Introduction: Respecifying education

Paul V. Smith

Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester

1. ETHNOMETHODOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Back in March 2018, I attended a workshop in London called *New Developments in Ethnomethodology* with a group of other academics and researchers. This group was broadly taken from what could be described as part of the next generation of scholars in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, this side of the pond at least; we might also arguably have been described as "young" given that age seems to work in a particular way in the category-bound world of academia. The conference had been organised in the context of a recent re-appraisal of ethnomethodology's radical heritage (Lynch 2016, Sharrock & Anderson 2017, Hammersley 2018). Listening to the presentations gave me hope that these discussions were at least being had by the right people. After all, since the beginning, there have been some *damnably* smart folks working in ethnomethodology.

Not that I necessarily count myself among them. I have worked in education for quite some time, and my primary concerns are always to solve practical educational problems. Solving the problems of a discipline comes a little less naturally. When I remember to, the best I can claim is that I've produced a few "hybrid studies". And yet: sometimes it works better when you throw away the plans and just say what's really on your mind. So, my lament on the place of ethnomethodology within education went something like this:

> Given that ethnomethodology can address, and probably has addressed, educational and learning phenomena in any setting you care to name, and is superbly placed to provide careful, detailed studies on and in education, with known fidelity to its chosen subject matter: why isn't it *the* prominent approach in the field of educational research?

Now *that* got their attention.

It's only fair to say that of course there *is* a substantial tradition of ethnomethodological studies in learning and education. These are carried out both by self-identified ethnomethodologists who choose or become inured in educational settings, and by educationalists who find that ethnomethodology provides a name for the approach they seek. This has resulted in a large body of studies which, in as far as they are faithful to the precept of studies being 'shaped by the distinctive and specific character of the phenomena they investigate' (Hester & Francis 2000, 4), take on a diverse variety of forms.

However – and perhaps not least for this very reason of the isomorphism of the phenomenon and the study – it does not strike me that that these studies will have the appearance of a concerted canon of work to the eyes of an outsider – at least enough, in most cases, for EM/CA studies to be the first literature to refer to for most educational purposes. Although there have been some noteworthy and influential clusters of publication (see Hester & Francis 2000 for a suggested delineation of themes in EM/CA work on education), it is a challenge to characterise them as large-scale, planned research agendas with a common pay-off. As Anderson (2016) notes, studies both in ethnomethodology and sociology occur largely because of individual interest.

A separate source for my lament comes from the observation that ethnomethodology's main principles (or "study policies") are only one step removed, at most, from being concerned with learning across the board. Ethnomethodology would have it that all practical activities are accountable, that is, 'observable-and-reportable, *i.e.* available to members as situated practices of looking-and-telling' (Garfinkel 2007, 1); that is, in addition to being activities of a given kind, they are produced in such a way that they are *seen to be* that kind of action, and that where discussion of the action is necessary it and its features can be identified and described as such. That they are normally unreported or undescribed does nothing to deflect their reportable and describable character. Where they are described, they can work as overt (e.g. Driessen 1997) or unintended (e.g. Garfinkel's 2007 chapter on Agnes)[1] instructions or pedagogies. The enquiries of members into practical social action therefore occasion both instruction and learning (Fox 2006). In his later work, Garfinkel (2002, 145) brought about what in this sense would be a development of this insight, in outlining ethnomethodology's 'alternately descriptive/pedagogic order of argument'. My understanding of Garfinkel's assertions at this point is that what could start as descriptive accounts of accountable actions can become pedagogies when they are subject to enquiry. As above, I take it that this goes for members generally; but it is certainly the case for Garfinkel's development of ethnomethodological studies and analyses. The analyst visiting a practical work site will 'learn from "clients" and teach to "clients" production methods' such that 'all issues of adequacy as workplace stuff descriptions are readable alternately as instructions' (146). Garfinkel describes this as a 'mutual tutorial adequacy' (145), of which one of the best examples remains Harvey Sacks' distinction between "possessibles" and "possessitives", and how he prevailed upon the LA police to 'permit them to teach him what he was talking about' (186).[2] Whether the police learned anything from Sacks in return, or more generally whether this mutuality will tend to happen in practice (i.e. whether analysts will be able to tell participants anything of use or interest to them), is a discussion that is common in EM/CA circles, as

[1] A long time before the focus on instructed actions and tutorial problems became prominent, Garfinkel (2007, 180) wrote of Agnes that she "was self-consciously equipped to teach normals how normals make sexuality happen in commonplace settings as an obvious, familiar, recognizable, natural, and serious matter of fact".

[2] Ethnomethodological work at the Xerox EuroPARC would be another prominent example.

I will come on to. But the point remains that accountable actions are very easily and frequently rendered as learnable practices.

In short, then, the historical contingency of the ethnomethodological corpus can be cast as an initial obstacle to ethnomethodology's wider take-up and influence. The radically situated perspective that allows an easy slippage between the alternate activities of description and pedagogy is not perhaps a reason in itself, but adds to the frustration.

However, these are matters where, as it were, we need only look to ethnomethodology itself. My main thesis here is that formal education, education studies, and educational settings provide a microcosm or perhaps a particularly telling case of the wider sociological and institutional views of EM/CA. Through this, they also tell us something about the understanding of higher study, research, and expertise in our societies. This introduction is therefore a very minor and by definition marginal contribution to the sociology of education and sociology of knowledge. The observations that can be put forward in support of this thesis are manifold.

To start with, even (or perhaps especially) in formal educational settings, ethnomethodologists have demonstrated that *educational and learning practices are not solely the practices of those responsible for delivering the formal curriculum*. They have shown that learning will take place regardless of what instructors demand or expect (e.g., Heap 2000, Watson 1992). It is the case that learning will happen quite readily, whether or not this is the learning formally intended by the institution in which it takes place. It is also a feature of ethnomethodological studies that the practices identified within a learning setting tend not to be characterised as a poor, denuded, neophyte, or initial phase of a more technically advanced or expert practice, but rather have their own features and their own local criteria for success. We could make similar comments on notions of apprenticeship that arise from non-EM approaches to situated learning. Social theories of learning also attend to non-instructional practices related to learning; but ethnomethodological approaches can subvert these theories by removing the assumptions that performance is 'a manifestation of prior learning' (Fox 2006, 439), and that there is a clear set of expert practices that a neophyte will and must aim at. Ethnomethodological studies assume the competence of members to assemble, among other things, instructional and educational settings, thereby achieving those settings but in the process introducing a new layer of discernible phenomena that become the object of study. This may come at the cost of displacing the focus on the formal educational aims of the institution in question, and of the formal analytic methods for apprehending them. Many conventional approaches to education aim to *learn about*, rather than *learn from*, the participants of their studies. This, in addition to the other arguments set out below, means that ethnomethodology is not designed to help in the delivery of educational research, which 'began with the promise of instrumental "goods." This was part of its appointment as an applied science, and this instrumentalism has been with us ever since' (Macbeth 2011, 73).

Further, in terms of the conduct of its studies, *ethnomethodology is only very problematically understood as providing a discrete theory or set of methods* that researchers and students can apply. Ongoing publication of Garfinkel's writings have provided more insights into the depth

of his engagement with classical sociological theories and how ethnomethodology emerged from the lacunae in these theories (2002, 2005, 2006, 2019; see also Hilbert 2001). Ethnomethodology therefore has strong "classical" credentials, should it want to claim them; while describing it as atheoretical or non-theoretical in a naïve sense itself requires quite complex discussion (e.g. Hilbert 1990, Watson 2019). However, it remains the case that anyone coming to ethnomethodology anew will find the basic injunction of its research – look, listen, and faithfully describe the methods that members themselves use to bring about social order – a *Gestalt* shift away from the frequent plug-and-play approach to deploying social theory. As Lynch (2016, 3) writes:

> Both Garfinkel and Sacks proposed an agenda that conflicts with a commonplace academic and administrative presumption, which is that specialized analytical methods, disciplined efforts at measurement and assessment, and extraordinary reflexive insight are necessary for cutting through the dross of everyday activity, ordinary language, and commonsense reasoning in order to elucidate the causal forces and ideological formations that drive those activities. That presumption comes with the territory when advanced students in a social science are trained in specialized analytical methods and when they struggle to attain a degree of theoretical insight and technical mastery that surpasses the banalities of everyday reasoning. It also is expressed in programmatic efforts to see through the ideological "truths" that mask social reality.[3]

It is these formal analytical methods that help to provide graduates with the ability to claim their academic credentials in a society that has qualification and certification as one of its drivers (Collins 2019). Lynch's mention of the 'administrative presumption' is apposite for a series of reasons, as those working both inside and beyond educational institutions can attest to. In universities, both the academic "product" and institutional reform are driven by these presumptions of the need for and universal applicability of formal methods, as opposed to the close accounting of endemic methods. It is notable that ethnomethodology, although both used and taught in universities, tends to be introduced to students only once they are familiar with apprehending concepts and theories. The theory-less approach appears to take on its sense only in relation to theory-driven progenitors. Conversation analysis presents a slightly different case as it has been co-opted as a means of linguistic analysis by those who have come to see it as a method and not, as per its origins as "ethnomethodological CA", a way of apprehending a set of substantive concerns (Seedhouse 2007).

A third feature of ethnomethodology is that *it is, in nearly all senses of the term, distinct from critical studies*. Issues of power, reform, and social justice rightly take a central place in

[3] A corollary of this point is that ethnomethodology does not seek to provide explanations. Although some other forms of sociology, for instance transmission theories, can do a double duty as both social theory and account of learning, they do at least have the institutional advantage of explaining their phenomena.

both social sciences[4] and educational studies, and this focus has only intensified over the last few years. From a personal perspective, my experience of those who write in the ethnomethodological and conversation analytic traditions is that they are no less interested in these matters than most others in the academy. (In fact, by sheer presence in departments of social science, education, business, and other humanities alone, they are statistically likely to hold political views consistent with a critical perspective.) They furthermore work with an anti-foundationalist set of assumptions, similar to those in other modern traditions (Lynch 1993). The divergence between EM/CA and critical modes of investigation, as I see it, originates in debates as to what can be understood as sound methodology for conducting research. All ethnomethodologists, in my experience, have a preoccupation with investigative methodology which, for the reasons stated above, has a great deal of overlap with their preoccupation for properly rendering the practices of their chosen work sites. If the members see power, race- or gender-related matters as manifestly present in the setting, then so we do as researchers; one of the defining principles of ethnomethodology is that 'any feature of social life must be demonstrably relevant to social actors in particular courses of action' (Travers 1999). The participants to a scene get to decide what they orient to; we don't. This leads to a different idea of "member", or social participant, in EM/CA as compared to other approaches: the member is someone who is competent to take part in, and see what is going in, situated courses of action. This can readily furnish us with insights into power relations, inequity, and inequality that may different from, alternative to, or co-present with those assumed by the researcher (Berard 2005, Sharrock & Button 2007).

One way of characterising critical studies, on this basis, is that the idea of *criticality* becomes a shorthand for characterising a particular *a priori* focus. This approach has frequently been seen in EM/CA circles as *ironicising*, or stipulative, of members' own practices (e.g., Benson & Hughes 1991), in favour of the programmatic efforts to see into underlying ideologies as intimated in the quote from Lynch above. This ironicising does not necessitate the conclusion that the findings from critical, or any other kind of formal analysis, are thereby factually wrong, morally misguided, or inadequate methodologically on their own terms. Depending on who you talk to, this ironicising position may reflect either an overt critique of mainstream social sciences, or the extension of the ethnomethodological perspective to settings in professional social science. It remains the case in either understanding that ethnomethodology and social sciences are concerned with fundamentally different orders of phenomena (Heap 1984) to formal analyses or conventional social sciences. In an extended published debate with writers in critical discourse analysis, Schegloff (1997, 183) writes that they are:

[4] I will often have cause here to specify both social science *and* educational studies as distinct areas of work, at least institutionally speaking. However, where I refer to *social science* or *social scientific* alone, the reader should understand this as referring to the usage of social scientific methods in educational or indeed other fields where such methods are commonly used, as appropriate, and not only to professional or institutionally-housed social science and scientists.

> addressed to different issues, and not to the local co-construction of interaction. If, however, they mean the issues of power, domination, and the like to connect up with discursive material, it should be a serious rendering of that material. And for conversation, and talk-in-interaction more generally, that means that it should at least be compatible with what was demonstrably relevant for the parties – not necessarily their sequentially directed preoccupations, but, whatever it was, demonstrably relevant to them as embodied in their conduct. Otherwise the critical analysis will not 'bind' to the data, and risks ending up merely ideological.

Here, this is an ironic usage – with 'merely ideological' approaches ceding the right, for Schegloff, to be claim to be "situated". So it seems as though there is a challenge on both sides. With the warrant being the orientation of the participants to a scene, EM/CA, if carried out steadfastly, can make no guarantees of providing anything of emancipatory interest. Critical studies, on the other hand, have an inherent focus on power and inequality, but are open to the criticism that alternate analyses can readily be made of their materials. Of course, it can be the case that these interests intersect on occasion, and EM/CA publications can be found on all of the mainstream sources of inequality of interest to social scientists, for instance social class (Scharff 2008) and more prominently gender (Kessler & McKenna 1978, Stokoe 2003, 2006).

However, it is in some very recent work on race and racism that the latest attempt at a form of *rapprochement* between EM/CA and critical studies has appeared, in a series of publications by Anne Rawls and some frequent co-authors (Rawls & Duck 2016; Rawls, Duck, & Turowetz 2018; Rawls & Duck 2020; Rawls, Whitehead, & Duck 2020; Rawls & Turowetz 2021; Whitehead 2021). This work appears to provide, and perhaps more importantly create a space for, studies conducted with the tools of EM/CA that may enhance the claims of critical agendas. There may well, however, be arguments about some of the claims put forward therein concerning the origins of ethnomethodology and the new interpretation of its critical or political credentials, as well as on the treatment of data in some of the existing empirical studies. There is no space here to expand on these issues, but the interested reader is advised to note them well and mark future developments.

I can dwell, though, on a separate thread that illustrates many of the points made so far with a specifically educational focus. This is illustrated by an exchange between Sherman and Roth (Sherman 2004, 2005; Roth 2005) on the role and position of situated studies in general, and ethnomethodology in particular, in evaluating, and contributing to improvements in, school science teaching. For Roth, there is a responsibility on the educational researcher to find ways of improving on the *status quo* (as the phrase goes, "the point is to change it"). Roth's position is leveraged by his dual identity as both teacher and researcher; and having spotted a perceived limitation in ethnomethodology for his purposes, he adds cultural-historical activity theory to the mix in order to help find ways of bridging the "gap" between school science and professional settings where practical scientific competence is required. Well-established matters of the problematic

"authenticity" of school teaching are therefore writ large here. There is also the matter of whether situated studies are best placed to assist in efforts to close the gap between formal educational and professional settings.

Sherman sees in Roth's work a well-established conflation of situated studies with authentic educational experience. This is also to be found in the work of Brown, Collins and Duguid (Macbeth 1996); in Lave and Minick (Lynch 1995); and in the field of academic literacies (see my paper in this volume for related ideas and citations). In these instances, situated studies, where the focus is on situated *learning*, claim an improvement on prior, cognitive approaches to learning. However, *situatedness* here is used to warrant a certain set of outcomes by virtue of being connected to "real" contexts as opposed to the ersatz settings of the classroom. In some cases, the situated learning researchers mentioned above do accept that classrooms can also be situated contexts, and in these cases the work of providing the inauthenticity of formal learning settings is farmed out to notions of representational language, literal meaning, and trans-contextual criteria supposed to be operating in these settings. The result in all of these cases is that 'situatedness would be had for the enforcement of a moral order' (Macbeth 1996, 271), where the researcher can demonstrate that the classroom work would do better to take on the trappings of a "real-world" counterpart.

Sherman's main point (2004, 2005) is that all settings are necessarily situated, and on this premise, 'it makes no sense to say that "authentic" classrooms are conditional on "situatedness"' (2005, 200). Rather, 'school science and professional science [for instance] are distinctly situated practices, with deeply different tasks, purposes, personnel, and so on'. The aim of the researcher, then, is to render in detailed descriptive form what happens in these settings in and on their own terms. In the school science classroom, then, it becomes clear that 'students and teachers are doing school science, not imagining that they are scientists uncovering new laws of biology or designing new experimental procedures' (2005, 203). The point is to see what *is* going on, rather than what the researcher thinks *should* be going on. This becomes a point worthy of practical consideration rather than a conceptual argument alone; we might see that there is a great deal of "authenticity" in classroom practices if we attend to them in enough detail. I am tempted to ask: how close to a professional practice does the classroom equivalent need to be? Sherman suggests (203) that 'we might describe school science labs as essentially being a hybrid of science experiments and science demonstrations', where students find the relevant educational principles in their activities. They are doing learning more so than they are doing science.

Of course, as Sherman points out, formal education is a normative practice, and its practitioners will bring these normative influences to the awareness of the researcher. However: 'We [researchers] can take interest in gap closing exercises and how they are done, but "situatedness" gives no grounds for designing or insisting on them' (2005, 203). Once this work is done, teachers may use it to evaluate the findings. 'But the understanding comes first' (204); or to put it another way, 'analysis and design represent two very different orders of work' (Koschmann 2008, 363). Ethnomethodological research is not

carried out with a view to being applied, rather with a view to understanding. Any and all research findings can in principle be applied to a subsequent activity, but the application depends upon a set of principles that i. is (certainly in EM terms) external to the principles of the research itself;[5] and ii. is itself amenable to further analytical study.

Here, then, we arrive at the fundamental point: although EM/CA can be used for critical or evaluative ends, its practitioners have very much tended to see the study and the application of the study as two separate operations, and any attempt to conflate the two has a considerable conceptual working out task on its hands.

A final set of points originate in the *somewhat itinerant nature of EM/CA in recent years*. On the basis of a 2016 conference in Manchester on the theme of *Radical Ethnomethodology*, Anderson (2016) suggests that the conversations he had with delegates pointed to an antipathy of institutional sociology towards ethnomethodology, whereas those ethnomethodologists who had found homes in other departments (including education departments) had experience of accommodation and interest from their immediate colleagues. I have to say that my own recent experience does nothing to confound this observation. Those with EM/CA sympathies will lay down their hats wherever they can; but it must be remembered that ethnomethodology grew up in sociology departments, and its branching out into other disciplines is a notable phenomenon, if not a cause for regret. It is possible, as suggested by Rooke & Rooke in this volume, that the sociological loss of interest in ethnomethodology comes from its 'assimilation into the body of conventional sociology' (Sharrock & Anderson 2017, 2).

Despite this new accommodation, ethnomethodology (alongside cognate work in conversation analysis and Wittgensteinian conceptual analysis), perhaps by definition, *only very uneasily becomes part of disciplinary knowledge*. Where it does – perhaps as in the case of conversation analysis morphing into a linguistic methodology, or the attempted absorption of ethnomethodology as the "micro" wing of a grand social-theoretical synthesis – it can be through manifest misuse. And on the part of ethnomethodology itself, despite the precept of ethnomethodological indifference, it has a tendency to challenge or collapse disciplinary shibboleths (the above account being replete in these) by virtue of its application to academic contexts. On occasion, the "host discipline" can overlook some useful possibilities. One that comes to mind is an article by Sharrock & Greiffenhagen (2007) on linguistic relativism, which critiques the foundational notion of language as primarily used to describe the world, and that an incipient theory of the world is held by the speakers of a given language. These are positions that have long had alternatives, not least as provided by the various practice-based developments in the social sciences and

[5] Among other things, this raises the question of what is *applied* about applied research. I suspect that careful study could readily render the detail of "doing research" as opposed to "doing application of research". 'To undertake an analysis of a situation supposedly "improved" through design is to embrace a set of assumptions that should be topics of study in their own right (e.g., What might improvement mean?) rather than taken for granted. Such assumptions must be bracketed when the analysis if performed, if there is to be anything left for the analyst to actually discover' (Koschmann 2008, 363). Similarly, 'It is… a conceptual puzzle of its own how classroom research would "change the *conditions* of classroom teaching"' (Sherman 2005, 205).

humanities. It may even be the case that a recognisable linguistic relativism is not possible after a renovation based on more modern conceptions of language. However, until this ingenious idea is mined for insights, we won't know. It may be that the consistently and clearly stated concern of scholars in ethnomethodology to find respecifications of conventional studies, to "teach differences", is part of the obstacle.

The next section outlines the studies in this volume, before I return to the question above partly in the light of what this latest research can reveal to us.

2. THE STUDIES

The eleven studies in this issue have been organised into three sets: on higher education; on other formal educational settings; and those related to instructed action. As is often the case in collections of EM/CA writing, other organising principles were available. One of the attractions of the chosen mode, though, is that several studies address contexts within higher education – with the other studies falling quite neatly into line from that starting point. Despite the comments in the first section above, most EM/CA authors do frequently write from a position of teaching or research in higher education, and there has been an acceleration of EM/CA studies of higher education in recent years. With the delivery of higher education in particular having been an object of focus since the onset of pandemic conditions in March 2020, it was inevitable that some scholars would turn their ethnomethodological lens to their own teaching and learning practices.

The issue opens with one such study. Bolam provides a hybrid study that draws on data from live recordings of online lectures provided in a business school, in the early stages of the pandemic-occasioned transition to online teaching. She demonstrates how both the teachers and students had the same emergent challenge: both to get the instruction done using the online platforms available to them, while at the same time producing something that was recognisably and plausibly an instance of university-level teaching. The achievement of co-constructing the online HE classroom between the efforts of teachers and students relies not least on what Sacks called *omni-relevant categories*, with predicates of these categories having renewed relevance in the online setting. These categories are interwoven with contingent categories which emerge as the mutual learning of how to do, and receive, online instruction takes place. These immanent pedagogies of how to take part in online interaction sit alongside the overt pedagogies of the instructional aspects of the teaching session. The evident workings of the categories, practical technological issues, and the asymmetry of the roles of lecturer and student, all contribute to an interesting perspective on various shop floor problems. Despite the challenges, the data show how instruction is visibly achieved as a collaborative effort that is seeable as instruction of a level and mode suitable to a higher education context. Time will tell as to whether further such studies will i. demonstrate the value of ethnomethodology's descriptive analyses in this new generation of education settings, and ii. allay concerns over large-scale online teaching delivery.

In the next chapter, Tyagunova and Greiffenhagen investigate how university students use past multiple-choice questionnaires (MCQs) as a method of exam preparation. The authors took an approach that can be described as "ethnomethodologically-informed ethnography" using data from online non-participant observation of student communication in Facebook groups, as well as observations of testing situations and student and lecturer interviews. Based on the activities of students, Tyuganova and Greiffenhagen are able to argue that students interact with each other and past MCQs such that their learning becomes more meaningful than the rudimentary memorisation that is often associated with this assessment technique. They show how there are many "good reasons" for students to work with past papers. As well as helping with economy of effort, the combination of past papers and social media setting assist students in finding connections between the material as taught and the material as assessed. There is evidence of students clearly formulating the kinds of work they do with MCQs that discourage rote learning in other students, or assuming that past papers are an unproblematic key to new and unseen papers. The past papers themselves can be the subject of extended discussion in which students can be seen to synthesise existing knowledge into their justification for suggesting a given answer. Tyugaonova and Greiffenhagen's chapter not only provides some depth in terms of the methods that students use to provide, access, work with and discuss past MCQ papers, but also argues that there is a reflexive relationship between learning and the context of learning. This is not a determinative relationship, and the use of a mode of assessment such as MCQs does not mean that a surface level of learning will inevitably take place – it depends on what activities are carried out with the resources around these modes of assessment. This is something already recognised in theories of learning, but I would say that the authors add an "ecological validity" to that insight here through their use of the ethnomethodological version of reflexivity, such that on a given course there can be an ongoing "arms race" as lecturers change their MCQ papers annually to encourage work that differs from the previous year's iteration, and students respond accordingly, not least by drawing inferences about the growing corpus of material.

The next chapter, my own, addresses students' talk about texts they have produced. For higher education students to "perform well" (gain a high grade), they must produce assessed work that fulfils the course requirements. The description of these requirements, however, cannot be bottomed out though accounts alone, and students may understand guidelines in different, and sometimes "incorrect", ways. I recognise and agree with the general thrust of academic literacies scholarship, which emphasises that students have to switch literacy practices between settings, but question its tendency to treat language as referential, and where this problem is recognised, the suggestion that the solution lies in accumulating analyses according to varying conceptions of language. Peirce's concept of *abduction* is used to illuminate the processes students use in their ordinary talk about assessment to "work out" how feedback and marks are allocated to their work. Central to these processes are students' understandings of rules of general good practice: what rules apply, how are they applied, and how do they differ between courses and pieces of work?

Students use something akin to the documentary method of interpretation to connect *particular* marks to the *general* rules they attribute to markers, and so can "find" anomalous comments and marks which then require explanation. In conclusion, I recommend the use of concepts from pragmatist philosophy not for analysis in their own right but *as a means of conceptualising learning* in ways that facilitate analysis more effectively than mainstream theories of education.

The final chapter in the higher education section addresses the use of compliments in PhD supervisions from a conversation analytic perspective. Here, Böhringer uses video recordings of formal supervision meeting from a German university, where supervisory meetings can often take place in front of other supervisors and students. She is concerned with the kinds of interactional work that are brought about by the use of compliments in supervision. The work of Sacks and Pomerantz has shown us that compliments can have an effect, designed or not, on those who are co-present to the compliment and who are not explicitly addressed. These can be wider positives to those who share categories with the recipient, or have the result of making others feel threatened or excluded, for instance, where relevant categories apply only to the recipient. Furthermore, the "in-betweenness" of being a compliment recipient means that responses with minimal or even a non-verbal response are accepted possibilities. However, compliments, according to the setting, end up being more than face-saving positives that allow an evaluation to move on. There is a difference between compliments that occur in group interactions, and what effectively, as here, are two-party conversations with an audience. Compliments often silence the recipient, not least as the substance of the compliment tends to be inalienable and not distributable. Böhringer also argues that learner status is reinforced by virtue of being a compliment recipient, and therefore the subject of an evaluation – there is an asymmetry in the interaction, and at this point, research students are not co-creators of academic knowledge. Although the conversation may rapidly move on to a position where this co-creation takes place, for the duration of the compliment, it remains guidance.

The second section, where the chapters all address formal educational settings outside of universities, opens with Elsey, who shows how social order is brought about in a lesson in a further education college addressing everyday living skills for adult students with attributed learning difficulties. The lessons provided are designed to help with coping with everyday life, replicating these settings, and while students have individual aims and challenges, the lessons are nonetheless set up as activities in common. The crux of Elsey's chapter is the attempted withdrawal of one student from a cleaning lesson to pursue a personal activity, leading to a challenge to the order and ownership of that lesson. Getting the student back to the lesson in common sees a variety of interaction methods being employed by the teacher, which Elsey explicates as *cohorting practices*, the *ownership of lessons*, and *if/then formulations*. No matter what the aims, format, and constituency of the lesson, this is still a classroom setting where the mundane structure and desired order of the lesson is visible to all, as is the authority of the teacher, who has control in the time and space during which these events occur. Elsey shows us how these visible features are

oriented to and constitute the respective roles within the classroom, as the "repaired" lesson eventually takes form due to the errant student reading the signs and re-joining the class.

In his chapter, Mlynář introduces the idea of the "practical accord" to help explicate the relationship of textual objects to courses of work that they are or should be aligned with, as instructional matter in an educational setting. The setting is a high school in the Czech Republic in which students work together in pairs or, as in this case, in a group of three. The discussion of data shows the three students attempting to find the coherence in their work with a worksheet and online materials via a computer, with each having their own numbering system that is different but intended to be interrelated. The initial lack of cohesion between the two resources is a source of troubles for the students. Mlynář shows us how the students regain mastery of the local educational order, first through realising what the trouble is, formulating, and agreeing on it. Once this is done, the group is able to find ways of establishing a coherence (the "practical accord") between the two sources through prioritising on-screen instructions and allowing relevant terms in the online material to suggest where they should be answered. However, this trouble occurs again, occasioning a retrospective-prospective search through their materials and re-establishing of the group's task through treating previous "solutions" as preliminary proposals. Although dealing with texts in physical and online media, the work of "getting back on the page" manifestly involves not just spoken, but embodied and ostensive actions, as well as the students' own inscription work and its reflexive and structuring implications. Mlynář ends by outlining his views on the notion of the "practical accord" in relation to well-established concepts used in ethnomethodology such as "instructed action" and "gestalt contextures".

The chapter by Jimenez and Smith is set in a Welsh primary school and addresses how the (membership) "categorial landscape" of settings can be accomplished both through stable category relations for regularly bound activities, but also through more occasioned category devices as introduced by the specificities of the activity at hand – a similar point to that made by Bolam in this issue. The specific setting here is a class singing lesson in which there is a recognised call-and-response structure to the singing, with the chapter making use of graphic transcripts on the basis of video data. In their general activities in the classroom, the teacher and pupils manifest predicates of the expected Teacher-student pair, but there is always the possibility that this landscape can be complicated by the relevance of other membership devices, with "category incumbency" that works across different lines to that of the omni-relevant category. Jimenez and Smith show how the activity of group singing introduced a "leader-follower" device such that a pupil was able to take on the position of leader by counting in during the singing without the need for sanction by the teacher. The intervention was adequate to the task and as a result not only was the teacher able to "let it pass", but the counting also reflexively became part of the singing. This was in contrast to an earlier incident in which the omni-relevant category was to the fore and the teacher chose to issue a sanction. They conclude that membership categories do not provide easy "slots" for

individuals to fill, rather that occasioned category devices may become relevant at any time and interact with omni-relevant devices in interesting and observable ways. This is an argument in favour of the ongoing development of membership categories in settings, as opposed to the *a priori* definition of roles that appear to fit a context.

Boström's chapter uses Garfinkel's work on information to investigate the ways in which students come to understand the demands of a school science project in an upper secondary school in Sweden. The data is taken from seminar and tutorial discussions over a period of nine months. The information here is the guidance that students receive on their project. The students are confronted with something along the lines of a learning paradox, where they are expected to work in accordance with a set of standards and patterned relationships within the guidance (or "system of expectations"), but are not yet aware of "how to go on" with meeting those standards and have to guess at what manner of work they can acceptably refer to. Garfinkel's notion of instructed action becomes relevant here as students – very much along the same lines as in Garfinkel's celebrated study of furniture assembly – only get to see what the necessarily partial instructions are really referring to once nearly all parts are in place and they are in the final stages of putting together their research report. There is also a strong retrospective-prospective feel to the students' ongoing understanding as they reflect back and project forward for the sense of their work. The assessment takes on the sense of an object that bears similarity to other much-cited ethnomethodological objects, such as the potter's object. The chapter shows how the students' understanding develops over time through conversation with their teachers, who clearly have a much better sense of the whole from the outset, and who seem to be fully aware that the project will only take shape in its final throes. Careful readers will note Boström's usage of *abduction* in his chapter, and there may be something to be gained from reading it in conjunction with my own – not least as he provides an ethnographic extension of my more conversation-analytic chapter, with applied courses of reasoning evident over an extended period of time.

The final section moves outside of settings solely dedicated to formal instruction. Rooke and Rooke provide a study of learning to administer an intramuscular (IM) injection, with two candidate descriptions of this. The first is a uniquely adequate report on the process of so learning; the second relies on "misreadings" of Polanyi, Ryle, and the design theorist Norman. With one eye on the development of an EM hybrid discipline of nursing, and the other on the recent calls to retain or enhance ethnomethodology's radical credentials as outlined above, they argue that their approach of observing the strong form of unique adequacy (UA) while introducing non-indigenous concepts for their value in describing the setting is a step towards this aim. The combination of ideas from Ryle, Polanyi, and Norman in this instance help to provide the means of describing the complex relationship between explication, manual skill, and physical affordance that can be observed in the lesson, and thus in the methods used. Readers familiar with recent debates in ethnomethodology will be interested in the opinions on unique adequacy and hybrid studies as set out by Rooke and Rooke, as they will be by the treatment of Ryle's *knowing-how* and *knowing-that* in comparison with Polanyi's idea of *tacit knowing*. However,

the authors conclude that their analysis conforms to UA requirements of method, but not yet the requirements for a hybrid study. They set out the requirements for a hybrid discipline in nursing, including, among other things, a strict observance to both forms of UA, with the findings making contributions to the practice of nursing work (in this case). This project, the authors say, remains aspirational.

In their chapter, Brincher and Moutinho explore the interaction of a competitive "Counter Strike: Global Offensive" player (this being a "Massive-Multiplayer Online Game") and her younger brother, whom she is providing a tutorial to in his first competitive match. Their data consists of extracts from a video available on Youtube, rendered into transcripts of talk interspersed with screengrabs of the players and of the "player's-eye" view of the game. The authors see at least two sets of phenomena in this data: one is the brother's orientation to the sister's instructions, the sense of which emerges as they are followed. The second is how the overlap between the *Lebenswelt* (life-world) and the *Spielwelt* (game-world), ostensibly two separable realms of action and understanding, are brought together as a temporal whole. Brincher and Moutinho show how the brother receives instruction designed to help him communicate in a competitive game, maximising his movement and disposition in various game contexts, with his sister using various perspicuous moments to explain to him what has happened. The brother's practical local work within the game turns, as Garfinkel (2002) demonstrated, the rules into a description. The junior player makes his actions during gameplay accountable (in all senses) to his sister, with the in-game and off-game elements, interactions and temporalities, becoming a *gestalt*. The authors conclude that the players do not recognise distinct modalities or have their experiences framed by gameplay, but employ standard interactional resources to get the job done: common-sense reasoning, communication, a horizon of future experiences, and timing, eliding boundaries between different "worlds" as they do so.

Finally, Yasuaki examines a lesson in singing Japanese nursery rhymes. Here, the voice of the learner – also the author – becomes the object of instruction by the teacher, who is also the accompanying musician. The study is perspicuous in showing that the voice is simultaneously an "invisible instrument" *and* embodied, and so is amenable to instructional focus on singing technique and bodily disposition to make the production of invisible sounds accountable. This the author calls the "envisioning of the singing voice". It also shows how the relationship between words and music in vocal performance are subject to specific cultural-aesthetic preferences. Yasuaki makes use of transcripts from video recording and graphic transcripts to illustrate how the sequential sense of the instructional interaction is supplemented by other, multimodal, practices, including bodily configuration, quotations, descriptions, gestures, and gazes, which in collaboration with the learner proceed as transition from performance to instruction, demonstration of good and bad singing examples with explanations, and re-performance to demonstrate confirmation of the acquisition of teaching content. He concludes that the resources used to understand the performance of music cannot be fully captured by language or sheet music. The resources required to come to a genuine understanding are

the full range of practices literally *incorporated* into student-teacher interactions, and the cultural preferences brought as aspirations to the lesson. Singing instruction specifically is visually structured by a wide array of participation framework features.

3. RESPECIFYING EDUCATION AND KEEPING ETHNOMETHODOLOGY RADICAL

At least since 2016, and the introduction of new thinking about the future of ethnomethodology (see https://radicalethno.org/index.html), we have had to ask ourselves questions about where our studies stand and what they achieve in relation to any wider agenda. It's perhaps still as yet a little unfair to be asking colleagues to take on any larger responsibility where their own intellectual problems are solved by them carrying out "more studies", or where they may not have been party to any of the discussions that have taken place in person and in writing. Nor would it be fair to set up this collection of articles as a solution to the problem I set out in the first section above (although some do reference these discussions, and some do address the omitted opportunities suggested by Anderson [2016]). However, I feel it is incumbent on me to at least make some tentative forays into what a future programmatic contribution could be from ethnomethodological studies *of* education, and perhaps *for* the relationship between ethnomethodology and education broadly conceived. At the moment, I see four possibilities, which I will set out in a roughly increasing order of ambition.

To start with, there would be the continued production of new studies with no strategic programme to connect them. Of course, ethnomethodology is not alone among social science specialisms that it is largely diasporic, and the issue of who initiates and maintains any such programme is problematic. As suggested above, EM/CA approaches and studies *do* have some attraction to non-specialists where they are seen as providing close detail to a given research problematic. Explication of the order of phenomena studied by EM/CA does provide usable insights. Among these, I would say that the slippage between learning and education can be a particularly productive one. Ethnomethodologists are well equipped to find perspicuous examples of the ways in members competently pass in, bootstrap their way through, participate in, learn from, and adapt to settings. They have also made a point of showing the local and informal ways in which rules and criteria come to be applied. To paraphrase Rooke and Rooke in this volume, focusing on a learning process brings tacit knowledge into view. EM studies emphasise the direct methods of educational production, and what counts as learning, on the part of participants. One way or another, we are never very far away from seeing learning in action through the EM lens. Despite the ongoing ambition of problematising what we are asked to accept educational phenomena consist in (cf. Heyman 1980), EM studies can attract at least a random readership in education, which has been apt to borrow its theoretical and conceptual inspiration from other disciplines (Hirst 1983).

Another possibility – in practice likely to be hardly different from the first – is that of connecting to real-world practical developments and their associated responses. There

is an excellent example in this volume in the form of Bolam's paper. Over the last few years there has been a major, pandemic-occasioned shift in general work and living patterns, and this has led to seismic changes in educational contexts. The need to bring existing competences to new technologies for newly-hybrid ways of teaching and learning certainly constitutes a fecund site of research, and it takes little imagination to see how this can quickly become a perspicuous site for EM studies. It is serendipitous that there is already a corpus of EM/CA work, not least under the aegis of 'technomethodology' as cited by Bolam (e.g. Crabtree 2004), that can be used to support this. The wider connection of this existing literature to new studies and the general need for a detailed ethnographic perspective has promise. Something that is seen in Bolam's chapter, and which could be built on, is the question of how much new media occasion new practices, and how much existing practices – as seen for instance through the omni-relevant membership device of lecturer-student – are retained. In this sense the work of Harvey Sacks and others remains a useful corrective to the more lurid, but more popular, arguments of McLuhan.

A third path, again contiguous with the previous one, would be the development of hybrid studies and hybrid disciplines. There is an obvious example in this collection as provided by Rooke and Rooke, who argue that this kind of development would revitalise ethnomethodology. Different views abound on this ambition more generally. The advantage of, and a notable feature of this aim, is that the hybrid discipline need not be in a formal educational setting, but would necessarily involve mutual instruction. This then could be a way of finding a concerted pay-off in the ethnomethodological approach to learning. Hybrid studies have been discussed at length elsewhere (see e.g. Greiffenhagen & Sharrock 2019), so I will only note here that there seems little wrong with the ambition; the main reservation being whether any potential partner discipline or professional practice would want or evince the need for ethnomethodological insights.

The final possibility originates in a presentation by Button and Sharrock (2016) for the *Radical Ethnomethodology* conference. In this presentation, they suggest that the studies of the first generation of ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts did not carry out studies for their own sake, but in order to probe various prevailing methodological and conceptual problems of the day and to find ways of contributing to them. As the various authors I have cited in relation to this stock-take of a few years ago note, it is only fair to say that some of these matters have probably been solved to the satisfaction of many through the development of the familiar tools of EM/CA. This has led, among other things, to subsequent generations of studies using existing tools to extend and fill in the gaps of the original work. This does not mean that subsequent work has not been stimulating and systematic, and it says a lot for the inventiveness of the likes of Garfinkel and Sacks that their publications are still massively generative, and often the first things we turn to for inspiration. It also seems as though, despite some scepticism as to the possibility of a programme of hybrid studies, there is a consensus that new programmatic work need not limit itself to the concerns of academic sociology.

I would suggest that EM studies could be generated in educational research that are programmatic for ethnomethodology and address the wider issues of such research. The tentative lines of engagement as set out by Anderson, Button, and Sharrock should avoid the trap of trying to fit too assiduously with social scientific or educational agendas, leaving the issue of what other disciplines can take or learn from EM/CA. On this last model, we would need to identify carefully the prevailing concerns, and stake out the ground accordingly.

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