, these fall into three main classes and sub-classes thereof. The three main classes are *membership categories*, *activities* and *attributes*.

Membership Categories

Membership categories, as indicated in Chapter Two, consist of social types of person such as ‘bully’, ‘slow learner’, ‘nuisance’, ‘menace’, and ‘thief’. Their use can be seen in the following extracts:

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(33) WJS/5578

1 Ep: so: the: what what is the nub of the problem? Trauncy
2 doesn't sound like it's
3 Ft: well that's [not] no it's not=
4 Ep: [no]
5 Ft: =that no it's really it's thieving for a start that
→ 6 brought things to light but she's a very good bully
7 Ep: mm hmm

(34) MP/51

→ 1 Mt: I know the other side which I see of him that (0.7) he's
2 a thief (0.7) you know hgh he'll pick up anything ()
3 y'know errgh (1.3)

(35) AN/1

1 Ht: now, when she brought him in she said er e-e wasn't a
2 good talker
3 Ep: mm hm
4 Ht: and er I think I said was there anything else wrong
5 with him and er she said no
6 Ep: mm hm
7 Ht: and (-) I asked her as usual you know her first name,
8 her husband's first name
9 Ep: yeah
10 Ht: so she gave her husband as Paul and she's Pauline
11 Ep: mm
12 Ht: I accepted this er
13 Ep: mm hm
14 Ht: quite happily (...) and er we his birth certificate but
15 it wasn't very long before we realised that it was more
16 than just a poor speaker, he-he can't speak very much
17 at all he-he doesn't know the language, he doesn't
18 know=
19 ? [.....]
20 Ep: [mm hm]
21 Ht:

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22 The names of common objects, no responses to various
23 simple instructions such as 'stand up'. 'sit down',
24 Ep: he's really functioning like an=
→ 25 Ht: =mm hmm=
26 Ep: =eighteen month or two year old baby
 mm hm

Activities

Deviant activities were generalized in a number of ways. These included (1) the use of iterative verbs, (2) the use of modals for iteratives (would, will, etc.), (3) 'if... then structures', (4) temporal adverbs (always, often, all the time). Let me now consider each of these in turn.

Iterative verbs

However, as can be seen if the previous and the following extracts are compared, some generalizations refer to attributes (lacks initiative) whilst others refer to activities ('ruins all his clothes', 'rips everything there is he can have on', 'is not as well dressed as the other children'). This involves the use of the present tense. It is therefore something ongoing and continuous, not a discrete event as might be suggested with the use of the past tense.

(36) RMSJ/2

1 Ht: ahh I must admit father's right he said he ruins all
2 his clothes ahmm that they really don't feel like
3 buying him anything new at all because he rips
4 everything there is he can have on and sure enough he
5 is certainly not as well dressed as the other children
6 were or his younger brother
7 Ep: yeah
8 Ht: whether they're taking the right attitude I don't know
9 apparently he doesn't believe in keeping himself very
10 clean [ahmm]
11 Ep: [mmhm]m

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12 Ht: and if he's been playing football for the school and he
13 comes in in a muddy mess and mum says you know go get
14 washed or go into the bath and take your football kit
15 and put it in the washing bin' he doesn't do it he goes
16 and stuffs the old things under the bed, if he's forced
17 to have a bath apparently he'll get in with his muddy
18 things on which is a bit crazy, you know, a ten year
19 old is not that stupid and Terence is not stupid
20 Ep: yeah

In this extract several generalizing devices are observable. Firstly, it can be seen to contain several uses of iterative verbs: 'he *ruins* all his clothes', 'he *rips* everything ...', 'he *doesn't believe* in keeping himself very clean'. The teacher makes it clear that it is not the case that the child happened to ruin his clothes, rip everything and failed to believe in keeping himself clean on some specific occasion. Rather, such behaviour is a general pattern for this child, something that he regularly does. These uses of iterative verbs in the present tense are understandable as meaning that the activities and attributes are ongoing and persistent; they did not happen in the past as specific incidents. Furthermore, the use of the present tense indicates that these types of behaviour are ongoing and continuing, they are happening now; they are not some aberrant form of behaviour that is now past.

Modal verbs

The following extract contains a number of examples of the use of the modal verb 'would'.

(37) MP49

1 Ep: mm hm
2 Ft: and he just was really trying to show that he wanted
3 attention all the time
4 Ep: mm hm
5 Ft: but he'd come in some mornings and he was really good
6 and he'd write a story and he could write about two
7 sides and it was really interesting it was fluent it
8 was really good his art work's good when he wants to
9 other mornings he'd come in he'd say 'I'm doing nothing
10 I'm not going to do an effing thing' and he won't no

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11 matter what you do you can cuddle him you can talk talk
12 to him nicely you can sit him down if you (got him away
13 if) we have the supernumary if she can take him out and
14 if he doesn't want to that day he'll do absolutely
15 nothing (1.0) now the other children have started
16 following in the same things he's decided `I'm going
17 home' so I had a stage where I had to more or less
18 stand by the door for part of the lesson because `oh to
19 hell' the book'll go off in one direction pencil in the
20 other the crayons'll (....) little boys always (.....)
21 thrown across the room and off he'd go to the door and
22 if you didn't get there quick enough he'd be out and
23 over the yard he's gone once the auxiliary had to go
24 and bring him back `hhh and he's very disruptive really
25 but there again on the odd day he's beautiful
26 Ep: mm hmm
27 Ft: we've just got the two [ex]tremes
28 Ep: [mm]

There are number of uses of the modal verb ‘would’ in this extract: ‘other mornings he’d come in he’d say “I’m doing nothing I’m not going to do an effing thing”’ and ‘and off he’d go to the door and if you didn’t get there quick enough he’d be out and over the yard’. These are instances of how the behaviour is typified and generalized. They are not one-off instances, they are exemplars (Imershein and Simons 1976). This extract also contains the use of ‘will’ as a generalizing, typicalizing verb, as in ‘if he doesn’t want to that day he’ll do absolutely nothing’ and ‘the book’ll go off in one direction pencil in the other the crayons’. In both cases, the actions described are heard as typical, general activities.

Note also the use of the word ‘would’, as in ‘he would go and punch’. This serves to indicate that the behaviour in question is typical and general, a pattern of typical behaviour. This term serves to establish the typicality and generality of the behaviour. As Edwards (2006) indicates for the use of ‘would’ in police interrogation, it occurs where ‘a speaker formulates an actor’s dispositions (in this case, what they generally would or would not do).’ Presumably, there are other ways that dispositions are formulated, and the use of ‘would’ is one of them. That is to say, unlike a courtroom trial where a person is tried for a specific offence, in referral meetings the issue is much more the general character of the child. Specific instances, where they are mentioned, are generally tied to, and presented as exemplars of, such general dispositional characteristics.

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Of course, it is sometimes the case that a general disposition or characterization may be used in court as a means of shedding light on a particular act; dispositions have the property of inferentiality. Categories, as Sacks says, are ‘inference rich’. However, in courtroom trials such a practice of drawing inferences from categorization can amount to ‘prejudice’ and is an objectionable practice.

Just as the use of the word ‘would’ marks the categorical character of the conduct, so also does the use of the present tense in relation to activities and activities. As the extract continues, other general attributes emerge. Thus, Terence has a general belief: he ‘does not believe in keeping his clothes clean’. Modal verbs, such as will and would, are used to refer to habits, actions that are repeated again and again. Will is used for present habits and would for past (though not necessarily ceased) habits, grammatically speaking. The meaning is almost the same as a simple tense, but will is used as a kind of prediction. The action is so typical and happens so regularly that we can predict it will continue.

‘If... then’ structures

Another recurrent practice is to specify what the referral is like under certain conditions. This may be done, and it is done here, with an ‘if ... then’ structure. Looking again at Extract 36, above, we see that the psychologist is told what Terence does:

Ht: and if he’s been playing football for the school and he
 comes in in a muddy mess and mum says you know go get
 washed or go into the bath and take your football kit
 and put it in the washing bin’ he doesn’t do it he goes
 and stuffs the old things under the bed

Under these circumstances he does not comply with instructions to get washed. Again, this is something he does in general in these circumstances. Similarly,

Ht: if he’s forced to have a bath apparently he’ll get in
 with his muddy things on which is a bit crazy, you
 know, a ten year old is not that stupid and Terence is
 not stupid

These ‘if ...then’ structures are here used to exemplify the earlier characterization of the child as not believing in keeping clean.

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Just as Terence is described *verbally* – that is, in terms of the things he does and the *activities* he engages in – using general terms, so also are *adjectival* descriptions of Terence’s *attributes* described in general terms. Thus, adjectively, Terence is said to *be* a certain kind of person. In this extract, for example, Terence is said to be ‘not that stupid’.

In the following extract, both the psychologist’s question and the teacher’s answer are constructed in general terms:

(37) WJS/

1 Ep: what about umm you know (the) relationship with other
2 kids [there] in the cla[ss? ho]w=
3 Mt: [mm] [.thh]
4 Ep: = does he get on with them?
5 Mt: well here again you see-er-very often (-) umm (-) the
6 sort of thing that I hear (0.8) is (-) umm (0.5)
7 ‘Please Sir’ umm ‘Philip Boge just punched me’ (0.9)
8 he’s just got up sometimes y’know (-) wandered across
9 and thumped somebody
10 Ep: mhm
11 Mt: w-how desperate this really actually is you know I mean
12 I haven’t even nobody’s actually been into (-) tears in
13 the class[: or]anything like that so far so he=
14 Ep: [mhm]
15 Mt: =obviously (0.8) perhaps it’s minor irritation
16 sh[all] we say ·hhh but this sort=
17 Ep: [mm]
18 Mt: =of thing does happen fairly frequently
19 Ep: yeah

A number of points can be made about this extract. Firstly, the psychologist’s question is about the referral’s ‘relationships with other kids’ and it is hearably general; it can be heard to seek information about how the referral ‘gets on’ with his peers. The question is understandable as referring to his relationships in general, not his relationships on some specific occasion or even under some specific set of conditions. The psychologist asks ‘how does he get on with them’ (‘the other kids there in the class’). ‘Getting on’ refers to a general pattern; the question seeks a general answer not a specific instance of how the child ‘got on’ with someone on a specific occasion. Secondly, the teacher’s response exhibits his analysis of the question as being

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about general matters. He answers the psychologist's question with an *exemplar* of the 'sort of thing' that he hears': 'Please Sir, Philip Boge's just punched me'. What follows is then to be understood as not just one incident in which Terence 'just got up sometime y'know (-) wandered across and thumped somebody' but rather as the 'sort of thing', that is as typical and general, that Terence does. Again this displays an orientation to categorical organization. It thus may be possible to speak of categorical orientation in several senses: the kind of person he is (various aspects provide for ranges of categories) and the sorts of thing that the child does. In this case 'sort of thing' refers to the typical thing that the child does or the typical event that he is involved in. Note how 'sort of thing' is placed at the inception and on completion of the description. Thirdly, the thumping in question occurred on no particular occasion with no particular pretext; it 'just' happened 'sometime'. Furthermore, in so far as the child 'just' 'wandered' across, it implies an aimlessness, a case of casual violence, for no good reason: he 'just' got up and wandered across.

Temporal adverbs

In the following extract the general character of the behaviour being attributed to the referral is accomplished via the use of the adverb 'always':

(38) WJS/

- 1 Ep: yeah
2 Mt: and (1.6) tch there was one boy who (0.5) has sat next
3 to him fairly regularly that's Richard [Halling] (you
4 know)
5 Ep: [mhmm]
6 Mt: umm (0.6) yesterday Richard asked to be moved he wanted
7 to go and sit next to Andrew Anderson so he's sitting
8 next to Andrew Anderson so Philip gets on but even
9 although there was some sort of hint of companionship
10 there and suchlike they were always quarrelling
11 [and goi]ng on at=
12 Ep: [mmhmm]
13 Mt: =each other ((s.v.)) a[n th-]is sort of thing () ·hh
14 so-it was as well that he moved=
15 Ep: ((s.v.)) [mhmm]

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In extract (38), then, the generality of the behaviour is communicated via the phrase ‘they were *always quarrelling* and going on at each other’. That is, the teacher moves from a story about a particular incident the previous day when Richard (a boy who sat next to Phillip regularly) was moved, as his own request, to sit next to Andrew. The teacher then reports that this resulted in Phillip ‘getting on’ with his work. Furthermore, he ‘gets on’ which can be heard to be an instance of a repeated form of behaviour. ‘Gets on’ implies repetition. Having made this report, he then shifts focus to the relationship between Phillip and Richard. As he says, ‘but even though there was some hint of companionship, they were always quarrelling’. Again, then, the teacher’s remarks are focused on the general character of the relationship, not some particular instance.

It can also be noted here that description of the boys as ‘always quarrelling’ and ‘going on at each other’ is followed by ‘an’ this sort of thing’. The previously made general descriptions are not only described as typical, they are said to belong to a collection of things of which the present is a member. ‘Sort of thing’ can be used prior to an exemplar and post a generalized description of a particular kind. As well as invoking a collection to which quarrelling and going on belong, this ‘sort of thing’ functions in a similar fashion to the ‘generalised list completer’ (Jefferson, 1990).

Conclusion

In this chapter some methods for accomplishing generality in descriptions of deviance have been described. The generality of the descriptions of deviance is one aspect of the recipient design of these descriptions. The analysis presented here suggests that the accomplishment of educational psychological relevance in and how the referrals are described involves components that constitute the deviance in question as a general phenomenon. However, these generalized descriptions are not used randomly. Rather, they are deployed systematically; there is, in other words, a discernible orderliness to their use and positioning relative to one another. Thus, according to Edwards (1995: 319), ‘script formulations are descriptions of actions and events that characterize them as having a recurring, predictable, sequential pattern’. He notes (1995: 320), that ‘one notable feature of everyday event descriptions is how they make inferentially available particular dispositional states of the actors’. That is, from these events it is possible to infer the ‘dispositional state’ of the actor. He cites Smith’s (1978) example of ‘K’ who was said to be ‘unable to put a teapot cover on correctly...’. As has already been shown, the parties to the referral talk exhibit a concern with expansion and explication in their descriptions. These expansions and explications are achieved systematically and in an organized fashion by

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the selection and positioning of particular kinds of components at specific junctures in the talk. The components are procedurally and methodically positioned relative to one another.

In addition to its generality, deviance is also described as extraordinary or extreme. That is, the referral talk is aimed at describing the kind of object that the referral is. It is not simply that the child is deviant in some way, or has committed some deviant act. Rather, there are other qualities that are 'added' as it were to the mere fact of deviance. As will be discussed in the next chapter, these qualities have to do with typical and general character, its persistence, its irremediability and its extreme character. Irremediability will be considered subsequently. But first, there will be a discussion of recognisability. If generality is a first feature of the description of referrals, a second is their recognisability as descriptions of deviance.

Chapter Nine

Extremity and Irremediality

Introduction

It was argued earlier that referable deviance is somehow 'special' deviance. This is not to say that referable deviance does not share qualities in common with non-referable deviance. The two models of deviance described in Chapter Five – the norm-infraction model and the developmental model – are used not only in referral meetings but much more widely in talking about and responding to 'ordinary deviance' as well. Similarly, it is likely that much deviance in school is general and mundane in character. The expertise of the EP is invoked not merely by the deviance of the referral. This would presumably be dealt with in the school itself. So, what makes the deviance of referrals 'special'? The answer is that it is extreme, compared to ordinary deviance and, perhaps most importantly, it is perceived as irremediable, at least in terms of the means and resources available within the school itself. The appropriateness, so to speak, of the referral is evident in the extremity and irremediability of the problem. That is to say, the warrantability and accountability of the referral lies in its character as *beyond* the kind of deviance that would ordinarily be dealt with in school. Two aspects of this are extremity and irremediability. It is therefore to these two qualities and their description that the analysis now turns.

The Extremity of Referable Deviance:

Some uses of extreme case formulations

The referral is not just deviant, but extremely so. The description of extreme deviance is also done and developed with a contrast set, namely between ordinary and extraordinary deviance. A recurrent form of category contrast used in designating deviance is the 'extreme case formulation'. 'Extreme case formulations', according to Pomerantz (1986), comprise 'one practice used in legitimizing claims.' She goes on to say that 'interactants use extreme case formulations when they anticipate or expect their co-interactants to undermine their claims and when they are in adversarial situations' (Pomerantz 1986: 222). By formulating descriptions of cases as maximum cases they forestall the possible objections to their descriptions. Extreme case formulations provide for a sense of the present problem - the referral under consideration for educational psychological intervention - as one which is extreme *in contrast to* the kinds of problems that the school ordinarily deals with. As such, extreme case formulations can be heard to implicate the seriousness of the problem and thereby its educational psychological relevance. Consider, for example, extract (1):

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(1) MP/1

1 Mt: nobody's s-s:poken of this lad as a discipline problem
2 (.) as such if anything he's rather introverted (0.5)
3 err
4 (1.5)
5 there have been (.) comments which were made to me:
6 when I fir:st became involved which said e-is-his
7 mathematics are atrocious
8 (1.4)
9 his: number concepts seem to be: (-) so poor (-) that
10 (0.7) he shouldn't be in the maths class (-) the
11 teacher didn't know really what to do with the lad (-)
12 because he just couldn't things now event at this stage
13 he wasn't disruptive (0.8) but obviously he was gaining
14 nothing from (0.6) class time

This extract contains the use of three extreme case formulations pertaining to the pupil. The first refers to 'his number concepts' being '*so poor...that...he shouldn't be in the maths class*'. The second consists of a report that 'the teacher *didn't know what to do with him*'. The third observes that 'he was gaining *nothing* from class time'. The collective upshot of these formulations is the identification of the child as beyond the limits of normal school provision and hence as requiring some kind of special educational help. Similarly, in extract (2), the referral is depicted as beyond 'remedial help':

(2) RMSJ/1

1 Ht: I do want him tested I do want to know whether I'm
2 dealing with a dull child
3 Ep: uh huh
4 Ht: And lack of schooling or arm an average child and it's
5 lack of schooling err he's getting ermm remedial help
6 and Mrs Martin is getting nowhere fast with him for all
7 he's err::mm
8 Ep: Have you contacted the parents?

Thus, in this example the child is depicted as being beyond remedial help in so far as the remedial teacher is 'getting nowhere fast with him'. In depicting the child as having problems that are beyond boundaries

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encompassed by the school's remedial resources, the relevance for the school of educational psychological intervention is made available. Likewise, in the following extract (3), the referral is described as 'absolutely uncooperative' and as having 'no intention of going along with you in any way whatever'. These formulations of the extreme character of the child's lack of cooperation leave no room for doubt. The implication is that the child is not only unresponsive to the normal means whereby such cooperation may be negotiated or otherwise obtained in the classroom, but also that the school does not have any further resources with which to address the problem. Under the circumstances, a referral to the educational psychologist is an intelligible and rational matter.

(3) MP/73

1 Mt: but you know: one does one's best for those who can't
2 cope at the level of the (0.6) average of the form you
3 know an tries to amuse them and entertain them but when
4 you got a lad like Peter Willis you've got somebody
5 who's absolutely uncooperative
6 Sw: ((s.v.)) mm-hm-hm
7 Mt: he has no intention of going along with you in any way
8 whatever

Using predicates of the category 'teacher' to formulate the extreme character of the problem

The examples considered so far have drawn a category contrast between types of pupil and in so doing have implicated the intervention of educational psychologists by virtue of the recognisable seriousness of the problems presented by the referral. In the following extract this is achieved in terms of the category membership not of the referral but of the teacher:

(4) MP/80

1 Mt: y'see I mean it is going on in other places where some
2 younger teacher or less experienced teacher doesn't
3 want to say: that they can't-they can't handle Peter
4 Willis
5 mhmm
6 Sw: I mean I don't mind saying it I've handled lots of
7 Mt: stroppy lads in my time y'see and I don't mind saying

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8 that this one is (0.5) something that I've never
9 experienced before
10 Sw: Yeah that can be the case (.....)
11 Mt: you know (0.5) ((r.v.)) but I'm sure there are other
12 teachers () you know [less] experienced teacher=
13 Sw: [yeah]
14 Mt: =younger teachers who are going through agonies
15 Sw: mm

In this extract the category 'inexperienced teacher' is used to mark the seriousness of the problem. Thus, whilst a predicate of the 'experienced teacher' is that particularly difficult and uncooperative pupils can be successfully dealt with (though, as this teacher has already said, this is *not* the case *here*), for the 'inexperienced teachers' this would not be the case; such expertise is not predicated, in the view of this teacher at least, of such a category of teacher. Indeed, faced with such a pupil, such teachers can be expected properly to experience 'agonies.' Given the absence of such competence amongst this category of teacher, educational psychological intervention clearly 'makes sense'. The teacher says that he has 'dealt with lots of stroppy lads but this ...'. The contrast set is between those whom the teacher has been able to deal with and this particular one. Even though the 'stroppy lads' are different from those who do not present problems, they nevertheless are ordinary problems that can be handled. There are, then, two contrasts presented here. The teacher invokes a category, the 'experienced teacher', of which he is claiming membership. A predicate of this category is standardly being able to handle 'stroppy lads' and other difficult pupils. Hence, under 'normal circumstances', at it were, his category-bound expertise would enable him to manage successfully any problems which such pupils might present. In this case, however, in spite of his incumbency of such a category, the teacher does not know what to do. The clear implication is that the case is one which is *beyond* the category-bound knowledge of even the experienced teacher; it falls outside the domain of normal practice for such persons and hence can be heard to implicate a need for special educational provision.

Here is a second extract in which the category 'experienced teacher' is invoked to characterise the extremity of the problem the student presents. In this case the teacher emphasises the extremity of the problem by remarking on its uniqueness in his 'twenty-five or thirty years of teaching':

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(5) MP/49

1 Sw: mm hmm mmhmm
2 Mt: errm (0.5) at the moment I've taken him from his
3 classroom down in the gym waiting for Joseph to come
4 down .hhh but it's reached such a stage with me: that-
5 errm you know I find that the boy's completely
6 uncooperative
7 (1.0)
8 Mt: now I've been teaching for something like twenty five
9 or thirty years (0.5) an never have I had to (0.5) to:
10 call on the help of a year tutor or anybody else to
11 assist me with a child ((r.v.)) but in this one I must
12 admit I just don't know what to do to handle him

Depictions of seriousness through the use of retrospective and prospective category contrasts

Another class of category contrast involves changes in the seriousness of pupil deviance over time. These changes are identified in two ways. *Retrospective* category contrasts distinguish the present from the past with respect to the kind of problem exhibited by the referral, indicating that the problem is now more serious than it was. *Prospective* category contrasts project a future state of affairs in which the problem *will* be worse (unless, by implication, something is done about the problem). Extract (6) is an example of the former.

(6) MP/48

1 T2: well (0.8) as I see it (0.5) er he always has been a
2 nuisance I mean I hear from other people who've had him
3 you know from the time when he was in the first and
4 second year that's the way he spoke to teacher in the
5 way he behaved in class
6 Ep: mmhmm
7 T2: you know a continuous disruptive element in the class
8 Ep: mmhmm
9 T2: ((r.v.)) I've had im now since last September
10 Ep: mmhmm mm hm
11 T2:

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12 an-d (0.8) ((r.v.)) up till: () ergh Easter (0.6)
13 though-i-his attitude to: to teaching he er(-) to me
14 particularly (we have gathered from what-is-it)
15 attitude to teaching (-) is one of (-) utter
16 Ep: noncooperation and contempt
17 T2: mhmm
18 an:d (0.5) ((r.v.)) but () (0.9) this was only in the
19 manner of you know he wasn't prepared to work (0.5) he-
20 Ep: e wasn't as far as I was concerned up till this term
21 T2: mmhmm
22 Ep: um (0.5) actively non-cooperative you know (-)=
23 T2: mmhmm
24 =positively disruptive (0.5) and in the last few weeks
 he has turned to being positively disruptive

Here, then, the teacher contrasts a pupil's history in which he was 'always been a nuisance', continuously disruptive, non-cooperative and contemptuous with a more recent change for the worse. Thus, the pupil has now 'turned to being positively disruptive.' The seriousness of the problem has, in other words, increased to such an extent that it is, by implication, a matter of sufficient concern to warrant referral to the educational psychologist.

In the following two extracts, (7) and (8), prospective category contrasts are provided. Through their use, the teacher indicates that the problem will 'get worse' unless something is done (by implication, educational psychological intervention).

(7) MP/50

1 Ep: just errm
2 Sw: mm
3 T1: ((r.v.)) he's gonna get worse (0.5) i-in that=
4 Ep: (.....about this)
5 T1: =k(ind of)
6 T2: he's getting worse=
7 T1: =cos he's getting bigger (0.5) right?
8 Sw: mmhmm
9 T2: an he's deteriorated rapidly in the last week or two

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(8) MP/53

- 1 Ep: what's the worst that's happened to him here has he
2 been temporarily suspended or anything like this?
3 Mt: no. time he ha:d
4 Ep: mmhmm
5 Mt: right anytime (-) now (-) cos I: y'know unless
6 something happens pretty quick that's what's gonna have
7 to happen

Where extracts (6) and (7) respectively report and project a change in the seriousness of the problem presented by the pupils in terms of their conduct, and thereby implicate the relevance of an educational psychological assessment of the problem, extract (8) exhibits such a category contrast in terms of the kind of reaction which the school *will have to take* unless a solution to the problem is found. Such a projected category of reaction constitutes a measure of the seriousness of the problem, which implicates educational psychological intervention.

The Irremediability of Deviance

It has been emphasised already that deviance is in many ways a normal, natural trouble of school, so that to describe what a child does in the classroom is nothing special. Referable deviance has to meet other criteria, so to speak, and one particularly important criterion is that of irremediability. With respect to irremediability, it can be noted that Frank and Foote (1982: 114) state that in the case of child abuse case conferences, 'a case is typically "conferenced" when team members feel that therapy is having an inadequate effect on the parent's behaviour, and/or greater coercion is necessary to insure the parent's continued participation in therapy'. Similarly, Emerson (1969) has indicated that (referral) is a matter of 'last resort'. It is this 'we have tried but failed' that is another recurrent feature of the referral tellings. The placement of these items can be after the problem has been described – in fact, it serves to emphasize the seriousness of the problem, and in part to what extent they do not know what to do, and that therefore intervention is required.

In other cases, the acknowledgement of 'failure' is a prologue. In this respect, consider extract (9), in which the teacher describes how various attempts to remedy the problem have been tried but they have all failed.

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(9) SA/274

- 1 CC: well, I know very little about erm Simon except what's
2 in the reports (.....)
- 3 Ht: well, I think the reports are quite comprehensive (.....)
4 aren't they I read through them, the class teacher's
5 reports, the one, Mrs Smith that used to have him, she
6 had him for two years and er (.....) when you got it all
7 put together, and it seems to have been a regular thing
8 that he shows signs of improvement a little bit and
9 then gone right back, that sort of thing=
- 10 Ep: mmhmm
=struck me (.....) there wasn't a continuous flow of
- 11 Ht: improvement (-) and different things that were tried
12 erm succeeded for a while and then failed. She had one
13 system where erm if if he was er if he was good, if he
14 didn't get his (.....) right, his mother would give him
15 some money on a Friday (.....) this worked for two or
16 three weeks and then that didn't work (...) all these
17 sorts of things have been tried and have failed (-) and
18 of course as he got bigger his aggressive behaviour
19 became more of a problem in school. That was in the end
20 the cause of him being suspended
21 that's (...) was the aggression towards other children at
22 CC: all or the teacher?
23

With respect to the positioning of reports of and references to irremediability, it can be seen here that irremediability is mentioned by the Head Teacher at the outset:

Ht: he shows signs of improvement a little bit and then
gone right back

More typically, an assertion of irremediability is placed after the description of the student's conduct, as in the following extract:

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(10) RMSJ/303

1 Ht: so I con-contacted father and said if there is
2 any financial trouble we could help him with this he
3 said no there isn't I want to come and see you anyway
4 and he came up and although his behaviour had appeared
5 to improve slightly in school in actual fact it had got
6 considerably worse at home
7 Ep: mm
8 Ht: aahh I think he would like to talk to you himself
9 Ep: yeah
10 Ht: so I won't give you the whole story, ahmmm but in a
11 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated, they can't
12 trust him in the house at all on his own, even if they
13 pop up to the shops the house is in a mess when they
14 come back and he's stealing, he's been caught three
15 times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
16 Ep: hm hm
17 Ht: and each time it's only mother and father going up and
18 having a word with manager which has saved from being
19 prosecuted they've talked to him they tried everything
20 under the sun to get through to him but he's still
21 stealing [and]=
22 Ep: [mm]
23 Ht: =he's also stealing from home they find that he steals
24 money and hides it in the toilet cistern under the
25 carpet you mention it he's doing it now I'm giving you
26 this story second hand
27 Ep: yeah mm
28 Ht: to my knowledge he has not stolen in school, you've got
29 his co-op cooperation (the last thing)
30 Ep: yes, uh huh
31 Ht: mm
32 Ep: (.....)
33 Ht: mmhmm, oh I think you'll find him very cooperative,
34 ahmm the funny thing was, you know, ermm, he came out
35 with the same sort of things that I had noticed about
36 Terence, if he's in any kind of trouble there's just a
37 curtain comes over his face and he stares just straight

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38 ahead, goes blank and is not prepared to answer
39 anything, he shuts off=
40 Ep: =yeah=
41 Ht: =literally

In Extract 10 the story of 'deterioration' contains the following reference to irremediality:

Ht: they've talked to him they tried everything under the
 sun to get through to him but he's still stealing

This reference to the failure of the parents to change the child's ways occurs after the initial extended description/story of the problem in which it is said:

Ht: so I won't give you the whole story, ahmmm but in a
 nutshell his behaviour has deteriorated, they can't
 trust him in the house at all on his own, even if they
 pop up to the shops the house is in a mess when they
 come back and he's stealing, he's been caught three
 times stealing from supermarkets on the local terrace
Ep: hm hm
Ht: and each time it's only mother and father going up and
 having a word with manager which has saved from being
 prosecuted

Here, then, the story is that the child's behaviour has deteriorated. The Head Teacher's reference to 'deterioration' serves to announce the character of the story to be told. However, it gives little away with respect to what this deterioration actually consists of. What kind of deterioration might it be? The storyteller proceeds to explicate just what is involved in deterioration.

The explication refers to two main activities: the child makes a mess and he steals, and cannot be trusted in the house. What the child does (the description of what the child does) consists of activities and attributes. This description is then followed by the report that he has been saved from prosecution by his parents. That is to say, the report of 'stealing' is paired with the appearance on cue of law enforcement: being caught. The parents then plead his case, again on cue.

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So, a place where reports that parents and teachers have tried and failed comes immediately after a description of the problem. This is the problem; something has been tried but it was a failure. As with expressions of joy, trouble and the like, there are places where these go, and that is after a description of the problem. This seems reasonable because it would be unreasonable to say that there is this problem that we've tried to do something about but we can't do anything. Such a report of 'bad news' sounds like an announcement if said at the beginning. It would invite 'what problem?' as a response. To ask 'what have you done?' without knowing what the problem is for which a solution has been sought does not make much sense. Solutions tried only make sense in relation to problems presented. It therefore makes sense to speak of this in the order in which they occur. First, the problem, and then what's been done about it. There's a proper sequence. So, this makes sense of why it is where it is, but this does not account for what it is actually doing.

One thing that can be heard here is that it is completing the sequence. He did this and tried that. There was a problem, there was an attempted solution. If there is no report of the second part of the sequence, it would not be reasonable to appeal to third parties, in this case the School Psychology Service, whose role after all is only to provide and approve help when it is warranted and where that warrant resides in the fact that the school and parents have a problem so serious that they are therefore turning to outside agencies for help. They are saying 'we appeal to you' and 'we can't sort it, so we appeal to you'. This search for professional help invokes the standardised relational pair that Sacks famously calls K (Sacks, 1972).

If Extract 10 is closely examined one sees that after the 'pitch', so to speak, after the case has been made that (a) the child is deviant, (b) extremely so, (c) generally so, and (d) that remedies have been tried but they have failed, the EP moves on to 'interrogate' to gather background information. We have seen that reports that 'we have tried but failed' occur in RMSJ after the first description of the problem. In both extracts 9 and 10 the description of the problem is followed by a description of how the school is unable to do anything about it. It's just not a problem on its own; it's a problem the school cannot do anything about. There has been, furthermore, a proper sequence: we discovered the problem, we tried to do something about it, but we have been unable to. The report that these measures have failed leaves on the table, so to speak, that the issue of what can be done is yet to be dealt with. It implicates discussion of this insofar as the educational psychologist is there to advise. Within the context of a therapeutic service/advice encounter, the remedy response should appear on cue, just like an answer to a question. This links with the already argued point that the response displays the analysis of the prior talk as a call for professional help.

Conclusion

Our analysis so far has focused on five key features of descriptions of deviance in referral meetings. The first – deviance – establishes the referral as deviant, either in terms of a norm-infraction model or a developmental model. The second – mundanity – establishes the deviance as objective and external to the judgments and views of the referring school. The third – extremity – marks out this ‘real’ deviance as something extreme, something beyond what the referring school can be expected to handle in its everyday life. The fourth feature – generality – indicates that the deviance does not consist of isolated, one-off incidents, but is a persistent and continuing problem. Finally, the fifth feature – irremediability – describes the deviance as something for which solutions have been tried within the school but that these have failed. Our argument is that these five features, taken together, can be understood as making a case for professional educational intervention and help. Such intervention is predicated of the membership category educational psychologist under these sorts of circumstances. It is the school’s legal right to seek help and the educational psychologist’s legal responsibility to assess and to advise in those cases of deviance which are extraordinary and extreme, general rather than merely occasional, and which have seen attempts at remedy within the school come to nothing. As we have indicated, the teachers in the referral meetings do not say in so many words ‘we need your help’. To be sure, the referral meeting itself serves to project that a request for help is forthcoming, but by itself this would not be sufficient for the case to be so heard. Unless the case is described in particular ways then it would *not* be so heard. Our analysis has sought to show that the five features of the descriptions of deviance comprise a method whereby this hearing is achieved. In describing the deviance in these ways, then, the case is made for professional help. It is via the production of the descriptions themselves.

Chapter Ten

Categories, Culturalism and Context

Introduction

This book has focused upon three categories of person in the context of educational referrals: referrers, referrals and referees, and their talk-in-interaction. Two of these, the referrer and the referee are engaged in talk-in-interaction with respect to each other but most significantly with respect to the non-present third, the referral. The analysis in this book has examined how the referrer and the referee constitute each other both as incumbents of these categories in the course of the discourse identities of their talk-in-interaction – that is, in how they organize their talk-in-interaction with each other and also in what they say about the referral.

With respect to the latter, one major purpose of this book on ‘Descriptions of Deviance’ has been to explore some connections between the selection and design of descriptions of deviance and the response of those whose professional task is to do something about the deviance. In other words, a significant aspect of the focus here is on ‘recipient design’. The recipient of a description is one major ‘consideration’ that is taken into account in the design of the descriptions. That is to say, it is the identity of the recipient that is a consideration for the producer of a description in its design.

What kinds of connections between the identity of the recipient and the character of the descriptions can be seen? One is that the talk is about school children who are said to have problems, and specifically special educational needs. These are identified and described in terms of contrasts between normal kids and the referred kids. These descriptions ‘fit’ the identity of the recipient because it is a category predicate of ‘educational psychologist’ to deal with referrals.

It is, of course, important not to reify ‘identities’ as fixed constancies for the course of social interaction. Rather, when speaking of a ‘recipient’, of course, one is speaking of an occasioned identity, the omni-relevance of some identities notwithstanding. This, then, raises the question of how the parties to a scene or context of interaction, constitute themselves and each other as incumbents of particular categories/identities? The answer is that they do so, at least in part, by stating who and what they are going to talk about; this is done in the opening segments of the meetings. There are also other considerations that enter into the production of descriptions, considerations such as ‘topic’. Indeed, one way in which attention to topic can be appreciated is via a focus on the selected descriptions, in order then to be able to see how these display an orientation to a particular topic, and also the identities of the participants and the character of the context in which their talk is being produced.

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There is, then, a reflexive relationship between the descriptions and the identities. On the one hand, the descriptions 'reflect' the identity of the recipient and on the other they constitute that identity for this occasion. This concern with 'considerations' pertaining to the production of a descriptions or collection of descriptions is one expression of ethnomethodology's and conversation analysis's preoccupation with the methods in and through which activities are accomplished. The case in point is that of the School Psychological Service. This is an organization that is available as a resource for schools, in connection with the education and management of children with special educational needs. Schools are entitled to refer children to the SPS and the SPS is obligated to respond, but not any old child can be referred. The institutional arrangements provide an opportunity to investigate how descriptions are selected and designed for their interactional utility and specifically to achieve the intervention of the SPS. It should hardly need saying that descriptions do not merely describe, they accomplish action; language use does not so much represent the world or objects in the world as it accomplish actions within that world. What actions are accomplished? The answer to this question lies not in the heads of those who do the describing but in the responses of those to whom the descriptions are made.

The case here is a *prima facie* one. That is, on the face of it there is a case for assuming that because it is the task of the SPS to offer its advice and intervention in connection with children with 'special educational needs' then those needs will be reflected in how the children are described so as to warrant that intervention. That is, again, the referral is an *accountable* action. That accounting is done via the description of the children and their conduct and attributes. In and through such descriptions, teachers provide for a distinction between children who can be managed within the school and those who cannot. It would seem, then, at least *a priori*, that such a distinction would be an oriented to matter for teachers, such that the educational psychological relevance of the referrals would be exhibited and made available as part and parcel of the description of referrals. It is important to note that, whilst it is sometimes the case that the teacher says 'the reason why we are referring..' explicitly, more often the account is left implicit in the way the child is described. When the data are examined in the light of this issue, it is apparent that, with a few exceptions, there is a marked absence of explicit requests for educational psychological intervention. Apart from the request for a test (made by the teacher in a minority of cases), and claims that the problems will get worse or the child will have to be suspended unless 'something

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happens' (ditto), specific requests for particular forms of intervention are not made. Instead, the teachers describe the contrastive, extreme and serious character of the problem without stating in so many words that they wish for educational psychological intervention to occur. How, then, is this squared with the 'hypothesis' that categorisation is recipient designed - that these categorisations have been selected from alternatives with regard to their recipient and organisational implicativeness?

There are several possibilities here. A first is that the categories of deviance described are hearably 'educational' in the sense that they are made manifest in an educational context. They occur, therefore, within a domain of educational psychological expertise and practical action; they comprise categories of problem with respect to which educational psychological action is predicated. A second possibility is that EP intervention is implicated by the seriousness of the cases described. Thus, the methods of categorisation examined earlier can be understood to identify and mark the seriousness of the problems as far as the school referrers are concerned and to implicate the intervention of educational psychologists by virtue of that seriousness. In this regard, the categorisations can be understood to invoke the predicated professional expertise of educational psychology. That is, in so far as it is a predicate of educational psychologists to deal with some children - those deemed to have 'special educational' needs and problems - then the categorisations can be heard to implicate intervention. Consequently, even in the absence of explicit requests and justifications for referral, the teachers' descriptions can, nevertheless, be heard to implicate the intervention of the educational psychologist.

Another possibility is that it is not necessary for schools to have to make explicit requests for educational psychological action nor to justify or explain the warrant for referral. This is because a category predicate of teachers, and in particular, school special needs coordinators, is their entitlement to refer when they so judge a child to have reached a stage where referral is warranted. School personnel do not have to state in so many words that they want educational intervention, that the cases are relevant for educational psychology, because the very act of referral itself serves to indicate this. Referral serves to categorise the child as somebody about which something should be done, and specifically done by the educational psychologist. The point is that the pupil is not at first referred, *then* categorised. Rather, the pupil is categorised in the act of referral itself. That is, the fact or act of referral categorises the child *as a bona fide referral*. In this sense, the referral and its warrant are 'self-explicating.' It is in the course of the referral meeting that the child is then categorised in detail in terms of the varieties of category contrast discussed earlier. A reason, then, for the absence of explicit justifications and requests is that the referral itself is such a request, just as the justification is part and parcel of the description

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itself; it displays itself by virtue of the depiction of the seriousness of the case and of how it lies beyond what may be dealt with in the routine ways of deviance management within the school.

A further noticeable feature is the marked absence of formulative work on the part of the teachers, of explicit formulations of what the problem definitively *is*, with respect to which educational psychological action should now be taken. The educational psychologists would seem, as it were, to be left to formulate the upshot of these various categorisations of deviance, and thereby to produce a diagnosis of some kind that has practical remedial implications. From the transcripts analysed earlier, it is apparently sufficient for teachers to indicate that there *is* a problem. The descriptions designate how the problems appear to them, what the children are like in the context of the classroom, how they compare with the norm for children of the age in question, and so forth. But they offer neither psychological diagnoses nor candidate solutions. What is offered consists of the 'identifying detail,' as it were, but not the 'underlying problems' of which that detail is a document.

This absence of diagnostic formulation, it may be suggested, is part and parcel of the recipient designed character of the teachers' categorisations. That is, not only are the categorisations educationally psychologically relevant in that they deal with 'serious' problems of deviance in school which by implication lie *outside* the domain encompassed by the predicated obligations and competences of teachers but *within* the domain of educational psychological expertise, but they also display an orientation to a central asymmetrical dimension of the teacher/educational psychologist relational pair. Thus, it is one thing to describe the problem and indicate (by the various means identified earlier) its seriousness, another to 'diagnose' the problem. The latter is a 'professional' predicate of the psychologist. It would be inappropriate, therefore, for the school personnel to presume such professional expertise by offering their own diagnoses. Accordingly, the descriptions appear to be designed to allow the educational psychologist to arrive at a formulation or conclusion about the nature of the problem and appropriate ways of reacting to it. In designing their descriptions of the problem in this way, school personnel can therefore be understood to be oriented to the special expertise that is a predicate of the educational psychologist.

Now, an important point is that it's not just what anyone can see in the descriptions but what the psychologist sees. The question is: what sorts of things are taken up from the range of things that could possibly be taken up? Sacks's remarks (1992: 744) are relevant here:

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One thing I'm leading up to is that the question form, while it can be sequentially relevant, can select a next action, can provide for an 'answer' as an appropriate next action, it can be used to do a large number of other actions that are also sequentially relevant for next pair members, etc. And by locating which other actions, besides the 'question', are being dealt with, you can regularly deal with the sort of answer that occurs – not merely that 'an answer' occurs, but some features of the sort of answer that will occur.

The place to look, of course, for 'which other actions' are being done by a first pair part is where the recipient makes their response, since it is there that they display their 'analysis' or understanding of what the previous speaker was doing. So, not just 'describing' is being done, but something is being done with descriptions, at least far as the recipient can be seen to indicate. Furthermore, whilst deviance, irremediability, generality and the rest are features that 'anyone can see', the question is 'what does the psychologist see' or 'make of' these descriptions? Before proceeding further, then, what is required is consideration and analysis of the psychologist's responses. If this is done, then hopefully we can see what actions, besides description, are being done by the teachers' talk.

It must be noted here that we are not dealing with a single utterance, a first part of some adjacency pair, the response to which can be seen to display what the recipient has taken the actions being accomplished in it to be. Rather, we are dealing here with a whole segment of the meeting, what I have referred to as the descriptive 'phase' of the meeting in which the business of the meeting has been largely taken up with the generation of descriptions of what the problem is. Therefore, it can be expected that the response of the psychologist takes account of not just some particular utterance but the accumulative sense of the preceding talk. The question is: how do they do that or what does this consist of?

The analysis presented in previous chapters has shown that the descriptions of deviance consist of various 'components': deviance, irremediability, generality, extremity, mundanity, etc., and that these are hearable as invoking the professional help, i.e. the category-tied expertise of the educational psychologist, given what 'we know' about the category predicates of the EP. To adapt a phrase of Sacks, these components, produced in this context, have 'programmatically relevance' for the EP's next actions. In this way, we can see that these descriptions have been selected and designed with their recipient in mind, and in particular, with what the recipient is in a position to do for the producer of the descriptions.

On 'Culturalism'

We have shown that the teachers describe referrals in general terms, they point to the extremity of the problems presented by the children and they indicate their irremediability, that is, they have tried but failed to deal with the problem; they are so serious they are beyond the capacity of normal classroom teaching to deal with them. In these descriptions, we have argued, the teachers can be heard to invoke and appeal to the professional expertise of the psychologist and to request their professional help and advice. There is programmatic synchrony between the teachers' descriptions of deviance and the response of the educational psychologist. Yet this hearability is, for the time being, at least, something that we have asserted is the case. We have claimed a hearable programmatic synchrony in the descriptions of deviance but we have not demonstrated that such a hearing is one that the psychologist makes. What evidence, then, is there that the descriptions of deviance we have analysed are in fact understood as requests for professional help? Does the claim that they are so understood rest on anything more than shared cultural knowledge?

These questions require a return to the methodological debate discussed in Chapter Two. They resonate with an issue in conversation analysis concerning the 'next turn proof procedure'. According to several discussants (e.g. Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; Schegloff 1992), what some conversational item actually is, what action it can be understood to be doing, is revealed in what its recipients make of it in the next turn. In the absence of a response in the next turn that demonstrates that the speakers themselves understand the descriptions as invoking the standardised relational pair, teacher/educational psychologist, are we not simply engaged, as Schegloff (1992) has put it, in a promiscuous 'culturalist' analysis whose only authority is our own common-sense knowledge? Is there not a danger that such invocation reifies categories and relationships as explanatory devices rather than conceiving of them as *in situ*, moment to moment accomplishments? Such a danger, it has been suggested (Schegloff 1992), was responsible for a shift in Sacks's preferred analytic method, namely that any analytic claim had to be 'proven', not merely by recourse to the analyst's own cultural knowledge, but by inspecting the details of what is actually spoken and what is actually made of such speech by the participants in the talk-in-interaction being analysed. These methodological considerations have, then, provided for the requirement that analytic claims satisfy the 'next turn proof procedure'.

At first glance, the requirements of the 'next turn proof procedure' would appear to create some difficulties for the analysis presented in this chapter. This is because it is quite clearly the case that in the

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turns immediately following the teachers' descriptions of deviance the standard responses are either acknowledgements and continuers or questions that either follow up what has just been said or initiate new topics. Such 'next turns' hardly amount to a convincing 'proof' that the psychologists understand the descriptions of deviance as requests for professional help. We could, of course, concur with this conclusion, but such concurrence would be based on a cursory inspection of the data and, we would argue, on a much too literal understanding of the notion of the 'next turn proof procedure'. Thus, it is clearly the case that in both conversational and a variety of institutional contexts, the *place* in which to demonstrate understanding, by whatever means, may be considerably later than the immediate next utterance. To be sure, one way to understand the meaning of a 'next turn' is to think of it as the turn immediately adjacent to a previous turn, as in question and answer. However, as Sacks's and others' analyses of the telling of stories has conclusively shown, there is also a sense in which extended and often collaboratively produced stretches of talk can be considered 'turns' at talk. With stories and jokes, the appropriate place for the 'response', where a demonstration of understanding and appreciation is to be made, is at the end of the story or joke, not in the middle of its construction.

A similar organizational arrangement prevails in referral meetings. Thus, they are standardly divided into two 'phases'. In the first, the teacher, in collaborative interaction with the psychologist, describes the case. Once the case has been described, it is then the 'turn' of the psychologist to produce a response – to make recommendations about what to do next, to offer advice and to outline a plan of reaction to the facts of the case as they have been constituted in and through the teacher's descriptions. The point here is that the recipients – the psychologist – only takes up the descriptions in the response phase of the referral meeting. It is in their outline of a programme of intervention that the psychologist demonstrates how they have understood the preceding descriptions.

For example, in the case of AN/1 already discussed above – the referral whose language skills were described as those of an eighteen month or two year old baby – the psychologist responded by saying that he wanted the teacher to try to implement a simple 'learning programme' in order to 'try to see if he can learn at all'.

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(1) AN/1/5

1 Ep: right what I what I would suggest is between now and me
2 coming to see him
3 T: uh huh
4 Ep: which is likely to be sev-several weeks
5 T: uh huh
6 Ep: I I might be able to squeeze him in fairly quickly I
7 might not
8 T: uh huh
9 Ep: in between that time what I would suggest you do is
10 (2.0)
11 Ep: have devise a very simple and very specific learning
12 programme for him where you you're going to aim to
13 teach him several words
14 T: mm hm
15 Ep: important words such as 'I want to go to the toilet' or
16 T: a ha
17 Ep: 'I want my dinner' or *I don't want my dinner' er just
18 concentrate on er very simple aspects of
19 T: yes
20 Ep: er of language just to see whether he can learn
21 T: yes
22 Ep: or not to give us some indication
23 T: yes
24 Ep: it could be that you may have to teach him to
25 understand orders maybe 'come here' or 'go away' or
26 T: this is it this is it
27 Ep: or 'sit down'

This extract is only a fraction of several pages of transcript in which the psychologist elaborates his proposed response to the teacher's description of the referral's deviance. What is clear from it, however, is that this response clearly 'fits' with the teacher's description of the problem and, we would argue, demonstrates that the psychologist has heard the descriptions of deviance as a request for professional help. Thus, where the teacher had previously described the referral with descriptions like 'he doesn't know the names of common objects', 'he doesn't know the language' and 'he's really functioning like an eighteen month or two year old baby,' the psychologist now proposes that the

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teacher try 'a very simple and very specific learning programme'. Making this suggestion, giving this advice, and doing so in terms of the detail of the teacher's description of the deviance, clearly indicates that the psychologist had been presented with what they understood to be a case for intervention and a request for help, and that he understood the teachers' talk in that way.

One further example should suffice to make emphatically clear the connection between description, understanding and response.

(2) AH/1/244

1 Ep: right well I'm gonner have to come in again and see him
2 again
3 (2.5)
4 Ep: if you could ermm between now and when I see him it'll
5 be some time next time when I get [in] it it's=
6 T: [mhm]
7 Ep: =not next week it'll be the week after I want you to
8 I'd like you to monitor
9 T: mm
10 Ep: his behaviour I don't mean monitor every minute what he
11 does
12 T: no
13 Ep: but ermm today just a brief summary of what he's been
14 like
15 T: mhmm
16 Ep: well starting from say this afternoon
17 T: mm
18 Ep: `this afternoon for most of the time he was okay got on
19 with his work etcetera etcetera [but] thumped two=
20 T: [mhm]
21 Ep; =girls err sat on four boys tore sixteen paintings off
22 the wall' err you know this sort of thing

Here too, then, there is a discernible 'fit' or categorical symmetry between the earlier descriptions of the child as engaging in extreme forms of attention-seeking, involving violence towards his fellow pupils, and the admission that the school's attempts to remedy this had failed, and the proposed response. Clearly, in

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taking up the case by asking the teacher to engage in monitoring and recording his behaviour, the psychologist can be understood to be responding to the teacher's earlier talk as involving a request for professional help from the psychologist.

As we have said, one conclusion that can be reached here is that we should not treat the notion of the 'next turn proof procedure' too literally as meaning the turn that immediately follows a prior turn. In certain institutional contexts, just as in conversational storytelling, the response and the demonstration of understanding may be 'delayed', so to speak, until an institutionally appropriate place has been reached. The description of deviance in referral meetings is one such context. The argument that the 'next turn proof procedure' provides a methodologically sound way of validating analytic claims about what may be happening in some course of action or stretch of talk, one which avoids reliance upon assumed cultural knowledge, seems to me to be overstated. One response to this claim is to say, 'so what?' because all analytical claims involve the use of cultural knowledge; something must always be taken for granted, unless one is prepared to engage in the kind of reflexive sociology or 'Analysis' advocated and practiced by Peter McHugh, Alan Blum and their associates during the 1970s and 1980s. Of course, even here, it was not possible to question everything, to turn all the auspices into topics because those engaged in the project of 'Analysis' had to communicate with one another and therefore had to take at least some aspects of the language being used to do so for granted. These attempts to extend analytic attention further and deeper into the realms of the taken for granted resources of social life notwithstanding, the point about the 'next turn proof procedure' is that it does not provide a secure vantage point devoid of and uncontaminated by the use of cultural knowledge. For example, if the proof that something was a 'question' is to be sought in the character of the next utterance as an 'answer', then surely cultural knowledge is involved in seeing it as an 'answer' in the first place, not to mention that cultural knowledge will be involved in making sense of the words that the speaker producing the answer is using. In other words, then, the 'next turn proof procedure' merely postpones the point at which cultural knowledge comes into play; it does not eradicate the analyst's need to rely upon it in unanalysed ways (Hester and Francis 2003).

Another response is to 'play along', so to speak, with Schegloff and examine the response of the EP. If this strategy is adopted (and there are debatable grounds for doing so), then it can be seen that there is evidence that the EP does indeed 'hear' the preceding descriptions as doing an action, and that that action is a request for professional help. This is because what the EP does is s/he sets out a plan of next action, s/he

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proposes what should be done next, and in these responses s/he displays an analysis of what the teacher has previously talked about. There are, of course, two types of responses. The first is the 'immediate response'. This is the response that occurs in the turn immediately after, or very close to, the descriptive turn. Such immediate responses consist of the following types: acknowledgements and continuers, follow-up questions (such as requests for clarification) and new topic initiations. From these responses, it is largely unclear just how the EP has understood what the teacher has been talking about. The second type of response occurs in what can be called the 'response phase' of the meeting because it is here that the EP makes proposals for next actions. In these proposals can be heard his or her analysis of the preceding descriptions. They display an analysis of what the teacher has been doing, i.e. asking for help, with the child. That is, given the nature of the problem, as described by the teacher, the EP describes what should be done next. At the very least, the 'fit' between proposal and description indicates the EP's analysis. But this is not just a hearable fit, given our cultural knowledge, but a fit that is actually displayed.

Talk in Context: Accomplishing Referral Meetings

It is in relation to the issue of 'context' that the transformation of taken for granted resources of sociological inquiry into topics for ethnomethodological investigation remains apparently a deeply obscure manoeuvre for conventional sociology. Thus, a standard reaction to ethnomethodological studies is that their analysis of what conventional critics call 'micro' social interaction fails to take account of larger, wider, i.e. 'macro' social contexts and structures within which they occur and by which they are shaped and influenced'. Such responses reveal only a cursory and superficial understanding of what ethnomethodologists actually do, and where they 'stand', with respect to issues of context. Put simply, unlike conventional sociology, ethnomethodology does not *privilege* the relevance of particular versions of social contexts to what occurs in a setting. Rather, the relevance of versions of context is regarded as a members' phenomenon. This means that *that* a context is intelligible and available as a particular type of context is provided for and oriented to by members, not to be presumed by authorial fiat. Thus, whilst it may be 'correct' to occasionally assert that members' talk occurs in 'capitalist society' or in a 'context of patriarchal relations', such correctness needs to be distinguished from the *operational relevance* of such contexts (cf. Coulter 1989).

For ethnomethodology, the issue of context provides for a focus on 'the in situ production of the local visibility of recognisably everyday activities and settings' (Cuff and Sharrock, 1985: 149). The availability,

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therefore, of 'referral meetings' as a 'social facts', however, serves as a point of ethnomethodological departure. In understanding the accomplishment of referral meetings, the key point is that the social identities of the 'parties to the referral meeting', the sense of their talk, and the intelligible accomplishment of the referral meeting itself are reflexively constituted. This reflexive constitution involves, firstly, the selection of categories for the participants. This, as was shown in the first part of this chapter, is achieved in the selection of activities that are bound to these membership categories for this occasion. To this, it must be added that such selection is done, and the activities that constitute the category membership so selected, *because the occasion is a referral meeting*. The activities in question - advising, discussing, making recommendations, testing, etc. - and the identities to which they are bound, are relevant and sensible because the context is a referral. In turn, such identity displays and the performance of such activities serve to confirm and reflexively constitute the recognisability of the context *as a referral meeting*. Similarly, the sense of the talk as 'intelligible referral talk' draws on a sense of the context just as it constitutes a sense of the context *as a referral meeting*.

Furthermore, as was indicated in Chapter Four, the categories that are selected for the participants and for the referral are used *in situ* as categories *as members of a device* which is occasioned by its use-in-context. The relevance of such devices is occasioned by the context. Simultaneously, such occasioned devices constitute the context for what it is *for the participants*.

There is, then, a mutually elaborative relationship between activities, categories, devices and the context or setting. Participants display their category membership, through action, including the use of devices and categories, which constitutes the occasion for what it is. This involves sequential matters as to how to order their talk together, and it involves categorisational matters such as how to interpret the talk so produced. Just as their talk is interpreted in the light of their category membership, for this occasion, so their category membership is an achievement of their talk in this context. Thus, the nature of the talk reflects the identity of the speakers and the nature of the occasion, the identity of the speakers is constituted through the talk and its context (the nature of the occasion), and the occasion is constituted through the talk which occurs within it and the identities of the speakers. Category and context comprise a reflexively constituted relational configuration. The categorial order so produced is therefore a locally organised, relationally configured, reflexively constituted phenomenon (Hester and Eglin 1997c).

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