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Conversation Analysis, Practitioner Based Research, Reflexivity and Reflective Practice: Some Exploratory Remarks.

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ABSTRACT

During the course of this paper we intend to explore some possibilities that relate to ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, reflexive practice and practitioner based research. We intend to explore the way in which conversation analysis may facilitate some objectives and goals of reflexive practice and practitioner based research within professional practice. In order to fulfil this objective, this paper will discuss and describe the methodological approach of conversation analysis, explore the principles of reflexive practice and practitioner based research and consider the extent to which conversation analysis may be used as a means of fulfilling the aims of these inter-related projects within professional settings.

Key Words: Reflective practice, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, practitioner based research,

Conversation Analysis, practitioner based research, reflexivity and reflective practice: some exploratory remarks

1. Introduction

In recent years practitioner based research and reflective practice have become an important aspect of professional activity and training within a variety of settings that include social work and nursing (Fuller and Petch, 1995). Whilst these professional concerns have separate lineage's, they have become fused in a project of practice centred professional development. At the core of this symbiotic conceptual relationship is a concern with developing research informed practice that is carried out and developed by practitioners themselves.

During the course of this article we intend to explore ethnomethodological and conversation analytic approaches to researching social interaction as a potential means of facilitating the objectives of reflective practice and practitioner based research. In order to do this we intend to explore the work of Donald Schön, contemporary techniques for carrying out practitioner based research and the sociological approach known as ethnomethodology and the related principles of conversation analysis. Whilst this paper does not seek to provide a condensed course in conversation analytic methods it does seek to identify the approach as a suitable candidate for fulfilling and facilitating some of the aims of both reflective practice and practitioner based research. In order to begin this process a discussion of the theoretical foundations of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis will be provided.

2. Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis

Ethnomethodology is a heterogeneous sociological program. According to sociological orthodoxy, Ethnomethodology began with the publication of Harold Garfinkel's '*Studies in Ethnomethodology*' (1967). Garfinkel had been a student of the famous structural functionalist Talcott Parsons. He was influenced by the phenomenological work of Alfred Schutz with whom Parsons maintained a troublesome correspondence. Some of Garfinkel's early work involved the use of 'breaching experiments' through which Garfinkel illustrated the normative grounding of social order via the explication of common-sense methods which people followed

and displayed in the business of constituting social activities. For Garfinkel, Parsons' notion of the social system obscured the very phenomena that constituted the essence of the social and more specifically the very phenomena of 'social order'[1] that Parsons has sought to examine. For Garfinkel, the normative grounding of social order was a members' achievement and he began to focus on the routine methods by which members reflexively constituted social activity. Furthermore, Garfinkel viewed social activity as demonstrable of social order and as a local, praxiological achievement of members in any given interactional context. According to Lena Jayussi (1991:235), Garfinkel's *study policy* is characterised by the:

> ... redirection of the way the problem of `social order' is possible … [it] is a question which in Garfinkel's work can be seen to be reconstituted via (I) a focus on the produced detail that is a proper answer to the puzzle how, and (II) a deconstruction of the generic notion of 'social order' into the notion of particular 'orders' of various occasioned settings in everyday life.

The analytical concerns of ethnomethodological enquiry are summarised into five main themes by a number of ethnomethodological commentators.[2] These include, practice and accomplishment, indexicality, reflexivity, accountability and the ethnomethodological notion of membership.

2.1 Practice and Accomplishment.

According to the work of Coulon (1996:17), for ethnomethodological enquiry:

> ...it is crucial to observe how, in a commonsense manner, actors produce and treat information in their exchanges and how they use language as a resource; in short, how they build up a 'reasonable' world to be able to live in it.

In other words ethnomethodological enquiry is concerned with the commonsensical procedures and methods that members use in achieving a sense of orderliness. Furthermore, the distinction between topic and resource (Button 1991) in sociological endeavour is of central importance to the ethnomethodological approach. Traditional sociology takes standard concepts such as norms and values, rules and structures and assumes that they have an epistemological connection with a transcendent reality

independent of their interactional context and production. As such, *topics* of social enquiry become *unexplicated resources* for describing an assumed illustration of the world. As Lynch notes, paraphrasing Garfinkel, traditional sociological enquiry 'fetishizes the sign' (Lynch 1991). That is to say, the social world is contingent upon the everyday actions of members and it is these methods of social accomplishment that should be investigated in attempting to explain and illuminate how society is possible. As opposed to the 'reading in' of theoretical 'signs' to the explanation of social phenomenon in an index like fashion. The analysis of language and interaction in terms of abstract prespecified schema is to overlook the practical accomplishment of everyday life. Thus, semiotic representations should also be investigated as interactionally, reflexively and praxiologically achieved phenomena rather than just a collection of signification's that have emerged out of thin air.

2.2 Indexicality

For Garfinkel, social life is very much realised through language. That is to say much of the local work involved in carrying out practical everyday accomplishments is realised through the situated, contextually sensitive natural[3] use of language. For Garfinkel one of the major aspects of language was the prevalence of what English language philosophy has described as deitic terms[4], a term derived from the work of Bar Hillel. For Garfinkel and Sacks (1970:339) sociologists are concerned with:

> ...seeking to remedy the indexical properties of practical discourse.

Furthermore, Pharo (1984 quoted in Coulon 1996:152) echoes this sentiment and argues that the sociologist is involved in:

> ...an infinite task of substitution of objective expressions to indexical expressions.

Harvey Sacks in his Lectures in Conversation (1992, a, b) describes the prevalence of 'indexical expressions' within natural conversation. In particular, he draws our attention to indexical pronouns such as 'I' and 'We' that are articulated and understood in terms of the context of their occurrence. Indexical expressions draw our attention to the way in which language and terms within language derive their

meaning from their ‘index’ within a given linguistic contextual arrangement. For Garfinkel this meaning-in-context was not an arbitrary process but a dynamic interactional process grounded in the commonsensical methods of members. Furthermore, for Garfinkel language as an interactive medium is irremediably indexical. Thus, indexicality is not merely a philosopher's problem but a practical matter for members.

For ethnomethodology, the prevalence of indexicality throughout language draws our attention to the way in which meaning is contextually, interactionally and socially produced within local in situ instances of practical action. For Garfinkel, the 'objective expressions' of traditional sociological enquiry are themselves rooted in an attempt to deal with the indexicality of describing the 'social'. The formations of language games that deal in 'objective expressions' are themselves subject to the irrepairability of indexicality. As Lynch (1993:19) notes:

> Whenever logicians or philosophers try to affix truth values to particular formal statements or to give stable definitions to terms, they invariably must contend with the fact that when a statement contains indexical expressions, its relevance, referential sense, appropriateness, and correctness will vary whenever it is used by different speakers, on different occasions, and in different texts. In order to remedy this problem, philosophers attempted in various ways to replace indexicals with spatiotemporal references, proper names, technical terms and notations, and 'objective expressions'.

Consequently, the ways, strategies and methods for repairing indexicality are grounded in practices and orientation's common both to the philosopher, sociologist and ordinary member. While the methods employed may vary and the complexities of language games differ, the fundamental orientation to repairing indexicality remains an inexorable feature of social interaction.

2.3 Reflexivity

The notion of reflexivity, in an analytical sense, draws our attention to the way in which the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ of philosophical discourse are mutually constituted.

Furthermore, in a member's sense, reflexivity refers to the way in which members constitute the activities to which they are oriented. The concept of reflexivity has been used by sociologists pursuing different strands of sociological thought to explain a number of interrelated phenomena. For example in postmodernist theory it is invoked as a means of drawing our attention to the way in which the reflexive constitution of narratives proceed to a circularity of signification within which language can be seen to exhibit ‘infinite play’ (Derrida 1990). However, for Garfinkel reflexivity provides a central concept for appreciating how members achieve a sense of local order. For members, Garfinkel argues, reflexivity refers to those praxiological, occasioned instances, which describe and constitute the social at one and the same time. Reflexivity can, for example, manifest itself through members' descriptive work that according to Garfinkel (1967) is a constituent feature of the setting that such descriptions seek to describe. This is not problematic but central to understanding and documenting how action-in-order is realised in and through interaction.

2.4 Accountability

The notion of accountability is a concept that seeks to illustrate how members make their actions praxiologically and reflexively recognisable and understandable. One of the most famous studies that included a description and explanation the whole process of ‘accountability’ can be found in the story of Agnes. Garfinkel (1967) had interviewed Agnes, a transsexual, who had chosen to become a `woman'. Garfinkel's research suggested that in order to ‘pass as a woman’ Agnes had to learn continually and routinely to display the accountable features of her chosen gender. Whilst through reification and the natural attitude members may ‘forget’ the orderly business of making such features available during interaction, for Agnes, this had to be ‘learnt’ to such an extent that it became routinised. In contemporary terms the social constitution of gender comes as no surprise. However, it is the methods through which social, interactive identity work is done which caught Garfinkel's attention. Thus, accountability can be seen to be a constitutive feature of interaction, members ‘inform’ and ‘display’ certain categories of identity and orientation as a means of structuring and achieving a local sense of order.

2.5 The Notion of Member

The final notion that is described by Coulon (1996) is the notion of ‘member’ and `membership'. As Coulon notes, the notion of member is not a *social category per se* but refers to a relationship with language, namely natural language competence. The notion of ‘member’ is an analytical device in many respects. Furthermore, it is a term that highlights the indexical and reflexive concerns of ethnomethodological enquiry. Through reference to interlocutors as members of a given interactive and linguistic *activity*, the occasioned and situated character of interactional work is emphasised. Membership of that interactive activity reflexively constitutes the parameters and features of membership within the context of its articulation and realisation. In many respects it pre-empts the post-modernist notion of decentering the subject,[5] in that membership is not a transcendental subjective state which provides for epistemological certainty. Rather it is a socially achieved and negotiated set of parameters which is reflexively and indexically embedded within social interaction on a 'no time out basis'.

2.6 Respecification

Recent developments in ethnomethodological enquiry have focused around the notion of ‘respecification’. Respecification is a term developed by certain ethnomethodologists in describing some perceived consequences of ethnomethodological research. Furthermore, it is seen to be representative of the study policy which Garfinkel initiated. For example, studies by Aaron Cicourel (1964) and Latour (1987) were seen to respecify ‘method and measurement’ by focusing on the local, endogenous and practical processes which reflexively constitute such abstract foundationalisms. Respecification is an attempt to topicalise the human sciences by focusing on foundational edifices such as ‘logic’, ‘epistemology’, ‘cognition’, and the ‘social actor’ in praxis. These foundational concepts are respecified through the examination of the practical actions of members that produce the phenomena that the human sciences have taken for granted as established resources and procedures. In one sense, respecification represents the deconstruction of foundational concepts through the analysis of practical action and sense making (Jayussi 1991). Additional concepts used by ethnomethodologists in respecifying foundational issues include the notion of ‘haecceity’. Garfinkel's notion of haecceity

involves a detailed examination of practical action in terms of a singularity or a set of singularities that are seen as endogenous, local productions of order. For example, Lynch (1993) notes that the analysis of science in terms of practical action respecifies scientific\foundational issues, such as experimental design and measurement, in a way which draws our attention to how such procedures are locally produced and realised via practical mundane interactional activities. These activities are standardly obscured by the generalised rhetoric of scientific discourse and its foundational precepts. Haecceities, as an analytical concern, ‘flesh out’ such practical activities which are obscured by generalised rhetoric. For Lynch (1991:98):

> The point of studying haecceities is to disclose an order of local contingencies of the days work: unique assemblages of equipment for recording and enframing data, improvised methods for getting an experiment to work, uncanny procedures for selecting ‘good’ data and cleaning the data from artifacts, expedient ways of getting results and getting them again, situated rhetorics for instructing colleagues how to see the results etc.etc.

Consequently, by examining practical action in terms of singularities, the local and endogenous features of order and orderly phenomena are ‘fleshed out’ and made available in terms of the ‘missing whatness’ of reported social action. Furthermore, the notion of examining haecceities is indicative of the ethnomethodological orientation towards analysing the production of social activities\accomplishments as a praxiological achievement by members ‘in-and-as-of-the workings of ordinary, immortal society.' (Garfinkel 1991:1)

Through the analysis of situated practices and accomplishments of social order the resources of traditional sociological enquiry (e.g. the foundationalisms of logic, epistemology and so forth) are turned into topics of enquiry in their own right. For Lynch and Bogen (1996:273) respecification can be characterised in terms of the following procedures:

> (1)Take a "methodological problem" distinction, problem, or concept (for instance the difference between fact and opinion, the distinction between intended action and unintended behaviour, the relationship between what someone says and what they "really mean," the question

of whether professed reasons should be accepted as adequate explanation).
(2) Treat the "problem" as a matter of routine, local relevance for a particular kind of practical enquiry (such as juror deliberations)
(3) Describe the way members make use of the distinction or concept, and how they handle any problems associated with its use, and show how this use is embedded in routine courses of action (jury deliberations and their outcomes, coroner's investigations into the causes of death, suicide prevention center personnels's methods for discerning the difference between a serious and a crank caller, etc.

For Lynch, Bogen and other ethnomethodologists such an approach provides for a means of fleshing out and describing the methods through which such concepts are oriented to and dealt with by members. The advantage of such an approach is to situate such conceptual 'problems' around the way members repair, cope or deal with such issues in everyday contexts. For Lynch and Bogen, this provides a rich and differentiated account of how such phenomena are used and negotiated as a members practical concern rather than treating them as 'concepts on holiday' (1996:273).

3. Ethnomethodology and the Analysis of Language

Ethnomethodology is not exclusively concerned with language and society. However, much of the early ethnomethodological work and the contribution of Harvey Sacks ensured that language became an important area of study. In many respects the concern with practical action and the emergence of language as a major area within which members methods were observable pre-empted the linguistic turn within mainstream sociology. However, this development emerged some ten to twenty years after the publication of Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967) and Sacks' lectures at U.C.L.A. Furthermore, the interactive quality of language and language use was a natural area for investigation into how practical reasoning and locally produced senses of order were achieved through observable strategies and methods by members. Many of these members' methods were essentially conversational and the ethnomethodological concerns with members 'talk' became established relatively quickly.

3.1 Conversation Analysis and the Sequential Analysis of Conversation

The work of Harvey Sacks has been well documented by those working within the field of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Sacks' work (1992 a, b)

encompasses interests in the sequential and descriptive dimensions of language use. Sacks's initial observation was that everyday language could be recorded, transcribed and analysed. Furthermore, analyses of talk-in-interaction could be examined by others with reference to the original data. Subsequent work in the field developed a systematic convention and notation for transcribing talk and presenting results (Jefferson 1978).

From an ethnomethodological reading, Sacks sought to document the social organisation of language and is remembered particularly for the attention he gave to the sequential aspects of language and language use. Conversation analysis perhaps starts from the observation that language as a social process is sequentially organised into recognisable procedures and units. For example, topic organisation, topic changing, turn taking, topic conflict, pauses and adjacency as discussed by Sacks (1992,a, b), are seen to form the primal soup from which the sequential analysis of conversation emerged. A key concern here is the conversational practice of recipient design. For Sacks, recipient design is a feature of conversational interaction. For example, with turn taking, second speakers design their utterances in terms of the recognisable features of the categories displayed in the previous speaker's utterance. Furthermore, the second part of a turn taking unit is recipiently designed, sequentially. For example, an answer follows a question and is coherent in terms of the previous sequential order displayed in the first speaker's question. This can be best illustrated through Sacks' related concept of the adjacency pair that has become an important aspect of the sequential analysis of conversation. Examples of these forms of sequential (and recipiently designed) structures include question\answer sequences, greeting pairs and the IRE pedagogic turn taking structure identified by McHoul (1978). Thus, for Sacks, the dimensions of recipient design were both categorial and sequential in nature, this is a topic that has been pursued in recent commentaries on conversation analysis and categories-in-talk (Hester and Eglin 1997).

Conversation Analysis can therefore be understood to be interested in documenting talk-in-interaction. Consequently, the application of conversation analysis to the examination of professional practice has yielded a number of interesting and important studies. These studies have often examined professional practice in organisational or institutional settings. The application of conversation

analysis in this way has become known as the Institutional Talk Programme (ITP). It is to a consideration of this work that we now turn.

3.2 Conversation Analysis and professional practice.

Institutional contexts include medical settings, counselling sessions, courtrooms, broadcast talk and meetings. Whilst much ethnographic work is available about such interactional sites ITP seeks to examine the detailed specifics of *talk-in-interaction* within institutional contexts. Whilst the ITP programme has emphasised the notion of the 'institution' many of these studies within this area concern themselves with professional (and client) interaction.

Maynard and Clayman (1991) note that the analysis of institutional contexts has uncovered and identified specific formal properties and features of institutional discourse. However, we are reminded that ordinary conversation forms the baseline from which institutional talk is realised. Consequently, Harvey Sacks' identification of sequences and categories in talk are relevant to the study of more formal conversation. The principles of turn taking, turn allocation, extended sequences, recipient design, adjacency, topic management and conflict are therefore still central to the analysis of talk in medical settings, courtrooms, meetings and broadcast talk. One of the most important concerns for the analysis of institutional talk is the interactional accomplishment of institutional identities. Furthermore, these institutional identities are deployed during the process of carrying out institutional tasks. Teun A. Van Dijk (1997) lists the linguistic (conversational) resources that members use in interactionally achieving and displaying institutional identity. These are conceptualised as follows.

Firstly, the activity described as 'person reference'. The use of personal references or pronouns can often be heard as an orientation to a specific institutional identity. The use of the pro-noun 'we' is often understood as an appeal to institutional rather than personal identity. A famous example of this activity is included in Whalen et al paper on the use of pro-terms in organisational settings (1988:344). A further resource is known as lexical choice (Levinson 1993). This refers to the descriptive terms and other lexical items that participants may display in talk. Furthermore, such

interactional work may be understood to display the types of understanding of the situation they are a part of and the task (role) they are carrying out. In situations where jargon or specialised categories may be displayed (e.g. multidisciplinary meetings) lexical choice can also be understood to have a connection with the activity of displaying expertise. Some analysts (e.g. Heritage and Sefi, 1992) have also identified how certain interlocutors may use specific grammatical forms in institutional settings. For example, doctors may us a verb of obligation (you should eat less fat) or recommendation (I recommend a four week diet) or imperative (stop smoking cigarettes) or hypothetical (if I were in your position I would exercise more regularly) much more frequently than participants of an everyday conversation. Turn taking is important to the analysis of institutional talk for a number of reasons. The allocation of turn-taking has been a serious focus of study and some analysts have shown how turn taking in certain settings (e.g. McHoul, 1978) can be characterised by formal properties (e.g. the IRE turn taking system in classroom talk). Interactions in courtrooms (e.g. Atkinson and Drew 1979) and doctor / patient interaction (Maynard 1991) have all identified particular institutionalised turn - taking systems that manage talk-in-interaction in specific ways.

The design and responses of members talk in institutional settings is a further domain of interest for the ITP. Members design their utterances in terms of what has been said and to whom they are speaking (recipient design). However, in formal settings members also design (and therefore display) a sense of the institutional setting in and through their talk. Thus, answers given to a doctor in a medical consultation are designed in a distinct and different way from ordinary questions in everyday conversation. The *recognition work* of members in institutional talk displays the orientation to and accomplishment of the formal context and the institutional identity and role within the here and now sense of the institutional situation and task (e.g. an interview, medical consultation, cross-examination or exchange of information in an interview).

A further dimension of the Institutional Talk Programme is discussed by Drew and Heritage (1992) who note how the examination of institutional dialogue (and professional practice) is comparative. It is comparative in the sense that one can

compare institutional talk with everyday conversation and between various modes of formal discourse gathered from different institutional sites. Work carried out in this area includes Maynard's (1991) work on doctor / patient interaction and Atkinson and Drew's (1979) work on turn taking and speech rights in courtroom interaction.

Whilst the use of conversation analysis to explore institutionality is a useful way of investigating the interactional dimensions of social organisation, studies within this field clearly provide an enormous amount of information about professional practice within these settings. Clearly, conversation analysis can be applied not only to medical encounters (Maynard 1991), courtroom talk (Drew and Heritage 1992) and educational settings (McHoul 1990) but also to professional meetings, decision making contexts and other dimensions of professional - client interaction. It is clear, to those familiar with this particular tradition, that there are a number of important debates within the ethnomethodological and conversation analytic concern with the particulars of talk-in-interaction. We do not deny the importance of these debates including the important observations made by Hester and Francis (2000) concerning the methodological issues surrounding ITP and certain strands of conversation analytic work. Furthermore, we note that the description of Conversation Analysis presented in this article does not fully reflect the diversity and differences of opinion concerning the analysis of talk-in-interaction. However, this is not the concern of this article, our concern is to extend the ethnomethodological analytic mentality and concern with describing the practical and local production of social order[s] by members within a variety of diverse settings to those interested in notions of practitioner based research and reflective practice. This involves an attempt to extend and communicate the highly original and rigorous analyses produced by Ethnomethodology to those outside the academy; to communicate a different way of conducting reflexive and reflective analyses to practitioners (e.g. social workers, doctors and nurses) who may benefit from the insight and intrinsic value in deconstructing the taken for granted and addressing the theoretical prejudice and assumptions surrounding real worldy practices through the careful analysis of practical everyday activities and action. Therefore, our suggestion is that this form of analysis could be carried out by practitioners themselves as a means of improving and reflecting on their practice as members of those particular settings rather than taking

activities and practices within such settings for granted or accepting the commentaries of what Harvey Sacks called the ‘social science machine’. It is to the consideration of this possibility that we now turn.

4. Practitioner Based Research and Reflective Practice

In recent years reflective practice has been promoted and tied to the process of practitioner based research. Reflective practice can be understood as an attempt to introduce a phenomenological dynamic into professional action as a mechanism for ameliorating and improving individual or group practice in a range of occupational settings. This field of interest is not dissimilar to the activities and interactional parameters focused upon by conversation analysts interested in institutional and organisational contexts. Practitioner based research is an idea which promotes research into professional activity \ work by professionals or practitioners themselves. An essential component of this process is the act of reflection. Everitt et al (1992) argue that a reflective, practitioner based research programme should be used as a means of reclaiming the professionalism of social care\work from managerialism and "bourgeois improvers" (1992:3). Fuller and Petch (1995) argue that a reflective approach to practitioner based research should be promoted as a means of enhancing basic professional skills. These professional skills are identified as producing more informed ways of being accountable, increasing the standing of the profession and to ensure a research base that is sympathetic to social work values (1995:8). A further dimension to practitioner based research is the idea that practitioners are themselves the best individuals to carry out research into their own practice. Fuller and Petch (1995:52) list a number of strategies for data collection namely, the analysis of secondary sources, monitoring devices, questionnaires, interviews, scales and schedules, observation and diaries. The *ways* in which such data should be analysed is associated with the methodological practice of coding structured and unstructured data in order to generate statistical findings (1995:81-86). Fuller and Petch also discuss the important issues surrounding practitioner based research and the difficulties of practitioners carrying out research in the work place.

We would like to suggest that the analysis of members’ communicative and interactive activities within meetings (and potentially other contexts) could provide a

way through which practitioners could reflect upon and analyse aspects of their practice. Clearly, the methodological issues and problems of negotiating access (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:54), managing field relations within a practitioner based setting that you are a part of and setting up a study would still very much apply. Despite this, the use of conversation analysis would, through the attention to the situated specifics of members work, provide for a reflexive and reflective framework through which the interactional practices and dimensions of practitioners and practitioners work could be considered. Therefore, the task of improving professional skills and developing the research base of the profession would be served by the adoption of such an approach as part of the repertoire of practitioner based research. As a reflexive enterprise, the analysis of the interactional specifics, instances and detail of members communicative work could be a rich resource for the goal of 'thinking in action' (Schön 1991). The importance of examining Schön's work in relation to reflective practice is that his work forms the fundamental foundation and source of the whole idea. Schön (1991:139) argues that 'thinking in action' can be characterised in the following terms:

> Seeing *this* situation as *that* one, one may also *do* in this situation as in that one. When a beginning physics student sees a pendulum problem as a familiar inclined plane problem, he can set up the new problem and solve it, using procedures both similar to and different from those he has used before. Just as he sees the new problem as a variation on the old one, so his new problem - solving behaviour is a variation of the old.

The activity of thinking in action can therefore be seen to be a process through which the situated specifics of members activities provides a resource through which further activities (which may be distinct and unique) can be negotiated and made sense of. This may be achieved by reflecting on past (unique) experiences that may possess certain matrices of familiarity that can be brought to bear on the task at hand. To this extent, ethnomethodological-based analyses may be of use in disrupting natural attitudinal expectations and perceptions and providing a means of i.) reflecting on practice through analysis and ii.) reflecting on pieces of disseminated research and study. Furthermore, Garfinkels'argument that members of a society are not cultural dopes can be seen to be relevant in the case of practitioner based research. From an ethnomethodological point of view, members' methods and members' work are not

merely the primary focuses of study but also viewed as the means through which practical activities are achieved. Clearly members, in the sense that Coulon (1996) uses the term, refer to members of a given linguistic group or speech community that social work and other social care practitioners may be seen to constitute. Schön (1991:269) in his discussion of reflective practice argues that variations between professions can also be contrasted with specific constants. He argues that these constants provide for a means of considering the variation of reflective practice between different professions. According to Schön (1991:270) these can be described in terms of the following:

- the media, languages, and repertoires that practitioners use to describe reality and conduct experiments
- The appreciative systems they bring to problem setting, to the evaluation of inquiry, and to reflective conversation
- the overarching theories by which they make sense of phenomena
- the role frames within which they set their tasks and through which they bound their institutional settings

Schön (ib id) elaborates on this framework by stating:

> In calling these thing constants, I do not mean to suggest that they are absolutely unchanging. They do change, sometimes in response to reflection, but at a slower rate than theories of particular phenomenon or frames for particular problematic situations. Hence they give the practitioner the relatively solid references from which, in reflection-in-action, he can allow his theories and frames to come apart.

In making some connections with the phenemonology of Schön I am not suggesting they should be embraced. Rather, that ethnomethodological and conversation analytic studies of practice can respecify Schön's dynamic through a more subtle concern with the oscillation between reflection, experience and analysis as a members phenomenon. If membership is taken to mean something that is characterised by situated relevance and can be understood as a product of local social organisation, then the reflective practitioner, as 'membership' of a specific setting associated with the domain of 'practice', can be understood to point to such an accomplished order within which 'analysis' is of everyday significance. Furthermore,

the analytic mentality of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (grounded as it is in the very self same methods of members practical sense making) provides a framework through which the goal of both reflective practice and practitioner based research can be explored in way that is sensitive to real wordly activities and the local and situated character of member – practitioner practical sense-making. Furthermore, the explication of members' analyses is of central import to researching and reflecting on practice within the work place.

5. Conclusion

The use of conversation analysis can be viewed as a method which facilitates reflective practice due to the way in which talk-in-interaction can be seen to be an important focus of analysis and consideration. Furthermore, the analysis of talk-in-interaction can be understood to be a first order description of members practices. Whilst questionnaires and interviews can be understood to produce valuable information they are unable to document and describe the precise characteristics of practice-in-action, or seeing a particular situation as that specific situation i.e. as a locally organised phenomenon. Therefore it may be argued that any changes to practice that may emerge from analysis and reflection may be facilitated by a method that, as it's central concern, documents and describes members practices *in situ*. The analysis of practice, rather than questionnaire responses or interviews, provides a corpus of material that can be used to develop strategies that can ameliorate professional practice as talk-in-interaction. To this extent the analysis of talk and interaction corresponds to an analysis of practice, furthermore the phenomenological dynamic of reflection can be understood to be tied to the very art of analysing spoken discourse.

In terms of Schön's identification of the four constants that practitioners may seek to reflect upon as a means of comparing practices within and between professions, conversation analysis can be understood to provide a coherent method that can focus on these areas of practice as talk-in-interaction. Indeed conversation analytic and ethnomethodological studies have examined role settings and institutional identities (Drew and Heritage 1992), methodological design and the production of knowledge (Lynch 1985), the use of theory in work activities and

decision making (Housley 2000) and the work of specialist vocabularies and languages in professional/formal settings (Meehan 1981). Whilst these studies do not represent practitioner based research *per se* the notion of membership and the desire to document members activities provides an analytical and methodological framework through which such research can be pursued by members of professional settings themselves. Indeed, the embracing of such concepts may aid the development of the idea of reflective practice and practitioner based research into one that has more immediate concern with examining actual lived practices as opposed to second order reports and accounts of experiences.

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1That is to say Garfinkel sought to re-examine the classic question of Sociology that had preoccupied many of the founding fathers from Comte to Parsonian Structural Functionalism. This is the question 'how is social order possible?.

2 For example, Lynch (1993) and Coulon (1996).

3'Natural' in the sense that the ethnomethodological project is not concerned with the idealised or formal aspects of language and\or linguistic models. Rather it is concerned with the methods displayed and utilised by members during the course of social action and the accomplishment of order.

4 English language philosophy is exemplified by the work of Austin, much of the work involved examining hypothesised examples rather than natural occurring conversation.

5 The notion of decentering the subject involves a rereading of Ferdinand Sassure's linguistic structuralism. It eschews Cartesian epistemology by problematising the relationship between the signifier (word image) and the signified (concept). Consequently the signification process is arbitrary and the sovereignty of the 'subject' to legislate the meaning of language is 'de-centered'. Language becomes discourse and subject to the enunciative modalities and discursive features of the social body.