

Approaches to "Context" within Conversation Analysis

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This paper examines the use of "context" as both a participant's and an analyst's resource with conversation analytic (CA) research. The discussion focuses on the production and definition of context within two branches of CA, "traditional CA" and "institutional CA". The discussion argues against a single, monolithic understanding of "context" as the term is often used within the CA literature, instead highlighting the various ways that the term is used and understood by analysts working across the different branches of CA. The paper ultimately calls for further reflexive discussions of analytic practice among analysts, similar to those seen in other areas of sociocultural linguistic research.

1. Introduction

The concept of *context* has been a critical one within sociocultural linguistics. The varied approaches to the study of language and social interaction – linguistic, anthropological, sociological, and otherwise – each entail the particulars for how the analyst defines the context in which language is produced. Goodwin and Duranti (1992) note the import of the term within the field of pragmatics (citing Morris 1938; Carnap 1942; Bar-Hillel 1954; Gazdar 1979; Ochs 1979; Levinson 1983; and Leech 1983), anthropological and ethnographic studies of language use (citing Malinowski 1923, 1934; Jakobson 1960; Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Hymes 1972, 1974; and Bauman and Sherzer 1974), and quantitative and variationist sociolinguistics (citing Labov 1966, 1972a, and 1972b).¹ To this list we can add a number of frameworks for doing socially-oriented discourse analysis, including conversation analysis (CA), critical discourse analysis (CDA), and discursive psychology (DP).

These last three frameworks served as the focus for a critical dialogue on the nature of context in socially-oriented discourse analysis (Billig 1999a, 1999b; Schegloff 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Wetherell 1998). As the papers by Billig, Schegloff, and Wetherell exemplify, the conversation analytic understanding of context is often framed as contentious (and a "methodological limitation") outside of scholarship in the CA tradition. Such criticisms have emerged within pragmatics (e.g. Searle 1986), linguistic anthropology (e.g. Blommaert 2001, 2006; Briggs 1997; Bucholtz 2003), sociology (e.g. Cicourel 1981; Lynch 1985),

¹ Ervin-Tripp (1996) further unpacks the varied approaches to "context" seen in sociolinguistics.

and a range of scholarship in other traditions of socially-oriented discourse analysis. These critical discussions highlight a widespread understanding of CA's view of context as monolithic. In this paper I argue that it is not, however, enough to refer simply to a "conversation analytic" approach to context. Rather, it is necessary to refer instead to the numerous approaches to context seen across the different branches of CA that have emerged over the past two decades.²

The issue of context in CA is compounded by the fact that there are many varied aspects of an interaction that analysts understand as being elements of its context: the sequential organization of a singular utterance, the social milieu of the larger interaction (e.g. its institutional setting), and the membership categories and identities ascribed moment-by-moment to participants and others are all potentially relevant to the interactants (and thus, to the analyst). Though allowing for the relevance of each of these elements to an interaction, the majority of work within "traditional" sequential CA has focused primarily on only the first, the organization of an utterance in relation to the elements of talk occurring immediately prior. However, other branches of CA – those conducting analyses of interactions within both institutional and cross-cultural settings, work that examines the interactional aspects of social organization in children's peer groups, and conversation analytic research informed and motivated by a feminist politic – have adopted an analytic focus that also demonstrates the relevance of such contextual elements as cultural practices and epistemology, or sociological categories like gender or race. Common among each of these branches of conversation analytic research is the analyst's understanding of each as a local, demonstrably relevant participant's resource rather than an *a priori* construct.

It is not only the scope of the contextual elements that varies across these branches of CA, however. Analysts working in branches other than "traditional" CA often frame both their data and findings as sensitive to ethnographic issues and/or to discipline-specific epistemologies (such as the knowledge that dominant gender and sexual identities operate hegemonically, and are thus not oriented to by participants in quite the same way as other sociological categories and identities). As I have argued elsewhere (Raclaw 2010), traditional CA may also

² Scholarship over the past two decades has increasingly made space for variations in analytic practice and scope within CA, with two named varieties in particular emerging as distinct enterprises: "institutional CA" and "feminist CA". I use the not-entirely satisfactory term "traditional CA" to refer to work in sequential CA that is more often referred to simply as "CA" (given its broad association with the framework as a whole), of the kind that Heritage (1997) contrasts with institutional CA. This branch of CA has elsewhere been referred to as "core," "classic," or even "Schegloffian" CA (e.g. Blommaert 2001; Mcilvenny 2002; Speer 2001). To these "branches" I also consider what I term "cross-cultural CA" and "peer organizational CA", though work within these two areas is not generally organized as distinct, named varieties of CA (though see Moerman 1988). While not discussed within this paper, it is also worth noting the existence of what might be termed a sixth branch of CA, conversation analytic work falling under the purview of interactional linguistics (e.g. Ochs, Schegloff & Thompson 1996). I delineate the five fields under discussion here largely to highlight the differences in scope, and in the reflexive treatment of context, seen across the larger field of CA.

make use of what we might alternately refer to as "ethnographic," "member," or "common-sense" knowledge as an analyst's resource, though this practice has yet to receive the same reflexive discussion it has in other branches of CA.³ The use of these forms of knowledge is highly visible in institutional, cross-cultural, and peer organizational CA in large part because they emerge from settings outside of the analyst's own; while the use of discipline-specific epistemologies is highly visible in feminist CA due to the influence of feminist theory and methodology. It may be that the similar forms of knowledge deployed in traditional CA is far less marked a resource simply because it stems from a mundane source, and because the move to reflexivity seen elsewhere in sociology (even within EM) has yet to reach conversation analysis as a whole. One aim of this paper is to work towards clarifying exactly what is meant by the concept of "context" within conversation analytic research; in particular, how analyst approaches to context may vary in some ways, while remaining constant in others, across the different branches of CA outlined above. A secondary goal is to contribute to the dialogue concerning those ways that context is analyzed and invoked – and how the analyst's understanding of context is informed – across these separate branches of conversation analytic research. Due to the relatively limited space allotted to this article, the discussion that follows is limited to the two largest branches of conversation analysis: traditional CA and institutional CA.

The present discussion is not the first to suggest that context may be approached differently by the analyst working within these different branches of CA. Hammersley (2003, p. 774) notes that "the question of the role of 'ethnographic context' has arisen in a particularly sharp form in debates about the study of 'institutional talk' and about the relationship between CA and feminism. On the first, see Boden and Zimmerman (1991), Drew and Heritage (1992), Hak (1995) and Psathas (1995); on the second, see Edley (2001), Kitzinger (2000), Speer (1999, 2001a, 2001b) and Stokoe and Smithson (2001)." Other work, such as Maynard (2003) and Arminen (2005), devote entire chapters to discussing the necessity for institutional CA to engage with ethnographic practices normally seen as beyond the purview of traditional CA.

³ Two points of terminological clarification: what is understood in the CA and EM literature as constituting "common sense knowledge" (for example, knowledge of membership categories and their predicates) is not always clearly analogous with other forms of what has been termed "member knowledge," and I do not wish to conflate these terms. However, as Smithson and Stokoe (2001) have noted, the forms of natively gleaned member knowledge drawn upon by conversation analysts are often referred to by either term within the literature without clear distinctions made between them. Additionally, in keeping with the use of the term "ethnographic knowledge" by conversation analysts such as Maynard (2003) and Schegloff (1987, 1992, 2006) to refer to this same arena of knowledge, I do not wish to conflate ethnographic knowledge with ethnographic methods (e.g. fieldwork, participant observation). Rather, I hope to point out the similarities in the epistemological foundations of work done in institutional, cross-cultural, and peer organizational CA (which may well involve ethnographic fieldwork) and traditional CA (which almost universally does not).

My discussion will begin with a look at the foundations for the development of CA-specific understandings of context within traditional CA, which provides a basis for many of the methodological similarities seen among other branches.

2. Foundational Research: CA and the Ethnomethodological Project

One starting point for these foundations is in the sociological framework of ethnomethodology (EM) developed by Harold Garfinkel, which had a profound influence on the early work of Harvey Sacks.⁴ While CA and EM comprise separate research programs that have increasingly diverged since Sacks' passing in 1975, the ethnomethodological influence on the development of CA (Heritage 1984), and on the contemporary "social theory" of CA (Heritage 2008), is well cited. Hammersley (2003) frames one particular aspect of CA's approach to context as one of its "basic methodological commitments ... A refusal to attribute to particular categories of actor distinctive, substantive psychosocial features – ones that are relatively stable across time and/or social context – as a basis for explaining their behaviour," and traces this commitment back to an influence of the ethnomethodological framework. Hammersley sees Garfinkel's insistence that EM employ rigorous, scientifically-sound analytic methods as being a clear influence on CA's understanding of context as a locally established rather than static or *a priori* aspect of an interaction (seen, for example, in the ubiquitous analyst's question in CA, "why that now" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973, 299)).

This priority to establish scientific rigor within sociology is echoed in Sacks' own writings on CA methodology, particularly in how he advocates that analysts approach their data "without bringing any problems to it" and engage in the practice of "unmotivated looking" (1984). (We see this too in more recent conversation analytic practices, such as investigating talk for evidence of the "next-turn proof procedure" or the strict avoidance of "theoretical imperialism" within the analysis itself.) Schegloff (1992a) also argues that this shared stance between EM and CA on analytic rigor influenced conversation analytic understandings of context. However, Schegloff additionally notes a divergence reflected in the explicitly "anti-positivist and anti-science" stance that Garfinkel set forth for ethnomethodology, while "Sacks sought to ground the undertaking in which he was engaging in the very fact of the existence of science" (p. xxxii).

Hammersley (2003) also argues that the phenomenological influence on ethnomethodology helped to shape conversation analytic understandings of context. This is a point taken up most clearly by Arminen (2005), who notes that

⁴ There are, of course, other potential influences on Sacks' early work that may have contributed to the development of CA's distinct understanding of context, such as the symbolic interactionism pioneered by Goffman (e.g. 1959). However, a full review of these earlier influences (those external to "CA proper") is outside the scope of the present paper.

the phenomenological concept of "bracketing" – "where the question of what the world 'really' is is closed off and the inquiry instead concerns the appearance of the world and how it is constructed as it appears to us" – contributed to how "CA inquiries suspend knowledge about the external context of interaction, and study the way participants make the context relevant for themselves in the course of an ongoing interaction. In this way, CA studies the endogenous construction of context ... unselective and unmotivated data exploration allows the analyst to notice features and possible phenomena without a theory-drive pre-selection of the focus" (9).

3. Foundational Research: Sacks and Membership Categorization Analysis

Similar to the distinctions made between CA and EM, lines are also often drawn between the analytic frameworks of membership categorization analysis (MCA) and sequential CA (despite both emerging from the writings and lectures of Harvey Sacks). The present discussion largely maintains this division as set forth in Schegloff (1992a, 2007), Lerner and Kitzinger (2007), and elsewhere in the literature. However, Arminen's (2005) dissenting view is also worth noting in light of its relevance to understandings of context within CA: "This strict division and the whole notion of 'pure' CA (as distinct from MCA) is misleading and inadvisable. Moreover, separating talk from its context goes against all the basic ideas of CA, according to which the context-renewing properties of talk amount to the endogenous construction of context, as parties orient to the 'context' through the management of talk-in-interaction as an observable part of doing social actions in the context" (5).

For Arminen, then, membership categories (and their corresponding devices and predicates) are (perhaps necessarily) part of the context of an interaction as experienced by the participants; to work within the framework of sequential CA while excluding the analysis of these categories is thus a contradictory effort.

The tenets of MCA also have much to do with how context has been approached in institutional CA, since institutional identities like doctor/patient or teacher/student can have a significant bearing on the sequential organization of interaction. The division between MCA and sequential CA has much of its roots in Schegloff's (1992a) concern with the "culturalist tenor" (p. xliv) of Sacks' spring 1966 lectures (Sacks 1992), from which the groundwork on MCA first emerged, and his argument that Sacks abandoned the study of "category-bound activities" in his later work because of their "promiscuous" (p. xlii) analytic use. However, Sacks' understanding of membership categories as emergent aspects of the context of an interaction is still a vital one within CA, particularly in work on (primarily institutional) settings where the demonstrable relevance of these

categories is itself a tool for creating and establishing context.⁵ For example, Watson (1997) notes that speaker categories such as "caller" and "called" are made relevant throughout the course of an interaction, and that membership within one of these categories entails specific category-bound rights and obligations (e.g. called speaks first, caller is category-bound to initiate a pre-closing). Watson takes this argument so far as to argue that MCA is truly inseparable from CA, as "categorical organization is intrinsic to...turn ordering" (p. 16), and "the procedural apparatus Sacks formulated in his early work concerning MCDs (membership category devices) can work to explicate the operation of turn-generated categories" (p. 30). In Watson's view, then, the tenets of MCA necessarily inform conversation analytic understandings of context.

4. Understanding Context Within CA

Beyond Sacks' solely-authored work, numerous other early writings within the CA canon contributed to the core understandings of context within the framework. Of these ideas, one of the most profound and influential has been the understanding that the organization of talk is both "context-sensitive" and "context-free." These terms convey the view that a particular spate of talk is necessarily shaped by its local, immediately surrounding context, yet the practices employed within that spate of talk can be investigated across different social and interactional contexts. Schegloff (1972) provides perhaps the first published description of talk-in-interaction as context-sensitive, noting that "to say that *interaction* is context-sensitive is to say that *interactants* are context-sensitive" (emphasis in original). Here, as in much of his future work, Schegloff argues that context is as much of a sense-making tool for participants as it is for analysts, and that CA must therefore investigate "how participants analyze context and use the product of their analysis in producing their interaction" (p. 115).

The understanding that interaction also exhibits a context-*free* operation emerged later in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), which describes the turn-taking mechanism of talk-in-interaction as both "context-free and capable of extraordinary context-sensitivity" (p. 699). The authors expand on the situatedness of talk within a locally-determined context, describing how "conversation is always 'situated' – it always comes out of, and is part of, some

⁵ It should be noted the "promiscuous" nature of MCA has been challenged by a number of analysts who support its use alongside sequential CA. Silverman's (1998) review of MCA research argues that this promiscuity and risk is not "inevitable," especially when MCA is combined with conversation analytic work on sequential organization. Additionally, Watson (1997) argues against Schegloff's claim that Sacks' later work shifted away from membership categorization in favor of sequence organization, claiming that this view "shows an overly-selective attention [to] the empirical topics of Sacks' work rather than its general conceptual commitments" (2).

real sets of circumstances of its participants." However, they also highlight the import of the context-free operation of interaction in noting how "it is undesirable to have to know or characterize such situations for particular conversations in order to investigate them" (p. 699). Though a crucially important aspect of the conversation analytic framework, this "context-free" characterization of talk is also frequently misread by critics of CA, who cite it as evidence that the framework pointedly ignores the context of an interaction (especially what is often described as "macro" levels of context, e.g. the relevance of gender or the operation of power).⁶ However, as Arminen (2005) notes, "every subsequent conversational move renews our understanding of the prior move so that each turn both orients to a preceding context but also recreates the context anew. Therefore, a purely formal context-free description of a conversation remains impossible. Instead, conversation analysis amounts to discerning the participants' intersubjective understandings of the course of conversation as it evolves moment by moment, as the participants orient themselves to the social action" (2). Arminen's discussion also argues for the critical import of context for doing CA, as we saw above.

This argument leads to yet another aspect of conversation analytic understandings of context, that talk-in-interaction is both shaped by the context of an interaction, and ultimately works to (re)produce the context of the interaction. In this sense, talk is what Heritage (1984) describes as "doubly contextual" in being both "context-shaped" and "context-renewing" (p. 242). Heritage later expands on these descriptions by noting that "it is *context-shaped* because its contribution to an ongoing sequence of actions cannot be adequately understood except by reference to the context in which it participates ... This contextual aspect of utterances is significant both because speakers routinely draw upon it as a resource in designing their utterance and also because, correspondingly, hearers must also draw upon the local contexts of utterances in order to make adequate sense of what is said. ... Communication action is also *context-renewing*. Since every current utterance will itself form the immediate context for some next action in a sequence, it will inevitably contribute to the contextual framework in terms of which the next action will be understood. In this sense, the context of a next action is inevitably renewed with each current action. Moreover each current action will, by the same token, function to renew (i.e. maintain, adjust or alter) any broader or more generally prevailing sense of context which is the object of the participants' orientations and actions" (1989, 22-23, emphasis in original).

Within these early descriptions, Heritage formally defines "context" both in a "micro" sense, insofar as it consists of the localized environment in which the

⁶ See the series of papers by Billig, Schegloff, and Wetherell described above for a comprehensive discussion of this critique.

interaction occurs, as well as at a more "macro" level, what he describes as "the 'larger' environment of activity within which that configuration analysably occurs" (p. 22-23). In later work, Heritage (1997) does away with these two levels of distinction to provide a definition of context that is far more reliant on the sequential organization of an interaction: "sequences of actions are a major part of what we mean by context, that the meaning of an action is heavily shaped by the sequence of previous actions from which it emerges, and that social context is a dynamically created thing that is expressed in and through the sequential organization of interaction" (p. 223). Across all branches of CA, context is seen as encompassing those immediately local aspects of an interaction that are produced within it (rather than as an external influence to it). In this sense, context is a constantly renewable and alterable resource for participants.

5. Relevance and Orientation

Because context is a participant's resource, its relevance to the talk underway – and speaker orientations to this relevance – should be demonstrable within an analysis. Schegloff has made this point clear in much of his writing, though three papers in particular (1987, 1991, 1992b) are often cited as explicitly laying out a "program" for how to analyze aspects of context within sequential CA.⁷ As he notes in the first of these, it is only through close attention to these orientations and displays of relevance that the analyst determines what aspects of the interaction hold meaning for the participants themselves, and it is these aspects of the interaction that are of particular interest to CA: "This form of analysis takes seriously the relevance of the fact that the interactions we are examining were produced by the parties for one another and were designed, at least in part, by reference to a set of features of the interlocutors, the setting, and so on, that are relevant for the participants. The fact that these interactions are structured and progressively restructured by the participants' orientations does not serve...to make "objective" analysis irrelevant or impossible; it is precisely the *parties'* relevances, orientations, and thereby-informed action which it is our interest to describe...under the control of the details of the interaction in which they are realized. It is what the action, interaction, field of action are to the *parties* that poses our task of analysis" (3, emphasis in original).

This type of demonstrable relevance is what Schegloff (1991) terms "procedural relevance." Schegloff notes in this paper that everything said within a particular context does not necessarily attend to identities potentially mobilized by

⁷ This is not to say that Schegloff's other work doesn't explicitly touch upon the issue of context within CA, of course. Schegloff (1988), for example, lays out some of the finer points of CA's approach throughout most of its conclusion, and more recently, Schegloff (2009) does much of the same in presenting a critical review of some of two chapters from Sidnell (2009).

that context in a procedurally relevant way. For example, the institutional identity of a police officer who has self-identified as such to a caller, while talking to them on a police line, may not be relevant to a caller *solely* by virtue of either their self-identification or the institutional setting of the call. Rather, the identity is made relevant through the activity of the talk itself. Schegloff introduces the "paradox of proximateness" as a means for guiding analysts to procedurally relevant aspects of the talk: "If it is to be argued that some legal, organizational or social environment underlies the participants' organizing some occasion of talk-in-interaction in some particular way, then either one *can* show the *details in the talk* which that argument allows us to notice, and which in return supply the demonstrable warrant for the claim by showing the relevant presence of the sociolegal context in the talk; or one *cannot* point to such detail" (64, emphasis in original).

Schegloff (1992b) also draws on the paradox of proximateness in comparing conversation analytic understandings of context to those understandings seen throughout much of the social sciences. In the latter case, context is often divided into what he terms "external" (or "distal") forms and "intra-interactional" (or "proximate") forms. Outside of CA, such "macro-level" sociological categories as gender, sexuality, social class, race, and ethnicity are generally seen as "external" aspects of context, as are the various "institutional matrices within which interaction occurs (the legal order, economic or market order, etc.) as well as its ecological, regional, national, and cultural settings" (1992b, p. 195). All of these contextual features then "shape" the course of an interaction from outside of it. Within CA, however, all relevant context can be termed "intra-interactional," given speakers' demonstrable orientation to it within the course of the interaction itself. The paradox of proximateness problematizes the above micro- and macro-level distinctions, as what we generally think of as "external" context must be shown to be "intra-interactionally" relevant in order to analyze it, at which point (due to being "intra-interactionally" relevant) its "external" status is moot. Similarly, if a potential aspect of context cannot be shown to be "intra-interactionally" relevant, then it should be seen as "external" to the interaction (i.e. no longer worth the analyst's consideration). Schegloff's discussion also reinforces the need for analysts to attend to procedural relevance, as it allows CA to "show from the details of the talk or other conduct in the materials that we are analyzing that those aspects of the scene are what the parties are oriented to" (p. 110).

Reiterating the idea that context is ultimately a participant's resource, Schegloff (1992b) argues that for an outside party – like the analyst – to make sense of this context, they must attend only to that which participants may be shown to attend to. That participants demonstrably orient to relevant aspects of the talk can be seen in a "next-turn proof procedure" (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998) by which a next turn at talk is seen to show a speaker's orientation to a prior turn as accomplishing a particular action. Within a question-answer sequence, for example, that a question receives an answer is evidence of the second speaker's

orientation to the action of the first as being a question. Within a "traditional" understanding of CA, then, speakers will similarly orient to the relevance of aspects of the talk such as its institutional character, or the relevance of gender to a particular sequence or spate of talk. However, the methods used by members to display orientation to contextual elements outside of sequential organization are not all recognizable through the next-turn proof procedure, nor has the traditional CA literature made clear what types of interactional practices signal orientations to other elements of context. The other branches of CA have thus made the identification of such practices a necessary analytic focus.

6. Traditional CA and Institutional CA

CA has, since its beginning, noted that interaction within institutional settings differs in significant ways from everyday conversation. Sacks frequently made reference to this fact in his lectures, while papers such as Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) note the existence of different systems of both turn-taking and repair within institutional forms of talk. It was not until Atkinson and Drew's (1979) *Order in Court* that this variation was explored in detail rather than being simply mentioned in passing, however, with Drew and Heritage's (1992) *Talk at Work* following as one of the first books to entirely showcase key studies of institutional interaction from a conversation analytic perspective. Heritage (1997) notes that the difference between institutional CA and traditional CA goes beyond a difference in the setting of the interactions being investigated, however: "There are, therefore, at least two kinds of conversation analytic research going on today, and though they overlap in various ways, they are distinct in focus. The first examines the social institution *of* interaction as an entity in its own right; the second studies the management of social institutions *in* interaction" (p. 223).

In Heritage's view, then, traditional CA is primarily concerned with Goffman's (1983) concept of the "institutional order of interaction," and the way that talk-in-interaction both reflects and constitutes this order. Institutional CA, on the other hand, finds itself more concerned with how particular institutions – medical, educational, legal, or otherwise – exist as relevant entities that shape and inform social interaction, and are both constructed and renewed by the talk itself. For example, ten Have's (1991) institutional CA study of doctor-patient interaction was concerned far less with the individual and context-free practices for turn-taking employed by the participants, instead focusing on how the "asymmetry" in turn-taking that so frequently occurred between doctor and patient could be shown to be constituted in the interaction itself (by way of its institutional tenor) rather than as some pre-existing "social fact."

7. The Invocation of Institutionality

Both traditional and institutional CA rely on the concept of procedural relevance as a means for determining the context of an interaction. The question of how to show the institutional character of an interaction to be demonstrably relevant to it has thus been a decades-long endeavor among analysts. Drew and Heritage (1992) note that given the "constraints" of a framework that treats context as locally and intra-interactionally produced, "analysts who wish to depict the distinctively 'institutional' character of some stretch of talk cannot be satisfied with showing that institutional talk exhibits aggregates and/or distributions of actions that are distinctive from ordinary conversation. They must rather demonstrate that the participants constructed their conduct over its course – turn by responsive turn – so as progressively to constitute ... the occasion of their talk, together with their own social roles in it, as having some distinctively institutional character" (21).

The avoidance of some *a priori*, assumed "institutionality" of an interaction is thus a priority for analysts working within institutional CA, who Maynard and Clayman (1991) claim carry this commitment so far as to be "concerned that using terms such as 'doctor's office', 'courtroom', 'police department', 'school room', and the like, to characterize settings ... can obscure much of what occurs within those settings" (p. 406-407). Maynard and Clayman argue here that this is the reason why conversation analysts interested in institutional interaction avoid relying on ethnographic knowledge about an institutional setting, and rely instead on participant orientations to these aspects of the context. (However, the avoidance of ethnographic data is a constraint that much work in institutional CA has adhered to less and less over the years).⁸ Yet the question remains as to what practices are used by participants to demonstrably orient to the institutional context of an interaction; and as Schegloff (1992b) asks, "how does the fact that the talk is being conducted in some setting (e.g. 'the hospital') issue in any consequence for the shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction that the parties conduct? And what is the mechanism by which the context-so-understood has determinate consequences for the talk?" (111).

Drew and Heritage (1992) answer this question in noting three ways that talk becomes "institutional" in the course of an interaction, each of which are procedurally relevant to participants. The first of these entails an orientation by the participants (or at least one participant) to some goal, task, or identity related to the particular institution being relevantly invoked. This "goal orientation" is, as Heritage (1997) notes, a means for displaying not only the relevant institutionality of the interaction but also the "institutionally relevant identities" of the participants, e.g. doctor and patient (p. 163). The second means for introducing the institutionality of an interaction involves special constraints on the types of

⁸ This is especially true of Maynard's work (e.g. 1984, 2003), despite the prior quote hinting at the contrary

contributions that are allowable to each participant over the course of the interaction, which may change from institutional task to institutional task. For example, in formal institutional settings (Atkinson 1982) such as the courtroom or classroom, "there are specific *reductions* in the range of options and opportunities for action that are characteristic in conversation and they often involve *specializations* and *respecifications* of the interactional activities that remain (Drew and Heritage 1992: p. 26). The third marker of institutionality is the establishment of an institutionally-specific interpretive framework for the interaction, what Drew and Heritage refer to as "inferential frameworks and procedures" (p. 22). For example, the embodiment of a "professional" identity such as "doctor" or "judge" also entails the avoidance of expressing surprise, sympathy, agreement, or affiliation (the typically preferred responses in mundane conversational interaction) in response to the talk of "lay participants." The interpretation of these typically-disaligning actions as appropriate, unmarked responses for a participant embodying an institutional identity works to make relevant the institutional character of both the identity and the interaction itself. Heritage (1997) notes that these three characteristics of institutional talk are most fruitfully probed for by the analyst in six arenas of interaction: "turn-taking organization, overall structural organization of the interaction, sequence organization, turn design, lexical choices, epistemological and other forms of symmetry" (p. 164).

As these three criteria for institutionality show, then, the institutional context of an interaction is not something that exists prior to it, but is rather what Heritage (1984) refers to as "ultimately and accountably talked into being" (p. 290). This idea of talking context into being is therefore much the same in institutional CA as it is in traditional CA, with Heritage (1997) contrasting the approach to context in institutional CA with the aforementioned "bucket approach." As he notes, "it is fundamentally through interaction that context is built, invoked and managed, and that it is through interaction that institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction are evidenced and made real and enforceable for the participants" (p. 163). Heritage here gives an institution-specific example of this approach to context by way of an emergency call to the police, and describes the management of context as visible in the ways that participants "are managing their interaction as an 'emergency call' on a 'policeable matter'. We want to see how the participants co-construct it as an emergency call, incrementally advance it turn by turn as an emergency call, and finally bring it off as having been an emergency call" (p. 163).

As the discussion above shows, there is considerable variation between speaker practices across institutional and everyday forms of talk-in-interaction (for example, the constraints on what types of contributions are allowable to each participant within an interaction, or the institution-specific frames for interpretation utilized by the interactants). This variation is what Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) refer to as "contributing to a unique 'fingerprint' for each institutional form of interaction – the 'fingerprint' being comprised of a set of

interactional practices differentiating each form both from other institutional forms and from the baseline of mundane conversational interaction itself" (p. 95-96). It is thus participant orientations to the practices that comprise these "fingerprints" that make relevant an institutional context for the participants. However, an understanding of what comprises these fingerprints to begin with is something that may entail the acquisition of specialized forms of knowledge particular to an institutional setting. Likewise, the ability of the analyst to recognize these practices as talking institutions into being would also require such expanded arenas of knowledge.

There are numerous ways that participants talk institutional contexts into being that require access to these types of knowledge, as well as to particular "common-sense" understandings of the lifeworld of the participants. For example, Heritage and Sefi (1992) highlight the relevance of the next-turn proof procedure in showing how an utterance that may appear to be a casual observation – "he's enjoying that isn't he" – may elicit responses that reflect both the institutional tenor of the interaction and the division of labor among the responding participants. Within this particular example, the observation is delivered by a health visitor to the parents of the baby that she is evaluating. The father of the child orients to the observational character of the health visitor's turn at talk and provides an aligning response ("yes, he certainly is"). The mother's response, however, shows a notably different orientation ("he's not hungry cus he's just had 'iz bottle"), and displays what the authors describe as a notable "defensiveness" as it rejects an unstated inference of the health visitor's remark: that the baby is chewing on something because he is hungry. The mother's turn at talk thus displays an orientation to one of the institutionally-ascribed goals of the health worker, to evaluate whether the needs of the child (e.g. being adequately fed) are being met. Given the notably distinct orientations to the health worker's talk by the mother and father, the analysts conclude that yet another relevant aspect of the interaction (for analyst and participant alike) is the division of labor within the family, "in which the mother is treated as having the primary responsibility for her baby (reflected in her defensiveness), while the father, with less responsibility, can take a more relaxed and 'innocent' view of things" (Heritage 1997: p. 232).

Notably, both the institutional task of the health worker and an awareness of the expectations of mothers within the familial division of labor – each of which contribute to the context of the interaction – make use of ethnographically-oriented forms of knowledge and insights that are acknowledged far more frequently within institutional CA than traditional CA. This is not to say that traditional CA doesn't make similar use of the category predicates associated with other types of identities: orientations to familial roles can show up in dinner

conversations, for example, where "mom" might have cooked the meal and may respond "defensively" to a criticism of the food.⁹ In such a case, both the institutional task of the mother/cook and an awareness of the expectations of mothers within the familial division of labor can potentially contribute to the context of the interaction, just as in the example of the health worker described above. The use of ethnographically-oriented forms of knowledge and insights may thus be crucial to understanding the context-sensitive practices in operation even in traditional CA, particularly in single-case analyses where descriptions of context-free practices may be heavily reliant upon the analyst's understanding of context-sensitive practices. As mentioned earlier, however, traditional CA's general avoidance of framing either data or findings as sensitive to ethnographic issues leads to a perceivable difference between the analytic practices across traditional and institutional CA.

Another fruitful site for how the forms of knowledge discussed above may invoke an institutional context is a speaker's lexical choices. Institution-specific uses of lexical items within institutional contexts were noticed early on by Sacks, who notes the relevance of how the term "cop" is used to describe police officers in everyday conversation while the term 'police officer' is used while giving evidence in court (1979), or how members of organizations refer to themselves as "we" rather than "I" (1992). Heritage (1997) echoes these findings by noting that "a clear way in which speakers orient to institutional tasks and contexts is through their selection of descriptive terms" (p. 173-174). To illustrate this point, he shows how the self-identification of a school employee in the opening sequence of a telephone call with a student's mother (by using a "last name + organizational identification" format rather than a more mundane "first + last name") allows the mother to "identify the phone call as a 'business call' and, specifically, a 'call about school business'" (p. 175).

Schegloff (1987) and (1992b) also draw upon the import of lexical choice in discussing how the "pointed use of a technical or vernacular idiom" (such as the use of "hematoma" rather than the lay term "bruise") makes relevant a form of knowledge or state of expertise specific to an institutional identity. Such practices thus potentially display the relevance of that identity to the participants within a particular interaction. He here draws on Cicourel (1987), who argues that technical medical terms "anchor within the interaction the relevance for the participants of the medical cast of the setting and of the participants...and invokes it within the interaction" (Schegloff 1992b, p. 197). While Schegloff notes that the analyst working in institutional CA would not simply claim the relevance of the institutional tenor of such an interaction based on "extrinsic ethnographic

⁹ Of course, if we treat the family as an institution (a common understanding across the social sciences) then we see how "institutional identities" may become just as relevant to interactions at the dinner table as they are to interactions in the courtroom.

grounds," he does note in a footnote within the 1992b paper that "ethnographic research may, of course, [be] necessary to enable the analyst to recognize the sense and import of such terms as display[ing] the relevance of some aspect of context, or to recognize that seemingly ordinary words have such an import, but the relevance of whatever has been learned through fieldwork (or in any other manner) must be warranted as relevant to the participants by reference to details of the conduct of the interaction" (223).

That CA may need to be "informed" by the analyst's ethnographic practices, then, is something discussed far more openly within institutional CA than traditional CA. This lack of acknowledgement within traditional CA has contributed to the common understanding of traditional CA as being non-reliant on ethnographic (or "member's") forms of knowledge, as seen in Arminen's (2005) claim that "CA studies do not generally rely on ethnographic knowledge, but the analysis of some institutional settings may require contextual knowledge in order to make sense of realms distinct from everyday life" (p. 1). Maynard (2003) makes a contrasting point to this observation, however, arguing instead that traditional CA draws upon this same range of ethnographic information; the difference between traditional CA and institutional CA is only that the latter openly admits to the practice. As he argues, "ethnographic knowledge – an insider's understanding of terms, phrases, and courses of action – is something that CA regularly draws upon when displaying and analyzing a particular excerpt" (p. 74).

These are points that throw into sharp relief one of the perceived distinctions between traditional CA and institutional CA: the acknowledgment that distinct forms of knowledge are employed by both participant and analyst in navigating and formulating the context of an interaction. Arminen (2005), for example, notes that the traditional understanding of context as a demonstrably oriented-to feature of interaction "trades on the analyst's taken-for-granted competence in presupposing an argument that formulates the context-relevant features of interaction to the object of scrutiny" (35). Arminen claims that within sequential CA, there is the assumption that "an analyst is automatically competent to identify the context-relevant features of an interaction. ... If one *cannot* point to the *relevant presence of the ... context* in the interaction, the problem may either be that the context is irrelevant for the accomplishment of that action or that the analyst's argument has been inadequate and has not allowed us to notice the relevance of context" (p. 35-36, emphasis in original).

Arminen goes so far as to suggest that "if we are to study institutional interaction in its own right we have to revise Schegloff's methodological policy" (p. 37). He supports this claim by drawing on an example of one of Schegloff's (1991) critiques of Zimmerman's (1984) study of emergency calls as overestimating the institutional relevance of the practices studied therein (the call-taker's use of an "interrogative series" of insertion sequences), thereby missing "the potentially general relevance of insertions to sequences of this type" (1991: 59). However, as Arminen notes, Schegloff's critique is couched in what Heritage

(1997) refers to as the different goals of traditional and institutional CA: "the social institution *of* interaction as an entity in its own right," and "the management of social institutions *in* interaction," respectively. As Arminen states, "when the task of the analysis is not only to describe sequential patterns of interaction, but to identify and explicate the ways in which interactional activities contribute to the accomplishment of institutional tasks, then the analyst's ability to connect the interactional patterns to the institutional activities becomes essential and makes relevant the analyst's context-sensitive understanding of the institutional tasks" (2005, 37).

Whereas the earlier Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) placed a priority on the context-*free* practices of talk (in their previously mentioned claim that "it is undesirable to have to know or characterize such situations for particular conversations in order to investigate them"), Arminen here suggests that attention to those context-sensitive aspects of an interaction may be far more heavily weighted within institutional CA. However, if we return to the earlier example of a dinner conversation in which the family-institutional role "mom" is made relevant to the ongoing tasks and actions of the interaction, we can see how context-sensitive aspects of an interaction may be similarly relevant to work within traditional CA.¹⁰

In addition to the traditional-institutional differences mentioned above, Arminen also argues that particular institutional fields and professions may have their own sets of beliefs and theories of social interaction (what Peräkylä and Vehviläinen 2003 refer to as "interaction ideologies" or "stocks of professional knowledge,") and that these too form potential aspects of context that analysts need to be aware of to paint a full picture of the context of an interaction. Arminen thus leaves open the potential that similar types of ideologies exist in contextually relevant ways to participants in non-institutional settings, an argument that has been frequently seen elsewhere within sociocultural linguistics, though has yet to be a relevant aspect of traditional CA.

8. Concluding Remarks

Though recent scholarship in CA has recognized the existence of such named "sub-varieties" as institutional CA and feminist CA, relatively little work has explored the variation in analytic practice and scope seen across these branches in any detail. As the discussion above illustrates, the notion of "context" within CA provides one fruitful area for comparison. Though focused here on comparing only traditional CA and institutional CA, work within each of the branches

¹⁰ From this, it might be suggested that "everyday life" is treatable as a kind of institution, or perhaps even a variety of them.

outside of traditional CA – in engaging with a broader understanding of context that still seeks to align with the participants' own, endogenous understandings of their everyday interactions – problematizes the lack of concern within traditional CA to consider the analyst's own ethnographic or member's epistemologies as potentially relevant to the analysis. One direction for the future of the field may thus lie in bridging this gap between the analytic approaches adopted across the different branches of CA. As this paper also illustrates, there is (and should not be) no single means for doing CA or for approaching the concept of "context" within it, despite the occasional use of such intimidating modifiers as "Schegloffian" to refer to the "traditional" branch of the framework. Rather, CA may be best understood as a methodological approach with core tenets, such as the understanding that context is produced locally and intersubjectively as an interactional resource that is procedurally relevant to the surrounding talk.

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