

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor in Education

School of Education

Leicester University

Seán O'Halloran

Title:

**An investigation into the display of complementarity and symmetry in the discorsal
practices of meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous**

October

2003

Table of contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	II
INDEX OF TABLES AND FIGURES	V
ABSTRACT	VI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY AND THE USE OF NAMES	VIII
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 THE ORIGIN AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	1
1.2 THE ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY	3
1.2.1. <i>AA introduced</i>	3
1.2.2. <i>Methodological approaches and design</i>	5
1.2.3. <i>Phase one - Ethnographic immersion and the study of AA texts</i>	5
1.2.4. <i>Phase two – Conversation Analysis</i>	6
1.2.5. <i>Research questions</i>	7
CHAPTER 2 - AA'S TWELVE STEPS AND TRADITIONS	10
2.1 INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW OF AA'S HISTORY, STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE	10
2.1.1. <i>The Twelve Steps</i>	11
2.1.2. <i>Language and organisation</i>	14
2.1.3. <i>Early AA</i>	14
2.1.4. <i>The reflexivity of AA's Twelve Steps and Traditions</i>	16
2.3 AA WRITTEN TEXTS	23
2.3.1. <i>The Big Book</i>	23
2.3.2. <i>The "tools" of the programme</i>	26
2.3.3. <i>Conclusion</i>	27
3.1 THE LOCAL CONTEXT	28
3.1.1. <i>Membership</i>	29
3.1.2. <i>Groups and meetings</i>	30
3.1.3. <i>Meeting locations</i>	32
3.1.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	35
3.2 THE ETHICS OF ACCESS	35
3.2.1. <i>The development of codes of ethics in research</i>	36
3.2.2. <i>Attitudes to research within AA</i>	37
3.2.3. <i>Accessing AA</i>	37
3.2.4. <i>Gaining access and informed consent for this study</i>	38
3.2.5. <i>Gaining consent to participant observation at AA meetings</i>	40
3.2.6. <i>Gaining consent to tape AA meetings</i>	41

3.2.7. Reformulations in response to AA member concerns	42
3.2.8. Preliminary findings about AA in the group under investigation	44
3.2.9. Deception and risk of harm	45
3.2.10. The role and identity of the researcher	47
3.2.11. Conclusion	49
CHAPTER 4 - A REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATING TO AA	50
4.1 AA AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT	50
4.1.1. Some psychological profiles of the alcoholic	52
4.2 AA VOICES – ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES	60
4.2.1. Symbolic interactionism	61
4.2.2. The analysability of AA interaction	62
4.3 THE LANGUAGE OF AA MEETING	63
4.3.1. The analysis of Institutional Interaction in AA meetings	66
4.3.2. Turn-taking and topic construction in AA meetings	66
4.3.3. Going beyond the methodology of Institutional Interaction	69
4.3.4. Conclusion	70
CHAPTER 5 - ETHNOGRAPHIC IMMERSION	72
5.1 FROM A MACRO TO A MICRO PERSPECTIVE	73
5.1.1. Naturalism	73
5.2 LIMITATIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION IN LOCATING THE CONSTITUTIVE NATURE OF INTERACTION	76
5.2 1. Rule-governed discourse	77
5.3 CONCLUSION	78
CHAPTER 6 - RESEARCHING INSTITUTIONAL INTERACTION	79
6.1. DOING THINGS WITH LANGUAGE: SPEECH ACTS, FOOTING AND SPEAKER ALIGNMENT	79
6.1.1. Context as emergent	81
6.2 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS	82
6.2.1. Turn taking in mundane conversation	83
6.3 THE ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL INTERACTION	86
6.3.1. Relevance and procedural consequentiality	89
6.3.2. Orientation to goals	92
6.3.3. Symmetry in interaction	94
6.4. THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF NATURALLY OCCURRING DATA	95
6.4.1. Treatment of recorded data	96
6.4.2. Researching the discursive practices of a reclusive institution	96

CHAPTER 7 - THE SETTING, FRAME AND FORMAT OF AA MEETINGS	98
7.1 THE AA MEETING	99
7.1.1. <i>The AA programme as a 'room'</i>	99
7.1.2. <i>Meeting types</i>	100
7.1.3. <i>Pre-meeting interaction</i>	102
7.2 FRAMING MEETINGS AND TURNS	103
7.2.1. <i>Initiating and conducting a meeting</i>	103
7.2.2. <i>The opening protocols</i>	105
7.2.3. <i>Intertextual modality</i>	108
7.2.4. <i>Initiating interactive turn taking</i>	110
7.2.5. <i>Meeting closing frame</i>	112
7.3 FRAMING TURNS AND TURN TRANSITIONS	114
7.4 CONCLUSIONS	118
CHAPTER 8 - DEPENDENCY AND SYMMETRY IN AA INTERACTION	121
8.1 THE PERSONAL AND THE PROTOTYPICAL AA STORY	122
8.1.1. <i>The alignment of topic to collective experience</i>	124
8.1.2. <i>The personal narrative as an exemplum of the prototypical AA narrative</i>	125
8.1.3. <i>Density of intertextuality</i>	130
8.1.4. <i>Summary of key features of an AA turn</i>	134
8.2 BREACHES IN NORMATIVE ALIGNMENT	134
8.3 ESTABLISHING TOPICAL COHERENCE	150
8.4 TURN TAKING	153
8.5 THE TRANSMISSION OF AA BELIEFS AND PRACTICES	156
<i>Conclusions</i>	159
CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSIONS	161
9.1.1. <i>Research questions</i>	161
9.1.2. <i>The complementarity of the alcoholic's dependency on AA</i>	162
9.1.3. <i>Symmetry between AA members</i>	164
9.1.4. <i>The 'institutional' nature of AA interaction</i>	165
9.1.5. <i>The goals of AA institutional interaction</i>	166
REFERENCES	168
APPENDIX A – AA'S TWELVE STEPS	181
APPENDIX B – AA'S TWELVE TRADITIONS	182
APPENDIX C –TAPE TRANSCRIPT	183
<i>Charlie</i>	183
<i>Dave</i>	186

<i>Norman</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>Min</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>Jim</i>	<i>191</i>
APPENDIX D - TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS	194

Index of tables and figures

Table 1	A comparison of the elements associated with turn closing presented by Arminen and the elements observed in the Cosmo-city group	118
Table 2	A comparison between the phraseology used by Charlie and that used in AA literature	131
Addenda	1 audio tape of the meeting whose partial transcript appears in Appendix C. Duration one hour. Housed in pocket attached to back cover.	

Word count 71,689

Abstract

This is a study of the discoursal interactional practices members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) use to display their alignment to the AA programme and to fellow participants in AA meetings.

An ethnographic study was initially done of an Alcoholics Anonymous group in a location in a cosmopolitan city in Asia. This part of the study was undertaken to allow the researcher to immerse himself in AA discourse and culture in order to gain access to the everyday understandings embedded in AA life and discourse. It was also necessary to ascertain if AA in that part of the world was significantly different from AA elsewhere which has relevance to the significance of the findings.

Following ethnographic immersion, research using an ethnomethodological approach was undertaken. Data were collected through audio recordings and transcription of eleven AA meetings held in two locations in Asia.

Through the analysis of the differing discoursal practices which characterise different stages of AA meetings, it is demonstrated that they contain three episodes constituted by contrasting interactive features. Two of these are seen as framing the interactive episode involving 'sharing'. The two framing episodes contain a sequentially structured series of fixed, multi-mode turns. They frame the interactive heart of the meeting which involves the sharing turns. All three episodes are marked by an intertextual alignment to AA literature and belief system.

Data from the sharing episode is analysed and demonstrates the employment of sustained turns allows participants discoursal space to co-construct their personal narrative around and through an AA meta-narrative which exemplifies the necessity and relevance of the Twelve Steps in their lives, and thus their dependency on AA. The data also reveal the institutional nature of the turn taking system and demonstrates that it is the mechanism whereby the institutional goals of AA are realised. The construction of a shared identity as alcoholics is reflexively related to the shared range of discoursal practices employed. The lack of differentials in the range of discoursal practices employed constitutes non-differentiated roles among participants which are displayed though sustained discoursal symmetry. This construction of symmetry and dependency is seen as a discoursal manifestation of what Gregory Bateson sees as the necessary realignment in the combative dualist worldview of the alcoholic whereby 'surrender' brings about acceptance of self, one's alcoholism and the world.

Acknowledgements

It is unlikely I would have embarked on this study without the encouragement and assistance the Directorate of the Hong Kong Institute of Education gave to staff who wished to engage in Doctoral Studies. I am extremely grateful to them for suggesting a path I may not have chosen for myself but which I have found immensely rewarding.

I am grateful also to Dr Martin Cortazzi, formerly of the University of Leicester, and the staff of the Doctor of Education programme of that university for supporting me in my choice of topic and preparing me for this task. I am particularly grateful to Dr Peter Martin for his patient support, encouragement and invaluable feedback throughout this study. Thank you, Peter.

I should also mention the kind and professional support I received from the staff in the libraries of both the Hong Kong Institute of Education and of the University of Leicester.

My debt of gratitude to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, especially in the locations here studied, cannot be quantified or fully expressed. I felt honoured to be accepted as a researcher in their midst and privileged to be allowed to observe AA meetings for the purposes of this research.

Finally, I have to mention my family, particularly my wife Helen who had to bear with my preoccupations throughout the period of this study. I am so grateful for her belief that it could be done and for her giving me the space to do it. There are Catherine and Conor to thank. They did much of the transcription work for me. There are the discussions I had with them and with Ciaran. These were stimulating, rewarding and clarifying. And there are, of course, Siobhan and Maria, who did enough by just being Siobhan and Maria.

Thanks.

List of Abbreviations and notes on terminology and the use of names

The following is a list of the most commonly used abbreviations in the thesis.

AA	Alcoholics anonymous
AOSM	Asia Oceania Service Meeting
CA	Conversation Analysis
OG	The Oxford Group
NCA	National Council on Alcohol

In this study, AA members as such are referred to as *members*. The term *informants* is used to refer to those who supply data which is elicited through the research process. The term *participant* is used to refer to AA members who in the course of participating in meetings provide data, whether taped or captured through notes. However, in close discussions of the work of other writers, their terminology is preferred.

AA traditions prefer that AA members are referred to only by their AA names, usually their given name, sometimes followed by the initial letter of their family names. This practice is followed here. However, Bill Wilson (Bill W) and Robert Smith (Dr Bob) have been identified as the founders of AA in so many publications, that they are sometimes referred to using their full names.

All personal and place names used in the transcripts have been altered or suppressed.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to outline the origins of this study and give a brief review of its context and methodology. This is followed by a discussion of the features of AA discourse researched.

1.1 The origin and context of the study

The study is of the discourse and interaction in meetings of an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group in a cosmopolitan city in Asia, henceforth referred to as Cosmo-city. The use of the term *Cosmo-city*, has been necessitated for ethical reasons, and results from an undertaking not to identify the exact location of the group in any publication where recorded data of actual members is used. It is sufficient to say that the group is located in a cosmopolitan city in Asia.

This study was prompted by my own experience in attending a number of such meetings where I was struck by the singular nature of both the format and the interaction that took place. I was particularly interested in:

how a meeting is accomplished (Drew and Heritage, 1992) by members as a social activity

the elements that frame (Bateson, 1985) meetings as the format of meetings seem to be composed of episodes involving quite different but interdependent discoursal practices,

the participant footing (Goffman, 1981) adopted by participants to AA texts and how they aligned themselves to these texts and previous turns,

the nature of the discoursal constraints (Levinson, 1992), (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993) adhered to by the participants and these constraints reflected on the discoursal alignment between the participants themselves.

I was also interested to discover if this particular AA group was representative of AA as a whole, or if, being out of the heartland of AA, i.e. the United States, it had developed characteristics of its own.

I was aware that researching a reclusive organisation like AA involved particular ethical issues. I thus sought fully informed consent from group members to observe

and record interaction during AA meetings at the very start of the research process. It was at this point I became aware that the very process of ensuring my research was ethical was revealing significant research findings as negotiating access and informed consent afforded me the opportunity to observe the workings of AA structures and the attitude to outside issues taken by its members. For this reason, I have included a detailed description of the ethical processes I engaged in the section where I introduce and describe the group.

Regarding the nature of AA in a wider context, suffice to say at this point that AA is an international, loosely organised mutual help group for those suffering from alcohol problems. AA groups have great autonomy and look to a central organisation only for AA literature and the organisation of intergroup events. The main function of an AA group is to run AA meetings for those suffering from alcoholism and others interested in this condition. Mäkelä (1996: 52) describes AA's formal structure both within and outside the US as typically consisting of groups, intergroups, and phone answering services, and of local, regional, and national service meetings; the prototypical representation of this structure being the organisational chart (Fig 1).

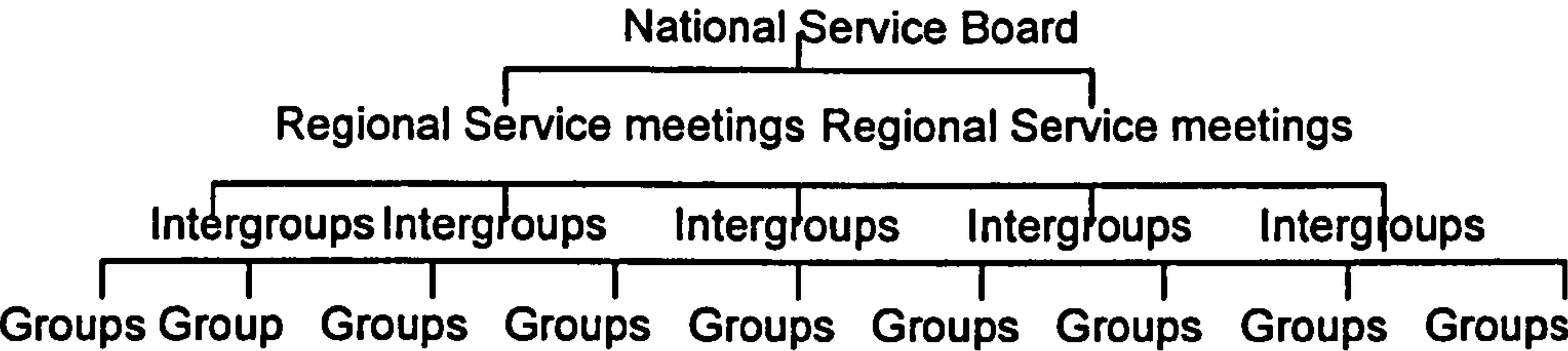


Fig. 1 – The organisational structure of AA

It became apparent that the Cosmo-city AA group adhered to AA literature and guidelines and received a considerable influx of long-standing AA members from the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia. These two factors, described in detail in Chapter 3, ensured that the principles and practices of this group appeared not to be essentially different from mainstream AA groups elsewhere. Indeed, this was frequently testified to by visiting AA members travelling to this cosmopolitan city. However, being comprised largely of expatriate members from outside the region and thereby not being integrated with the local community and being isolated within the region, it had developed structural characteristics of its own which are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.2 The organisation of the study

Throughout my professional life as an English language teacher, I have been involved with studying aspects of language. This has no doubt influenced this study. However, it was my experience in visiting AA meetings, rather than an interest in institutional interaction that led directly to this study. The first three chapters are therefore concerned primarily with AA both in its broader context and in the particular context studied here.

1.2.1. AA introduced

Chapter 2 offers an introduction to AA, focusing on aspects of its language and the role of discursial practices in its development. Aspects of its history, structure, discourse and organisation are outlined. It is a contention of this study that, while AA members do meet for mutual support in combating alcohol addiction in sharing their experiences, they typically align that sharing to a body of AA literature and beliefs. Furthermore, their discursial practices both constitute and are constituted through AA social structures. This approach emphasises practices that at once describe and constitute a social framework, i.e. reflexivity (Coulon, 1995). Within AA there is a reflexive relationship between structure, beliefs and discursial practices that enable its members to reconstruct their worldview and the relationship between *self* and the outside world. The Twelve Steps (Appendix A) and Twelve Traditions (Appendix B) of AA are introduced, being respectively the corner stones of AA principles and organisational structure. Thus, early drafts of the 12-Steps are examined, highlighting the process of co-authorship and the elimination of an expert / client relationship. The reflexive relationship between AA's Twelve Steps and Traditions is explored as are major themes in AA's written texts, including the concepts of alcoholism as a disease and the existence of a higher power.

Chapter 3 moves to the immediate context of this study. The AA group in Cosmo-city is introduced, focussing on its local features, membership, meeting locations and meeting procedures. My initial encounter with this group as a researcher involved the process of gaining access and informed consent. For this reason, the ethical issues related to research are included in this chapter. This process itself was illuminating and has implications for the findings of this study in the following ways.

It illustrated that this AA group operates within the Twelve Traditions of AA, introduced in Chapter 2, that characterise AA elsewhere. This is crucial in a study which explores the reflexive relationship between discourse and social structures.

The problems I experienced in gaining full informed consent to tape AA meetings led to reformulations of the research design. My intended research plan could have led to one member avoiding meetings where I was present. This I felt could result in a serious risk of harm.

Also outlined are the codes of ethics in social research in general and the attitudes to research which obtain within AA itself.

Chapter 4 presents a review of relevant research into AA. This study attempts to demonstrate that within AA there is a reflexive relationship between its structure, its beliefs and its discoursal practices. It is through its discoursal practices that members reconstruct their worldview and the relationship between self and the outside world. Therefore, literature on AA as a social movement is outlined (Room, 1993, Borkman, 1999). The chapter also introduces some psychological profiles of the alcoholic. These explore the alcoholics' view of the relationship between self and the outside world, (Tiebout, 1953; Tiebout, 1954), (Bateson, 1985 {1971}), (Brown, 1993).

Bateson (1985 {1971}) has argued that a basic fault in the alcoholic is an erroneous self-concept whereby the surrounding world is experienced as a hierarchical, compartmental structure which the individual pits himself against the world. AA, he argued helps the individual to realign his / her combative orientation to the world and accept it. An aim of this study is to demonstrate that the discoursal practices within AA meetings enable AA members to realign this worldview through pervasively displaying a *complementary* relationship with the AA programme and a *symmetrical* relationship with AA members.

Much research has attempted to present AA members' voices, thus ethnographic research (Maxwell, 1984) and research from the tradition of symbolic interactionism are also reviewed, (Rudy, 1986), (Denzin, 1989, 1997). Also outlined are important developments in research into AA meetings as speech events (Mäkelä, 1996).

Discoursal practices which display speaker alignment and footing (Goffman, 1981) are related to the psychological profiles of certain types of alcoholics. The final part of Chapter 4 introduces research into AA in the ethnomethodological Conversation

Analysis tradition. The work of Arminen (1996a; 1996b; 1998a; 1998b; 1999) who has applied this methodology directly to AA discourse is explored in some detail, especially as it related to turn taking and topic construction in AA meetings. It is in relation to the work of Bateson and Arminen in particular that the concerns of this piece of research are located.

1.2.2. Methodological approaches and design

This study is primarily concerned with the discourse of AA meetings. The interest in AA as an organised social institution is primarily related to the reflexive relationship between discourse and social structure. Chapters 5 and 6 move the focus away from AA to methodological issues and my proposed research design.

The research is designed in two phases. The first phase involves ethnographic immersion using participant observation involving documentary analysis of major AA texts. The second is an analysis of situated talk in interaction in AA meetings.

1.2.3. Phase one - Ethnographic immersion and the study of AA texts

Chapter 5 outlines the use of naturalism and participant observation to gain familiarity with the common everyday understandings of AA members. Ethnographic immersion in this study is restricted to participant observation in order to gain insights into the participants' everyday world and practices. This is done in order that the researcher may develop his own understandings as an informed observer of AA culture and the interactive language of AA meetings. This initial immersion is largely unnecessary in studies of interaction of mundane conversation and of interactional practices within mainstream institutions as the researcher and participants share membership of the same culture. However, with a reclusive institution like AA it is a necessary prerequisite that the researcher gains an understanding of what is happening which draws on member competencies and meanings, as displayed in interactive practices. These are seen to be contingent, locally accomplished, situated and conventional (Psathas, 1995).

The group in this particular location was selected for study as I had already become acquainted with the group prior to forming an intention to research its interactional practices. Once I decided to research the group, informed consent was sought, as described in Chapter 3.

In the period from mid 1999 to October 2001, meetings were observed on a weekly basis, apart from eight weeks in the summer months. Approximately 100 meetings were observed in that period, allowing me to gain considerable knowledge of normative practices in the group's meetings.

Field notes were not taken during but made after the meetings. This was to avoid intrusive and distracting behaviour. Detailed notes were usually only made of meetings where norms appeared to be violated.

The rationale for the analysis of AA texts, particularly *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Anon, 1985), is similar to the rationale for ethnographic immersion. They are of interest in so far as they relate to and impinge on, through intertextual allusions and participant alignment, AA interaction in meetings. As is discussed in Chapter 7, some texts are used to frame AA meetings, other readings actually constitute the first turn in the interactive part of the meeting as they are read directly after the opening protocols. Furthermore, participants align their own turns to AA texts, whether read at the meeting or not. This intertextual aspect of AA discursive practices has not been commented on significantly in previous work on AA language. However, as members orientate to them in a recursive and pervasive manner, they can be seen to be a constitutive element of AA interaction.

The reason for neglect of this feature of AA interaction may be accounted for by the reclusive nature of AA. A researcher may not be aware of these alignments, orientations and allusions because they do not share an understanding of what is happening which draws on member competencies. To gain full access to these meanings the researcher needs to be aware of how they are formed in AA's ideology though shared constructs that emerge in interaction and AA texts, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters.

However, ethnography, and the insights it can draw from informants' concepts and language is of limited value in analysing how institutions are 'talked into being', (Heritage, 1984). For this, an analysis of actual recorded interaction is required.

1.2.4. Phase two – Conversation Analysis

Chapter 6, therefore, explores the ethnomethodological approaches involved in Conversation Analysis (CA) and the analysis of Institutional Interaction using recorded data. As a background to this the concepts of 'speech acts' (Searle, 1960),

'framing' (Bateson, 1985) and 'footing' (Goffman, 1981) are also introduced. The principles of analysing talk-in-interaction using Conversation Analysis and the related methodology of analysis of Institutional Interaction are outlined, particularly the activity focus of CA and turn taking in mundane conversation and institutional interaction. The chapter closes with an exploration of asymmetrical and symmetrical relations (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998) in interaction suggesting how the concepts and methodologies outlined above have informed this research and are capable of yielding useful findings.

The data prepared for this study are all naturally occurring and are presented as transcripts of recordings of AA speakers made in AA conferences in two locations, one in Cosmo-city Asia and one in another unidentified cosmopolitan city in Asia. Though eleven meetings have been transcribed for this study, involving 70 individual extended turns, data from one meeting are discussed in great detail. This meeting was selected because in it things appeared to go wrong. This selection is justified according to ethnomethodological principles which focus on 'breaches' (Garfinkel, 1986) to gain analytical access to members' taken for granted, common sense knowledge through the examination of members' orientation to violated norms.

The abundance of data allowed the selection to be determined primarily on the 'breach' principle discussed above. Some data were selected on the basis that the speakers, having been selected by the convention organising committees, appeared to be considered proficient exponents of AA discourse. Most of the data were of this nature. Nonetheless, evidence for this is based on previous ethnographic observation by the researcher, but more importantly, none of the participants appeared to display an orientation to the presence of violated norms.

1.2.5. Research questions

Through a process involving participant observation of AA meetings, a study of AA literature and practices and an exploration of methodologies addressing the exploration of social discourse it became possible to frame the questions this research addresses.

This study seeks to identify the discoursal practices used in the various episodes of an AA meeting, including its opening and closing protocols and its sharing episode.

It aims to demonstrate that the discoursal practices of an AA meeting allow members to accomplish both

a complementary alignment to AA and

a symmetrical alignment towards each other,

It also hopes to demonstrate that these alignments have a constitutive relationship to the institutional *aims* of AA.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore how AA meetings are composed of two distinct systems of discoursal practices involving a 2-part framing episode and an interactive sharing episode. Chapter 7 explores how one discoursal system, the *meeting frame*, is comprised of two parts which start and conclude the meeting. These involve a sequence of formal, largely invariable, quasi-religious readings, prayers and rituals which *frame* the central interactive episode involving 'sharing' turns. Chapter 8 explores the sharing episode. Throughout both episodes, members' adhere closely to two separate but rule-governed systems of discoursal interaction.

This study is therefore concerned with the discoursal rules which govern and constitute the framing and sharing episodes and the discoursal practices through which members align themselves to the AA programme, texts, belief system and previous speakers. It explores the interactional constraints adhered to by AA members within the frame of an AA meeting and in the sustained turns of the sharing episode.

It is claimed that the symmetry reflected in the non-hierarchical, egalitarian nature of AA, is largely constituted through the way interaction is managed. This symmetry involves members engaging in biographically relevant discourse which pervasively is positively aligned to the contribution of others. Furthermore, they adopt a footing which suggests dependency on AA beliefs, principles and practices. The institutional constraints on discoursal practice typically involve the participants adopting a footing which minimises their personal authorial role in their discourse but attributes the

source of what is said to the beliefs and principals of AA. In this manner, AA members are equipped with the discorsal resources to reduce the alcoholics' aggrandised ego (Tiebout, 1954), which places them in conflict with themselves, others and the world (Bateson, 1985 {1971}).

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline, in an introductory manner, the nature and origin of this research, by briefly introducing AA as an organisation. Also briefly introduced is the design of the methodology employed. The chapter has indicated the main questions emerging from and addressed by this study as well as indicating its findings. The following chapter introduces the central beliefs and organisational principles of AA, particularly as set out in the 12 Steps and Traditions.

Chapter 2 - AA's Twelve Steps and Traditions

This study approaches AA as an institution whose structure and internal social relationships are constituted through its discourse, especially through the nature of interaction and other discoursal practices in AA meetings. This discourse, it is claimed, is marked by participants displaying both symmetry between themselves and dependency on the AA programme and belief system. Furthermore, it is claimed that the display of these alignments is related to the institutional aims of AA.

The aim of this chapter is, while giving a brief introduction to AA's Twelve Steps (Appendix A) and Twelve Traditions (Appendix B), to demonstrate that aspects of these alignments are displayed in other features of AA from its earliest days. The Twelve Steps require admission of powerlessness and surrender to – dependency upon - a 'higher power' or God. These Steps first appeared in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). An examination of the drafting of these Steps demonstrates that its writers were concerned to foster a sense of mutuality and reduce the inequality inherent in the relationship between author and reader. The Twelve Traditions - AA's organisational principles - it is further argued, were developed primarily to ensure the symmetrical relations which obtained between AA's first members were maintained in a vastly expanded organisation.

A feature of the AA discoursal practices in meetings is the manner in which members both align their discourse to AA beliefs and practices and construct their own stories within and through them. As these beliefs derive primarily from AA literature, the chapter ends with a brief overview of some of AA's main texts.

2.1 Introductory overview of AA's history, structure and discourse

AA is a mutual help organisation for those suffering from alcoholism which originated in the United States of America in 1935. Its own defining statement is the 'The Preamble', which first appeared in the May 1946 copy of the AA magazine *Grapevine*. It is read at the beginning of every AA meeting held by the group under study here.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

By its own definition, the discursual practice of the 'sharing' of experience is AA's primary activity. This is done so members can solve their common problem through mutual support. Organisationally it is totally inclusive, having only one condition of membership. AA accepts no financial support, and endorses nothing - being neutral on every subject that divides mankind. Membership, as its name indicates, is anonymous.

As membership has grown and meetings have proliferated new groups have been formed. These groups are not accountable to the movement as a whole, unless involved in behaviour likely to damage AA. Group members elect delegates to attend central, regional, and national bodies. The General Service Conference (United States and Canada) is the most prominent of these, being the guardian of the World Service and Twelve Traditions (Appendix B). Its Charter states, 'The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for *Alcoholics Anonymous*', (Anon, 1986). The main function of central and regional bodies in AA is to serve the group and AA members, mainly through the supply of literature.

Room (1993) has characterised AA as having a polycephalous, egalitarian and anarchistic organisational framework. The Twelve Traditions evolved out of the experience of early members as an encapsulation of the principles which emerged for the organisation's successful development. These will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

2.1.1. The Twelve Steps

The Twelve Steps (Appendix A) have been widely used and followed both within and beyond the boundaries of AA itself. An understanding of the Twelve Steps, which originated in Chapter 5 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, (Anon, 1985 {1939}) is central to understanding the belief system of AA. They are in effect the AA programme of recovery and ideally are undertaken by all active AA members often repeatedly and over a period of years. They were derived from the Christian tradition via the Oxford

Group (OG), a Christian group which aspired towards the spirit of early Christianity. (Anon, 1984).

Talking the steps involves the individual acknowledging her/his alcoholism, i.e. powerlessness over alcohol (Step 1) and the need to rely on a power outside of self to achieve sobriety (Steps 2 and 3). They also require the acknowledgement of harm done (Steps 4 and 5), and reliance on God - a higher power - to bring about changes in one's life (Steps 6 and 7). They require restitution for harm done (Steps 8 and 9) and the development of spiritual practices (Steps 10 and 11). Step 12 involves the incorporation of the previous steps into one's daily life and a commitment to help other alcoholics. Taking Step 1 may be seen as virtually a condition of AA membership. Failure to 'do the steps' is often cited as a major reason for a member relapsing to alcoholic drinking.

Among the first one hundred recovering members of the then called Alcoholic Foundation were 'Christians in the doctrinal sense of the word', liberals, among whom could be included Bill Wilson himself and atheists' (Anon, 1986). Such divergent belief systems could easily destroy the fledgling organisation, so the tradition soon developed to avoid specifically religious terminology. The references to *God* offended some so the hedge, 'as we understand him' became the acceptable compromise with the alternative expression *higher power*.

The use of the term 'the steps' is indicative of how the writers of the *Big Book* attempted to avoid vesting the original members with authority. In the original text, the prescriptive word *directions* was used. It seems unlikely that we would be witnessing the present proliferation of 12-Step Movements if they were called the 12-Directions Movement.

The idea of a spiritual 'way', 'path' or 'journey' is a commonplace in spiritual language when referring to spiritual development. Indeed Fr Dowling, a Jesuit and close friend and spiritual advisor of Bill W., saw similarities between them and the Practices of St Ignatius of Loyola. However, a journey into an unknown region requires directions or a map supplied from people who know, who have been there. It also requires one puts one foot in front of the other, which the traveller alone can do. By presenting a journey as made up of steps, the original writers of the *Big Book* chose to represent the journey in terms of what the traveller is responsible for rather than in terms of

what others already know of the terrain; the focus is on the traveller's responsibility rather than the knowledge of the cartographers.

Steps represent part of a journey as indeed Chairman Mao's famous maxim suggests, 'a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step'. The choice of the word 'steps', with its focus on the discrete elements of the journey rather than the final destination, has fewer teleological or religious connotations. There is no concern with the afterlife or salvation in AA. The objective is sobriety, 'a day at a time', in the here and now.

The Steps, with the focus on what is done by the traveller, present the AA programme as essentially *practical*. The AA programme is frequently referred to as a 'programme of action'. Indeed nine of the steps involve *doing things*: writing a 'moral inventory' and relating it to another person; listing those harmed and making amends; prayer, meditation and working with other alcoholics. There is an absence of things one is required to *believe* in the sense of tenets or doctrines. Even the initial three steps involve, as has been discussed, an acceptance of one's alcoholism and surrender to a new power, that is a realigned view of the dynamics and power of the ego in the life of the alcoholic.

This focus on practicality invests the term 'steps' with a particular ambiguity in an era of technical manuals. Steps also represent the discrete stages in a process. The steps are represented as to be 'worked'. The pervasive expressions used by AA members are 'working' or 'doing the steps'. The possible collocations 'taking' or 'following' the steps are rarely used.

Mäkelä (1996) reports that in 1991 there were 260 12-step programmes / movements modelled on AA but applied to problems other than alcoholism. Other 12-step movements address issues such as drug abuse, compulsive behaviour related to gambling, eating, sex, and the attendant problems within families. More diffusely, the existence and proliferation of mutual support groups for those who suffer from a great variety of diseases and afflictions can be seen to have derived much of their philosophy and working procedures from AA. In the United States, AA members acting in a private and often anonymous manner have played an important part in forming the societal response to alcohol problems, (Mäkelä, 1996). Perhaps the most significant example has been the influence of AA members in the espousal of the

disease concept of alcoholism within the National Council on Alcoholism (Kurtz, 1991), (Brown and Brown, 2001).

2.1.2. Language and organisation

As outlined previously, this study is an attempt to explore the nature of spoken interaction in AA meetings and examine the role it plays in constituting the relationships between members and the social structure of the organisation itself. Sociologists approach social structure and its connection with language use in two possible ways:

- forms of talk-in-interaction are viewed as dependent on and determined by social structures
- social structures themselves are seen as constituted by the nature of the interaction within them.

The former approach, often associated with Durkheim, approaches talk as a product of social structures and locates the phenomena of sociological interest in societal arrangements which shape everyday experiences and conduct. The latter ethnomethodological approach locates social order in its members' use of methodological practices 'to produce, make sense of and thereby render accountable, features of ... local circumstances' (Zimmerman and Boden, 1993: 6). The latter approach emphasises practices that at once describe and constitute a social framework, i.e. reflexivity, (Coulon, 1995). The exploration of such reflexivity is central to this study. To clarify this it is necessary to look at some aspects of AA's early development.

2.1.3. Early AA

There is little independent reporting of the founding of AA, thus the following account is largely derived from AA sources. The founding of AA is attributed to two conversations - interactions. One was in late 1934 when Bill Wilson, a cofounder of AA, was approached after years of career-ruining and marriage-threatening drinking by a former drinking partner Ebby T who had 'got religion' and managed to stay sober through his contact with the Oxford Group (OG), a Christian group which aspired towards the spirit of early Christianity. Bill was deeply impressed by Ebby's sobriety, but more so by their conversation, 'I could not forget what he said. In the kinship of

common suffering, *one alcoholic had been talking to another,*' (Anon, 1986: 59, original italics). Ebby had not tried 'to pressure or evangelise,' and though suspicious of the talk of religion, Bill went to OG meetings. He was fascinated by what appeared to happen when one alcoholic talked to another. He became convinced other problem drinkers could be affected as he had been by such talk and that such talk also supported his own sobriety.

He reports however that he struggled long and hard to regenerate the *kinship* experienced in his conversation with Ebby in his other encounters with alcoholics. Shortly after joining the OG, he experienced a profound spiritual upheaval after which he never took another drink of alcohol. This combined with his own obsessive, dominating personality and the evangelisms of the OG, perhaps led him to 'pressure and evangelise' in a way Ebby had not done when talking to him. It was Dr Silkworth, Bill Wilson's physician and an expert on alcoholism, who identified the reasons for difficulties. He was, according to Silkworth, 'preaching at alcoholics', (Anon, 1986: 70).

A few months later, having just failed in a major business negotiation in Akron, a town where he was a stranger, he wandered outside a saloon. To strengthen his sobriety he sought out another alcoholic. He did this through contacts within the local OG. Thus he met a somewhat reluctant and very hung-over Dr Bob Smith who had joined the local OG hoping to overcome his own drinking problems. Their conversation was seen by both men as crucial to their recovery. Bill reports that in that encounter he 'went very slowly on the fireworks of religious experience. I just talked away about my own case until he got a good identification with me, until he began to say, "yes, that's me, I'm like that,"' (Anon, 1986: 68). Soon after Dr Bob Smith, who is regarded as the joint cofounder of AA, stopped drinking himself. This is the point identified by AA members as the historic moment when AA was brought into being.

Bill Wilson wrote about his first encounter with Dr Bob:

You see, our talk was a completely *mutual thing*. I had quit preaching. I knew I needed this alcoholic as much as he needed me. This was it. And this mutual give and take is at the very heart of all of AA's Twelve Step work today. This was how to carry the message. The final missing link was located right there in my first talk with Dr Bob. (original italics) (Anon, 1986: 70)

It is worth noting that both Bill W and Dr Bob had sought help through the Oxford Group. Both had given up trying to overcome their drinking problem on their own and both had been driven to rely on others. To do this, it is argued, involves a radical reappraisal of the power of 'self'. Bill W. had learned that talking to another alcoholic had challenged his self-reliance. He was also learning to talk to other alcoholics in a manner based on mutuality and common suffering.

In the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Anon, 1985 {1939}) the alcoholic is described as 'egotistical in the extreme', given to 'grandiosity' and motivated by 'self-will run riot'. When thwarted, the alcoholic is given to 'self-pity' and 'resentment'. These emotions, springing as they do from the frustrated 'ego', constitute the greatest danger to continued sobriety, and lead to death. Alcoholics in AA meetings frequently refer to their 'stinking thinking' and self-destructive resentments and fears. Bateson (1985 {1971}), as will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4, picks up these themes and, in less moralistic terms, describes the alcoholic's erroneous epistemology, which depicts the alcoholic pitted in a conflict against himself and the world. Both Bateson and the writers of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Anon, 1985 {1939}) feel that a 'surrender' is required if this aggressive dualism is to be resolved. Steps one, two and three require the alcoholic to admit powerlessness over alcohol and the unmanageability of their lives, come to believe in a power outside their own will and seek help from it. This involves realignments both within the alcoholic and the way the outside world is related to. The realignments within the alcoholic and to the world without is effected and made manifest, at least in part, through a reliance on the power of the AA group and programme rather than power of individual 'will'. A central argument in this study is that these realignments are displayed in and constituted in part through the footing AA members adopt in their AA talk.

2.1.4. The reflexivity of AA's Twelve Steps and Traditions

The Twelve Steps represent a realignment in the way the individual alcoholic pits his will against his drinking behaviour and pits himself against the world by requiring the surrender to a higher power, making amends to those harmed and helping others. The Twelve Traditions, on the other hand, are concerned with the unity of AA at organisational and group level and AA's relationship with the outside world.

Bill Wilson was largely responsible for arguing the necessity of the Twelve Traditions and formulating them, though he presented them for membership scrutiny and discussion through the pages of the *Grapevine* (Kurtz, 1991) and by touring the country discussing them throughout the years 1947 to 1950. He went to great lengths to formulate the traditions based on what had been or was proving to be accepted successful practice within the organisation.

He and early members of AA became aware that as AA grew the principles and practices that had informed its early days would be challenged and perhaps lost. They were also aware of the previous existence of the Washingtonians, a movement to which alcoholics were drawn in great numbers in the 1840's but which, just as quickly, vanished without trace. It was reported at that time 'about 100,000 alcoholics were helping each other stay sober', in a manner very similar to that of AA (Kurtz, 1991: 116), i.e. alcoholics met to help each other and tell the story of their alcoholism and recovery. Bill Wilson was concerned that it came to prominence and died out in a very short time. In a series of articles in the *Grapevine* (1988: 5 {1945}) he gave a number of reasons why he thought this was the case. He felt the Washingtonian mass meetings reflected 'overdone self-advertising - exhibitionism'. Their sudden growth and success led to them being 'too cocksure', scorning old methods and refusing to learn from others. As a movement of some size it quickly became subject to interference from politicians looking for votes resulting in what he considered the unnecessary participation of Washingtonian groups in controversial issues; particularly the abolition of slavery as well as involvement on both sides in lobbying for the abolition of alcohol. Thus as an organisation it became competitive rather than cooperative. Groups started to finance their own publications with no overall editorial policy. He concluded, 'we need to constantly scrutinize ourselves, in order to make everlastingly certain that we shall always be strong enough and single purposed enough from within, to relate ourselves rightly to the world without', (Wilson, 1988 {1945}). In essence, he felt he was dealing in institutional terms with those characteristics of the alcoholic that had to be dealt with at an individual level through the Twelve Steps – ego, grandiosity, pride and resentment.

This meant developing a set of principles, set out in the Twelve Traditions, to deal with outside issues and organisations which was consistent with the spirit of mutuality which existed between AA members themselves and AA's ethos as manifest in the

Twelve Steps. For the policy to reflect these aspects of early AA which are intrinsic to it, it must emanate from structures which likewise reflected these relationships and values. He would probably have agreed with Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), had he read them, that the social structure could not be exterior or extrinsic to the everyday workings of an organisation, neither could it govern them, but is interior and intrinsic, residing in the local and particular detail of practical actions undertaken by members. That is, practices within a social organisation both describe and constitute its social framework. This is what ethnomethodologists refer to as *reflexivity* (Coulon, 1995). These practices, being largely discursal in nature, manifest the nature of the relationship between those who participate in them.

O'Halloran (2000) has argued that the success of AA is that it not only nurtured a particular type of talk but that Bill Wilson showed a profound awareness of the constitutive nature of discourse on social settings in developing the Twelve Traditions. In drawing up the Twelve Traditions Wilson showed sensitivity to the reflexive nature of the relationship between discursal practices, social systems and power differentials. Implicit in his approach, it could be argued, were the instincts of an ethnomethodologist. This is demonstrated in his placing discursive practices prior to and constitutive of social structure when he set about formulating the Twelve Traditions. Certainly historically AA discourse preceded and it is argued here, became constitutive of AA as a social organisation.

After his discussions with Ebby and before he met Dr Bob Smith, Wilson had spent a long time, and frequently without success, honing discursal practices that captured and created the *kinship* of common suffering which he knew could result when one alcoholic talked to another. As we have seen, *preaching* he discovered early, upset the required *mutuality*; as did discussion of issues which were outside the experience of the individual alcoholic. Thus as AA grew along with his own prestige within it, Wilson strove to articulate principles which at once described and constituted a social framework which preserved kinship and mutuality based on the experience of alcoholism and reduced power centring around one or more individuals, i.e. principles which resisted the tendency to diversify into possibly divisive areas and the tendency towards consolidation of authority around his or any other central leadership.

His motivation for this was not social idealism. It was based on his assessment of the worldview of the alcoholic and the maintenance of his own sobriety. The *Big Book*

(Anon, 1985: 61 {1939}) states 'the first requirement is that we become convinced that any life run on self will can hardly be a success.' The objection to self-will is not based on morality *per se*. It is pragmatic. A thwarted or opposed will leads to anger. The *Big Book* places 'resentment as "the number one" killer' of alcoholics', (p.64)

One of the problems for Wilson and the early members of AA was to formulate and develop structures and decision-making processes which reflected the *mutuality* of AA discursal practices and interactions and which led to the promulgation of policies which reflected and maintained this mutuality. Policy implies uniformity which in turn may imply compliance to central leadership. However, Wilson felt that the relationship which had developed between recovering alcoholics of the type who affiliated with AA could be undermined by the creation of 'rules'. In this regard Wilson said:

were we to proceed by rules, somebody would have to make them and, more difficult still, somebody would have to enforce them. Rule making has often been tried. It usually results in controversy among the rule-makers as to what the rules should be. And when it comes to enforcing an edict – well, you all know the answer ... A cry goes up: 'Down with the dictators. Off with their heads!' Hurt and astonished control committee after control committee, 'leader' after 'leader' makes a discovery that human authority, be it ever so impartial or benign, seldom works long or well in our affairs. Alcoholics (no matter if ragged) are yet the most rugged of individualist, true anarchists at heart. (Wilson 1988 {1945}: 7).

Mutuality and authority

He realised that mutuality between members can only be maintained if symmetry of relationship is established within the institutional positions of members. The assumption of central authority within the organisation, either personal or by a group, would inevitably undermine such symmetry. Of particular concern to Wilson was that the movement would become dependent on the founding members, particularly himself, as institutional authority became vested in a few. The resulting differentials in status between members would manifest itself in discursal practices constituted by and perpetuating these differentials. Such practices would be at variance with the 'mutuality' and 'kinship of common suffering' which members felt defined and constituted the very nature of their mutual association. Thus it is that Tradition 1 confirms the position of the individual AA member as secondary to and dependent upon collective unity. It states, 'our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity'. There is an obvious parallel with the first three

steps which require the alcoholic accept his powerlessness over alcohol and hand his / her will over to a higher power.

The over dependence of the organisation on the leadership of its founding members could threaten the very existence of AA as these members aged and died. Tradition 2 placed the ultimate authority outside any group of individuals and away from the organisation's centre by placing it at the periphery of the organisation – within the group. This is expressed collectively through the 'group conscience', which is characterised as the expression of the ultimate authority, 'a loving God'. Thus authority is not invested centrally in an individual or central body but peripherally and fragmentally in the collective voice of the multitude of groups which make up AA. Furthermore, AA groups are not subject to any authority or require recognition from any authority within AA. Any group of people who wish to stop drinking can form an AA group as long as they have no other affiliation. Tradition 4 states, 'each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole'. Tradition 9 states, 'AA, as such, ought never be organised'; thus assuring the absence of centralised authority and autonomy of the group. However, it goes on to say, 'but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve', mainly through the supply of literature. Thus, in recognition of the usefulness of some centralised functions, a *service* role is given to centralised bodies which are deemed to be responsible to those they serve. As well as striving to avoid the development of professional leadership, the Traditions sought to suppress other aspects of professionalism - expertise. Tradition 8 states, 'Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.'

Though Tradition 1 places the common welfare as the first priority, the inclusive nature of AA membership gives great autonomy to the individual. Tradition 3 states, 'the only requirement of membership is a desire to stop drinking.' Membership is therefore *self* rather than *organisationally* defined. This ability to self-ratify one's membership effectively eliminates the development of power differentials within the group which allow one group of members to arbitrate on the eligibility of others (Room, 1993).

Topics in AA discourse

If many of the traditions support and maintain a unity through assuring the symmetry of relationship within AA, others do so through ensuring unity of purpose through the avoidance of divisive topics or affiliations. Topics in AA discourse are determined by the groups' 'primary purpose', which is stated in Tradition 5 to be 'to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers', and is defined in *The Preamble* as 'to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety'. Furthermore, as we have seen, the AA Preamble states, 'AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.' This is seen in practice in AA meetings where members confine their sharing to matters related to alcoholism, which is almost invariably discussed only in terms of individual experience and sobriety. Medical, social, legal and religious aspects of alcohol and alcoholism are avoided; experience is paramount. In this there are also echoes of the Quakers, for whom 'belief is second hand, secondary to experience', (Davies, 1982:49). This single-mindedness of purpose is reflected in Tradition 10, 'Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy'. A more detailed account of topic choice and development in AA meetings is given in Chapter 7. This singleness of purpose, it was realised, could only be maintained if AA as such remained completely unaffiliated with all other groups. Tradition 6 states, 'an AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose'.

The Traditions were designed to ensure the organisation maintains its primary focus, avoids engagement in topics which divide its membership or reliance on outside organisations that would undermine AA's own autonomy. Tradition 7 was designed to further ensure this autonomy by ensuring, 'every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions', thus ensuring financial control could not pass to AA's central institutions or outside sponsoring bodies.

Self limitations and institutional constraints

It is a feature of AA traditions that they impose severe limitations on AA and its members: limitations on the role of the individual; limitations on personal authority;

limitations on affiliation and organisational structure; limitations on areas of operation and involvement. As such, AA provides an organisational structure which is antithetical to what is presented in the *Big Book* as the alcoholic's primary problem,

Selfishness – self-centredness! That we think is the root of our troubles ... The alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually does not think so. (Anon, 1985 {1939}: 62).

Kurtz (1991: 3) claims that it is this acceptance of personal limitations that is the beginning of healing and wholeness for the alcoholic. In organisational terms, the acceptance of operational limitations results in limitations being imposed on the 'self-will' of individual members. This is not imposed by regulations or by authorised persons, i.e. it does not result from the imposition of constraints by the powerful, but is 'constituted' through participants adhering to the discursal and interactive practices within AA and its meeting discourse.

This study explores how AA's self-imposed limitations is part of the discursive mechanism of filtering out ideologically and socially divisive elements necessary to create the dialogic elements of symmetry and trust, replacing competition with complementarity. Fairclough (1992) distinguishes three types of constraint that powerful participants can impose on social discourse: – constraints on content - on what is said and done; constraints on relations resulting from social relations people enter into in discourse; and constraints on the 'subject positions' people can occupy. It is argued that AA has developed a particular form of discourse, framed in easily identifiable and controllable setting, which achieves symmetry between its members, effectively filtering out forms of discourse which reflect and therefore perpetuate inequalities and conflicts, or which divert participants from their 'primary purpose'.

AA's Twelve Traditions as constituted through its discursal conventions ensure that occasions for confrontation, and therefore rationalisations to drink, are avoided within AA. The traditions preclude displays of personal status, distinction or authority (Room, 1993). The resulting organisation is polycephalous, egalitarian and anarchistic, effectively resisting the development of oligarchy and professionalisation of leadership (Mäkelä, 1996) and thus preserve the original fundamentally mutual features of AA talk.

2.3 AA written texts

At this point it may be worth taking a brief introductory look at AA written texts and their production. The following reasons are given for this.

AA differs from many other mutual-help movements in having basic texts that are highly revered by members that provide a common belief system to individual groups and members (Mäkelä, 1996: 119).

Written texts have greater durability, consistency and mobility than the spoken word and account, in part, for the degree of consistency found in AA ideology and practices in different regions of the world. The AA group under study here has access to and use all major AA literature.

Much of the process of writing AA literature reflects practices which are pervasive in AA talk, particularly the establishment of a footing of collective authorial ownership of what is said.

Elements of written texts inform and are recurrently intertextually woven into AA talk and this process is a major area of investigation in this study, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 7 and 8.

2.3.1. The Big Book

The central written texts of AA include *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939) and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1952) or *The 12x12*. It is from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, popularly known as *The Big Book*, that AA gets its name. AA texts become such by being approved by the General Service Conference of AA and are normally the only source of reading in meetings. The General Service Conference achieves its authority from group members and Conference approval is given in response to and is endorsed by a bottom-up democratic process, reflecting membership needs. These two books have a central defining place in the fellowship, having emerged with and through the fellowship and through being particularly associated with Bill Wilson (Kurtz, 1991). The *Big Book* in particular has unique authority among AA members and is so highly revered that even the principal author was not authorised to change it (Kurtz, 1991: 132).

The *Big Book* was launched with a very low budget and slow sales, resulting in the early members having nearly 5,000 unsold books and large incidental debts. After a

Saturday Evening Post article about AA by Jack Alexander, (1940) in March 1941, sales started to soar and a second printing was ordered. Four editions of the *Alcoholics Anonymous*, have been issued over the years, the most recent in 2001, (Anon, 2001 {1939}). The basic text, contained in the first 11 chapters, has remained the same in all editions. References in this work are to the Third Edition (Anon, 1985 {1939}).

The *Big Book* is made up of two sections. The first section includes a variety of genres. Chapters 2-11 present a collective, experiential, non-expert view of alcoholism and recovery based on an essentially pragmatic view of recovering alcoholics. The title of Chapter 5, *How it Works*, which contains the 12 Steps, testifies to its being essentially a manual, laying out the practical steps based on personal experience, of how the programme is to be followed in order to achieve identifiable results. Chapters are also addressed to spouses and employers of alcoholics. Though the book opens with Bob Wilson's own story in Chapter 1, the second section is comprised only of personal stories.

A psychiatrist in Montclair who read an early draft complained that it was all derived from the OG: there were too many 'you musts' and that they should be put on a 'we ought' basis. A Dr Howard felt that the prospect of insanity and death, the likely result for the alcoholic who did not find recovery, was sufficiently persuasive and no further force was required (Kurtz 1991: 75).

These contributions helped nudge the book in a direction many early members of AA felt it should go; avoiding prescription and a strongly religious stance. A major feature of the text of *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the centrality of the alcoholic's experience is that within the main body of the text there is no appeal to 'professional' or 'expert' authority of medicine, psychology or religion. There is, however, endorsement from men of medicine and religion in the preface and appendixes.

A comparison between the opening of Chapter 5 (Pp. 60 – 62), the chapter containing the 12-Steps, of both the original draft (Anon, 1999) with the version found in the Third Edition (1985) illustrates an interesting shift whereby authority is displaced from the author.

It is an attempt to gain greater symmetry than usually obtains in the relationship between author and reader. This is achieved by the judicious replacement of the

pronoun *you* with the all-embracing *we*, especially with abandonment of the distancing effect of the past tense:

we thought we could... but we could not

to replace

you may think you can. ... but we doubt if you can.

This places the focus on the centrality of the writers' personal experience rather than removing the writer from being an active participant in the process to an outside evaluator of others. The same is true of the evaluative *Now we think you can take it!* which is deleted altogether in the later version. Step 1 in the original version is presented thus:

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as your program of recovery:

1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

By changing *your program* to a *program* in the later version, the underlying relationship of bestower and bestowed upon, and its inherent asymmetry are removed.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

The addition of the pronoun *we*, to the first step further reduces this dislocation between writer and reader and presents the solidarity of shared participation. The expression *powerless* over alcohol itself has a clarity and directness which avoids the pejorative overtones of word like *helpless*, *out of control*, and *weak willed*.

An example of the secularisation of theological concepts is found in the use of the widely used metaphor 'take inventory' which derives from: 'made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves' in Step 4. This of course is derived from commercial life but applies here to a spiritual practice of 'examining one's conscience'. The use of a commercial term serves to counterbalance the terms *searching* and *fearless* with their religious connotations (Raphael, 2000).

It is evident that the writers consciously distanced themselves from AA's early association with the specifically Christian OG. The validity of the 12-steps was presented as deriving solely from their efficacy in helping the alcoholic stop drinking.

These compromises may have been the result of 'purposeful vagueness' as the result of 'discordant committees' (Raphael, 2000: 118). The results, however, were radical and far-reaching, involving more than a stylistic shift and fudged compromise. It involved a radical relocation of authority and purpose. There is no appeal to any form of authority in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Its validity is based solely on the fact of its members' sobriety. This underlying empiricism and the centrality of personal experience are expressed in the AA slogan, 'It works, if you work it'. The slogan 'it works' is shared with the early Quakers who 'grew up as an assertion of the centrality of individual experience in religious life and as continuing evidence of the validity of that experience, (Davies, 1982:45). The purpose of recovery is not to conform to codes of moral behaviour, rather it is to arrest a course of alcoholism and bring about a psychic change that enables the sufferer to avoid compulsive drinking. The effect was to marginalise religious doctrines to 'outside issues', and to focus on the 'primary purpose' of sobriety. These principles were later articulated as Traditions 10 and 5 respectively (appendix B). This reorientation of authority and purpose distinguishes AA texts and much subsequent 12-Step writing from most religious genres.

The second section of the book is made up of twenty stories written by other AA members and comprises over half the original and subsequent editions of the *Big Book*. The section of personal recovery stories contained in the second portion of all editions of the book opens with Dr Bob's story. They all follow the prototypical AA story-telling genre established in Bill W's own opening story. In the words of The *Big Book*, 'our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now' (Anon 2001, {1939}: 58). Stories in the second section have changed over the editions to represent changing patterns in AA's membership, particularly as more young people, woman and minorities became involved in AA. As such, authorship of the entire book is diffused and spread among the members. It was finally agreed that no writer should be named, even by initial on the title page, thus acknowledging that the process of writing was a collaborative effort (Anon, 1986, Raphael, 2000) resulting from a blurring of the distinction between producers and interpreters.

2.3.2. The "tools" of the programme

Twelve Steps are designed to lift the alcoholic from a sense of complete personal helplessness and isolation to constructive involvement with others through a process

of admission of personal powerlessness, acceptance of the need for a power beyond oneself, and acknowledging responsibilities for past failures and making restitution for them.

However, there are a series of other customs and practices which have evolved in AA to support the alcoholic. These are referred to as the 'tools' of the programme. The image is striking in its suggestion of simple practicality and the absence of piety, as well as the typical AA focus on activity rather than analysis. It is derived from the *Big Book*:

Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply layout the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection, (Anon, 1985 {1939}: 95).

Maxwell (1984) in an ethnographic study of AA written to give doctors and professional councillors a 'close-up' view of the AA experience, elicited - through interviews with AA members - a number of practices referred to as 'tools' of the programme. These practices are similarly followed by AA members in Cosmo city. They include the recital of AA's mantra, the Serenity Prayer, which is discussed in Chapter 4, going to AA meetings, using a sponsor and phoning other alcoholics. Also included are the use of slogans, such as 'a day at a time' and 'it's the first drink that makes you drunk'. Many alcoholics refer to the great difficulty they had in the early days of sobriety in being able to grasp AA concepts and refer to the usefulness of the slogans and talking to other alcoholics.

2.3.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to give a brief introduction to AA. In approaching AA as an institution constituted through its discourse, it has looked at the evolution of AA interaction in meetings from the first encounter of the founding members and explored features of the writing of the 12-Steps and 12 Traditions of AA and other AA literature. It has attempted to identify aspects of 'alcoholic thinking' and relate these to the principles of the Twelve Steps.

It has also attempted to open themes related to the reflexive relationship between discursal practices, power differentials and social structure as they apply to the foundation of AA and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, as well as give a brief outline of central AA beliefs and practices. These issues will be returned to in later chapters.

Chapter 3 - AA in Cosmo-city, Asia

An introduction has been given to AA in Chapter 2 with a focus on aspects of the Twelve Steps and Traditions, including aspects of AA history, structure, social relationships, discourse and practices.

This chapter contains two related sections.

3.1 offers an introduction to the AA group in Cosmo-city which is the focus of this study. Its particular characteristics as a largely cosmopolitan expatriate group in Asia are outlined, including particular features of its history, membership and structure.

3.2 outlines the research process used to gain ethical access to research the group, which itself sheds light on the nature of AA in general and the particular structure of AA in the region.

The relevance of the first section is that it places the group under study in the wider AA context; it identifies both those features which it shares with AA in many other regions in the English-speaking world and those features which are mainly local. Though the section is intended to be primarily introductory in nature, the absence of previous literature and research in the area means that the content of the section also represents findings from the ethnographic phase of this research.

The discussion of ethical research processes in the second section is included here because, by interacting and negotiating with the group for access, aspects of AA structures and beliefs were encountered which in themselves revealed much about the nature of AA in general and the Cosmo-city group in particular.

3.1 The local context

AA has grown in all major English-speaking countries and is gaining a significant position in the Spanish-speaking world (Mäkelä, 1996). There is a growing body of ethnographic research on these developments. However, AA has a small but growing presence in Asia, which has been little researched.

AA was established in the region by two men, one British and one American. This is a typical pattern for the establishment of AA outside the United States. Like the founders of AA in the United States in the late 1930's, they were 'flying blind' and had little experience of other AA groups on which to draw. However, there has been, from

the earliest days, a constant infusion of members who have experienced AA in other areas, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. They have brought with them an awareness of core AA beliefs and practices. The group has also relied heavily on AA literature. The result is that AA in the region developed with its own characteristics but within the mainstream of AA.

3.1.1. Membership

The group remains pre-eminently an English-speaking organisation the vast majority of whose membership is comprised of expatriates from the English-speaking world, though there are a few local members, other Europeans and Asians. Many, being expatriates who have come to the region because of their work, are professionals. Many work in the financial sector and other areas of business, government agencies, education and journalism. There are 78 active AA members named by first name only in the list of telephone numbers circulated within the group. These are all English speakers of many nationalities and a small number are locals. However, being a city with a transient expatriate community there are a number of short-term members and other members, often former residents of the city, who revisit on a regular basis and members who attend quite regularly who live and work in the surrounding regions where there is little or no AA. There are other long-term members who, though not attending meetings regularly, still regard themselves as AA members. Including new comers, the membership at any one time is greater than the phone list suggests. There are in addition a small group of non-English speaking members who attend the one meeting held exclusively in the local language. Average attendance at this meeting is about ten, though there are only about three local members who still attend meetings regularly and have done so over a year. They are fluent in English and regularly attend English-speaking meetings.

Mäkelä and associates (1996), in their study of AA in eight societies outside the United States describe how new AA members everywhere usually enter AA as individuals cut off from their social matrix. It seems that *individuation* is the particular aspect of modernity that is a precondition of AA, as this involves the process by which individual persons become the basic units of social action, superseding the family, kinship, work teams and the village community, (Mäkelä, 1996). This process is notable in this group and is reinforced by the exigencies of expatriate life. As is reported by Mäkelä (1996) in other regions, some members restrict their participation

in AA activities primarily to meeting attendance. This largely applies to working married members with families. However there is an established pattern of other social activities for members. Unmarried members and non-working spouses particularly avail of social occasions with other members outside of meetings. These associations and activities are particularly important where established AA members are adjusting to a new country and trying to establish networks for themselves or their families outside of work. Interpersonal problems and other difficulties at work, including finding work, are frequent topics in AA meetings. This gives members a window into the work and professional lives of other members, not normally visible because of the principle of anonymity. This results in informal contact after the meeting where members exchange information about job openings and business opportunities. It has even led to situations where one member may employ another. Thus AA membership may bring about mutual support which extends to the full range of social and economic ties through which people relate to each other.

Newly arrived members frequently testify to finding and utilising a network of associates to help them settle into the new environment. Visitors regularly declare themselves to be feeling 'at home' as soon as they enter an AA meeting. Researchers have tried to capture the special nature of AA affiliation by comparing it to an ethnic group (Madsen, 1980), describing it as a clan-like formation in modern society (Trevino, 1992) or by analysing the use of 'levelling devices' that foster homogeneity and equality (Sadler, 1979). AA in this region, as elsewhere, remains an open network, where membership is not contingent on belonging to a certain trade, profession or mutual beneficial pay-offs.

However, unlike in the USA, the AA group does not have the social visibility it increasingly has there. The distance between AA and the mainstream culture is large. Few members, unless working for American companies, would allow their AA membership to be known in the work place. Anonymity is strictly guarded and there is very little reference to AA, or 'recovering alcoholics' in the local media. The meetings are small, and open meetings are rarely attended by non-alcoholics, other than members of Alanon, the support group for family members of alcoholics.

3.1.2. Groups and meetings

Groups are the basic unit of AA and the central activity of a group is to arrange meetings. The AA pamphlet '44 Questions' (Anon, 1952) gives the following account of the typical AA group:

A typical AA group may have a chairperson, a secretary, a program committee, a food committee, a treasurer, and a general service representative who acts for the group at regional or area meetings. Newcomers who have a reasonable period of sobriety behind them are urged to take part in handling group responsibilities. (Anon, 1952)

In Austria, Iceland and the German speaking parts of Switzerland the connection between meetings and the group is so close that there is no clear distinction between the two (Mäkelä, 1996). In other countries, groups usually sponsor more than one meeting a week, sometimes several in one day. There remains however a close association between the group and one or a small number of meetings which it organises in a specific location on a weekly basis. However, in Cosmo-city there is one large single amorphous group organising 25 meetings weekly. There is in addition one small group of fluctuating membership. An Intergroup to facilitate communication and co-ordinate activities has not developed.

As is usual in AA where evolution is bottom-up, AA has evolved in Cosmo-city from small meetings. What is not usual however is that while AA meetings and meeting locations have multiplied, the number of AA groups has not done so significantly. The group under study here covers the entire city area and its chairman and officers are not primarily associated with and responsible for running a small number of AA meetings. This is left to meeting secretaries.

This particular structure has evolved in Cosmo-city probably because of the close association AA has historically with the expatriate community. This reflects the expatriates' identification firstly with the rest of the expatriate community rather than a particular location. Other members may identify with one or more particular meeting or location which they regularly attend. Nonetheless, the close identification with 'the home group', and participation in group activities, a key aspect of membership affiliation with AA in most regions (Norris and Leach, 1977), is less pronounced where group affiliation is more diffuse.

However, despite the large size of the group and because of the large number of meetings sponsored by the groups, meetings remain relatively small, sometimes as

few as three or four may attend a particular meeting, and rarely more than twenty-five. Thus the local AA has the advantage of achieving the intimacy fostered by small meetings as well as enjoying the greater variety of speakers and the wider range of members that a large group allows (Mäkelä, 1996).

A further consequence of having one group which absorbs new meetings, rather than allowing for the proliferation of new groups is that there are fewer options for the disgruntled. Much of the proliferation of AA and its diversity are accounted for by the fact that if members are unhappy with the way a group is being run they can simply get up and set up a new group (Room, 1993). This has had the effect of fostering diversity and ensuring that only groups which generally met members' needs survive. However, the Cosmo-city group organises a number of special interest meetings which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Early members of AA in Cosmo-city established links with the AA General Service Office in New York. AA literature was ordered from there and when their funds reached more than the 'prudent reserve' recommended, sent contributions there as well. Recently, however, the group has started to participate more fully in the local regional structures through the Asia Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM) and financial contributions are now being sent to that body.

3.1.3. Meeting locations

The group uses four main meeting locations. The main AA room, where 13 meetings are held mainly in the evening, is in an old military hospital hired by the AA group for a nominal rent from the Government. All but one of these meetings is held in English, and that one is bilingual. The building is located in an expensive residential area very accessible from the most central and cosmopolitan part of the city and the favoured location for the expatriate community. The part reserved for AA's use consists of four rooms: one large where the main meetings are held, one smaller anteroom, where smaller meetings and meetings of other 12-Step groups, with AA's permission, are also conducted. Off this is a small room which acts as an office and storeroom. The phones, answering machine and fax are housed here. Much of the layout of the room is to facilitate receiving phone calls from problem drinkers and AA members. Above the phone is a notice board with the meeting schedule. By the phone is a clipboard where all phone calls and their outcome are logged. This is an absolutely central part

of AA, as a significant percentage of those who become members made their initial contact through telephone calls. It also caters for the needs of visitors to the region seeking information about meeting times and locations. The main door is padlocked using a combination lock known to meeting secretaries and most members. The secretary of the meeting of the day is responsible for opening and locking up the rooms.

The large AA room is unusually old for this modern city. It has high ceilings with old cornicing and ceiling fans. The windows have latticed storm shutters. The room contains a number of large soft chairs and sofas arranged in a square around two low coffee tables. Behind these are small chairs set against the wall, allowing an inner and outer circle arrangement. This seating arrangement facilitates the preferred style of round-table meeting.

Unlike many parts of the world, there are no 'top-table' or podium style meetings. There is no fixed position for the Secretary or main speaker in these meetings, though Secretaries usually position themselves in the inner circle of chairs. Borkman (1999), identifies only two basic meeting methodologies: the sharing circle where participants tell their stories; and the 'lecture' style, with a podium, where a speaker faces the audience and tells an extended version of her or his story – the speaker meeting. Here, even 'speaker meetings' retain the sharing circle methodology.

Testifying to the significance of written texts is that fact that small tables and bookcases, where AA literature and tapes are stored, also hug the walls. There is also a large table set against the wall on which AA pamphlets are displayed. These are free to any interested newcomers, members or visitors. Books are also available for sale.

Evidence of an awareness of the constitutive nature of setting in discourse is that in the group's main meeting room only 'AA conference approved literature' is stored or displayed. Other Twelve Step and Recovery related literature, including publications by Hazelton, are also for sale, but are stored in the ante-room. This does not indicate disapproval of other literature which is in fact encouraged in the *Big Book*. However, it signals an exclusive focus on AA's 'primary purpose' and a physical manifestation of the 'filtering' of certain features and content of other discourse within the AA room.

The close association between discourse and setting is also evident in the presence on the walls of posters listing the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in English and the local language, and the Serenity Prayer. There are also a number of posters carrying slogans on all four walls. As this room is used exclusively by AA, these posters are permanently placed. They are an integral, but not indispensable, part of the setting of any meeting. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as well as the slogans, which will be further discussed, are referred to extensively during meetings and most members have their own favourites. It was also observed that slogans are sometimes used as the topic in discussion meetings.

Another major location for meetings is a room provided in the grounds of a Roman Catholic Church near the central business area. This again facilitates the preferred circular format. Five English-speaking meetings a week are held there during weekdays at lunchtime. This is reflected in the attendance. Members use this meeting as a break from work in the financial sector in the central area of the city. It is also popular with expatriate women living overseas because of their husband's employment. In this venue, as in the others where AA meetings take place in rooms that are usually used for other purposes, it is usual for the secretary of the meeting to place slogans along with posters listing the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions on the walls in prominent positions for the duration of the meeting.

One English-speaking meeting a week is held in the evening in a room provided by the Seaman's Mission, also in a central location. This is the location of the first AA meetings in the area and for this reason has a special value to long-term members. Though less plain and functional than the room provided by the church, this meeting also takes place around a table. This meeting has declined in relative popularity recently, its downtown location and distance from the residential areas favoured by expatriates, making it less accessible than the main meeting room in a residential area. However, it is attended by tourists who stay in the vast number of hotels which are located in the immediate surroundings. This meeting testifies to the fact that AA in the city has not outgrown its early association with travellers and visitors associated with seamen's missions and the tourist area.

The most recently established venue is in a hospital in a smaller satellite town. It is the only meeting located in a predominantly local environment and outside the central cosmopolitan area and is the only meeting conducted solely in the local language.

Following the tradition which has developed in Cosmo-city, the development of a new meeting did not result in the establishment of a new AA group, even though those who attended the meetings were of a different ethnic group and spoke a different language to other members of the group.

3.1.4. Conclusion

This section has offered an introduction to the AA group under study. Its particular characteristics as a largely cosmopolitan expatriate group in Asia are outlined. Its origin as a group it is not untypical of developing AA groups in other areas outside of the USA. Its meeting format, the constant infusion of experienced members from areas where AA is well established and the central role of AA literature ensure that its core beliefs and practices are consistent in broad outline with AA elsewhere.

It has however developed structural characteristics of its own which perhaps reflect that its membership is largely made up of members of a minority expatriate community who have not been integrated into the wider population. Thus, though the number of meetings have risen, this has not been accompanied by development of a new groups associated with different localities, ethnic or linguistic groups.

3.2 The ethics of access

This section explores the ethical issues involved in the process of accessing the group's AA meetings for research purposes. The focus is on the following three areas:

General ethical issues related to ethnographic and ethnomethodological research.

Ethical issues related to the study of AA and the specific steps taken in this study to ensure it was ethical.

The response of members of the Cosmo-city AA group to negotiations for access, and what that reveals about AA and the particular group in question.

The steps taken to ensure ethical access, informed consent, prevention of harm and the avoidance of deception are outlined. These steps are reported at some length at this point in the study rather than in the chapters where methodological issues are discussed as the negotiations involved throw light on the organisational principles of the AA group in Cosmo-city.

Also outlined are reformulations of the research design, especially the origin of data used, resulting from members' concerns. This was reformulated in order to maintain an ethical approach to all members and avoid any possibility of harm.

3.2.1. The development of codes of ethics in research

Researchers have always been held accountable in law and to their individual consciences for their conduct while pursuing their investigations. Since 1945, it has increasingly been expected that those involved in academic enquiry should be aware of the professional ethical issues related to the quest for knowledge. Codes of ethics, more stringent and demanding than prevailing legal and moral codes, have been developed to ensure research, especially into human informants, is conducted in the most ethical manner possible. A distinction is made between professional ethics and personal morality. Whereas the latter relates to the way an individual conducts himself across a range of human activities and contacts, the former refers to the way a group of associates define their specific responsibility to each other, the subjects of their professional endeavours and society as a whole (Erikson, 1970). Professional ethics may therefore differ across professional groups. What is acceptable professional behaviour in an undercover agent, policeman or private individual may not be acceptable behaviour in a researcher.

The Nuremberg Code of 1947 and the Helsinki Declaration of 1964 set standards for judging physicians and scientists who had conducted biomedical experiments on concentration camp prisoners. This code became the prototype for many later codes intended to assure that future research involving humans be carried out in an ethical manner. The Belmont Report (Department of Health, 1979) published the results of its deliberations and has become a key document for research ethics in many Federal Agencies and academic Institutional Review Boards (IRB). The three ethical principles and six norms of scientific research outlined in that report have been the basis of more specific codes drawn up for particular research disciplines.

This section will focus more fully on the ethical principles and norms of the Belmont Report rather than how they have been codified for different disciplines, such as codes like that for the American Psychological Committee for the Protection of Human Participants in Research, (APA, 1982) and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2000). However, before undertaking a discussion on ethical issues which

confront the researcher, it is appropriate to discuss the attitude of AA members to being researched.

3.2.2. Attitudes to research within AA

Alcoholics Anonymous, on principle, does not engage in research into alcoholism, medical or psychiatric treatments or education, although members may participate in such activities as individuals (Anon, 1998). Its primary purpose, as *The Preamble* states, is its members' sobriety. To keep this focus and avoid distracting disputes, AA's Tradition 6 states AA will not 'endorse, finance or lend its name to any related facility or outside enterprise'. Therefore, AA as an organisation is not prepared to engage in or endorse specific research, though it does publish detailed information about its membership.

However, AA itself is broadly sympathetic to research and is not necessarily anti-intellectual, as claimed by Bufe (1998). It has a tradition which goes back to its founders, particularly Bill Wilson, of intellectual inquiry and working with professionals in the area of medicine and psychology. He clarified his own views of alcoholism as a spiritual malady or allergy by consulting expert medical practitioners like Dr Silkworth of Towns Hospital (Anon, 1984); reading the works of psychologists such as William James (1958) who influenced his thinking on ego-deflation, and through private correspondence with Carl Jung on the necessity of a spiritual experience in recovery from alcoholism (Wilson, 1988). This spirit of enquiry was subsequently articulated in the Memo on Participation of AA Members in Research and Other Non-AA Surveys, (Anon, no date) published by AA. This states, "in general, within AA, there is a favourable attitude to research," (p. 2).

Nonetheless, AA is a highly reclusive organisation whose membership values and protects anonymity. This and the sensitive nature of alcoholism mean that there are particular problems regarding research access.

3.2.3. Accessing AA

Generally, research ethics insist that people have a right not to be used. Observing them and reporting their behaviour for research purposes constitutes precisely that. Though it is generally acceptable to make research observations of many public acts that would normally be viewed by others, making research observations in a place

deliberately chosen by the participants as private and safe in order to make disclosures of a personal and sensitive nature obviously poses questions related to proper access. To access such groups for research purposes without proper consent would be unethical and an abuse of trust.

Rudy (1986), in his research, describes how access to AA members and meetings depended greatly on establishing rapport with members. Nonetheless, it is important for the researcher to be completely open about the aims, nature and purpose of the research. AA meetings are characterised by the need for honesty and trust. Any suspicion of lack of honesty, evasiveness or disingenuousness would probably result in immediate closure of access. Gaining such access and consent to research AA depends on the researchers' perceived knowledge of and attitudes to AA and a demonstrated respect for AA traditions and procedures.

Access to social organisations can normally be gained at various levels: at the organisational level; at the group meeting level and at the level of the individual. It is usual practice when researching an institution for researchers to approach some kind of leadership to get initial permission or support, as the leadership can act as gatekeeper with the power to facilitate further access. However, AA traditions state that leaders are servants who do not govern and that each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole (Anon, 1985 {1939}). In my attempt to gain formal access as a researcher, I was to discover in practice what this meant.

The Memo (Anon, No date) suggests that researchers approach the General Service Office (GSO) only for opinions on feasibility and literature. Decisions about cooperation are usually made at the individual rather than the group level. The Memo outlines how a request to participate in research can be made to individual members who then seek the cooperation of other members. However, relying on snowballing techniques within AA may be impractical, as members may feel reluctant to break the anonymity of others.

3.2.4. Gaining access and informed consent for this study

AA is a highly reclusive organisation which gives fundamental importance to the principle of anonymity. It is not an organisation to which researchers have casual access. Having decided to examine the discourse of its meetings, my first formal

contact with the group as a researcher was to negotiate ethical, fully informed consent to my research. This process itself was highly informative about the nature of AA as a social institution and the results of these negotiations informed the scope and shape of the methodology of this research. For these reasons I decided to position the discussion of my initial approach to the AA group and the ethical issues involved prior to more general methodological discussion which follows in Chapters 5 and 6.

There now follows an account of my negotiations as a researcher already known to members of the group when I sought access and informed consent to research the group and the discourse of AA meetings.

My original plan had been to make my first approach at group level to see if any problems were envisaged and then to seek consent to observe and record meetings from individuals at meetings. I took my research plans to a Group Business Meeting, which meets once a month to deal with housekeeping and AA service business as outlined in the previous section.

I handed out a printed sheet of paper which outlined the nature of my research, the cooperation I was requesting from members and how anonymity would be preserved. Copies were also left on the tables in the meeting room and posted on the group's notice board. I had hoped that armed with support from the business meeting I could then approach individuals at meetings to gain individual consent to observe, and ultimately record some meetings. I made it clear that I was not approaching the business meeting to circumvent the necessity of gaining individual consent. However, I was informed that this was not a matter for the business meeting or the group. AA does not oppose research but neither does it endorse it (Tradition 6). My request was interpreted as a request for group endorsement, which could not be given. I was informed that consent to being researched was a question for individual members of AA and I should take it to them.

My experience with the business meeting, while not advancing my research, had confirmed for me that AA has no gatekeepers. My approach would have to be made exclusively at the level of individual members and at individual meetings.

It also became apparent that for me there were two levels of access for which consent had to be negotiated as far as researching meetings was concerned.

- gaining consent to be a participant observer
- gaining consent to using the more obtrusive research methods of recording meetings.

3.2.5. Gaining consent to participant observation at AA meetings

Though my first approach to the business meeting had not resulted in my gaining consent in principle from the group, it had resulted in members becoming informed about what I was doing. I used subsequent discussions with members to ensure that as many members as possible knew the nature of my research. My intention was to use data collected from two locations. One was at 'open' meetings in the main meeting rooms and the other was the small 'closed' meeting held in a smaller location. The methodological issues relating to my role are discussed in Chapter 5.2.

However, gaining access as a participant observer at the 'open' meeting in the old military hospital posed no major problems. Open meetings, may be attended by anyone who may be interested, be they people whose family members or friends have alcohol related problems, members of the medical or religious professions or indeed researchers. Unlike in many areas, the difference in format between an open and a closed meeting is minimal. In Cosmo-city, as non-AA members rarely attended open meetings, open meetings often proceeded in a manner indistinguishable from closed meetings. AA members themselves have sometimes to refer to the schedule to determine which is which. For me, it was simply a question of informing all present that research into the group was being engaged in and that part of what is observed will be used in published research, ensuring the anonymity of all present. As far as the requirements of AA itself are concerned, it is arguable that as 'open' meetings were designed for outside observers, such an announcement was unnecessary. I felt, however, that I was not simply involved in observation, in the same way as would be any other member of the public. Researchers conduct their work with a view to disseminate their findings through publication. Therefore, the fact of the ultimate intention to publish makes a researcher's observation different from non-alcoholic members who may attend open meetings. Research ethics requires informed consent. All potential research informants have the right to know that being *observed* implies being *written about* and should be informed of the steps taken to safeguard their anonymity.

In actuality, there was never a murmur of dissent to my presence as a researcher at any of these open meetings. If there had been I would have immediately withdrawn my request.

3.2.6. Gaining consent to tape AA meetings

AA meetings are a highly confidential and protected setting designed to ensure absolute privacy. Anonymity is a central principle of the movement and members do not welcome attention. However, the richest data to be had, and that which comes closest to the heart of AA, is the interaction at AA meeting. A fine-grained analysis of such meetings requires the proceedings to be taped and transcribed to allow detailed analysis and, equally important, facilitate the presentation of demonstrable evidence. The ethnographic data obtainable through questionnaires, interviews and observation of open meetings is insufficiently fine grained to meet the requirement of discourse or Conversation Analysis (CA). However, gaining consent to tape record an AA meeting is a much more difficult task than gaining consent to observe one. Though the AA Memo (Anon, No date) on research clearly envisages methods involving individual members responding to the researcher, it gives no guidelines on research that involves more obtrusive forms of observation, such as tape recording. My task was to find a way of getting audio recordings of AA interaction at its most typical and contextualised, while fully respecting and safeguarding the traditions of AA, and also ensuring my research was conducted as ethically as possible in terms of gaining informed consent and avoiding harm.

The particular meeting I had chosen to record had a small regular attendance (6-8 members) which was reasonably predictable. I had determined to approach all regular attendees and inform them of my desire to use data I observed during those meetings for research purposes, and, on occasions, if all members present had previously given consent, to tape-record the meeting. This always met with the same response, 'what about the new comer? new comers would not trust AA meetings if notes were being taken or they were being recorded.' Members were very sensitive to the possible reaction of newcomers and the harm to them and their view of the AA programme. Assurances were required that there were safeguards to ensure there would be no tape recording if a new comer were present. However, scheduled meetings are quite *ad hoc* affairs. It is impossible to predict beforehand who will be present, or if a newcomer were to arrive unannounced.

Once I had gained this informal, but informed individual consent my intention had been to ask a 'group conscience' (discussed in previous section) meeting be called immediately before a regular meeting and reiterate what I had said to individual members to all present and gain formal, unanimous informed consent to tape that meeting. The Memo (ibid) states that some groups have permitted questionnaires or interviews to occur after meetings. However, it goes on to say, 'meetings are devoted exclusively to the AA programme. No research which could interfere with this goal could be tolerated'. Whereas interviews can be conducted around the meeting, a firm line is drawn at any intrusion into the meeting itself. Any obtrusive form of observation undermines the fundamental qualities of trust and anonymity required in AA meetings. As is discussed in this study's main findings in Chapter 7, an AA meeting is a very clearly and tightly framed event. Permissible discoursal practices within frame are highly specific and there is virtually no leakage of out-of-frame discoursal practices into the frame. The question was whether the same would apply to research practices. I anticipated that consent to taking notes or tape recording would depend on whether these were considered an interference with the meeting and there were a possibility of harm to newcomers.

3.2.7. Reformulations in response to AA member concerns

When objections came they were not on the grounds outlined above but on my *role*. The final member I approached told me she knew what I was doing and why but did not feel comfortable being in a meeting where a 'participant observer' was present, whether I was recording or not. It was to my *role* not the tape recorder or note taking to which she was objecting. That member had therefore decided, in view of the support I had received from the others who attended the meeting, not to oppose what I was doing but simply not to attend that meeting any more. It was she, more than the researcher, who was concerned that the Hawthorn effect - the effect on the observed of the knowledge that they are being observed – would interfere with the authenticity of the meeting and thus its usefulness to her.

This response required that I carefully reconsider the question of harm. If my activities as an observer led to one member withdrawing from a particular meeting, I would have to acknowledge that my activities were posing a real risk of harm. The person involved did not have limitless time and lived in a location where attendance at other meetings was inconvenient. It is a central tenet of AA that attendance at

meetings is vital to the maintenance of sobriety; any action of mine which interfered with that attendance involved a real risk of considerable harm. I therefore decided not to pursue my attempts to use that particular meeting for research purposes. I did not ask for a group conscience meeting on the subject, despite having received the consent of the others.

In fact in terms of AA requirements, I could record meetings if the majority of members at a 'group conscience meeting' gave their consent. It was to conform to the ethics of research - more stringent than those of AA in this regard - that I sought *individual informed consent*.

However, these experiences led me to believe that attempting to obtain consent from *all* individuals to tape a meeting was too problematic. The sensitivities of some members and the risk of harm were too great. It might be worth mentioning that the AA group I was studying, unlike those in the United States, is largely isolated from the medical and treatment community. There is virtually no tradition of visits to 'open' AA meetings by councillors and doctors; there is also little expectation that AA will or should be researched. There are no prominent members of the community or world of entertainment or sport declaring, "Hi, I'm in recovery" on television. Alcoholism is seen in the wider community as a disgraceful, unreliable state, not as a disease. A breach of anonymity, for many, would be a distinct threat to their ability to make a living.

In view of these sensitivities I decided rather than attempt to get unanimous consent from all individuals to record a particular meeting, I would use recorded material from small AA conventions held in Cosmo-city and in a neighbouring region. These materials had been recorded by the AA Convention organisers and were available to anyone who wanted them, whether members of AA or not, I decided to use materials from both locations as both were of AA meetings in cosmopolitan Asian cities whose membership has a similar profile. In fact, there is some transfer to membership between the two cities.

This would mean that some of the data used in the ethnomethodological analysis of institutional interaction had not been derived from Cosmo-city, the site of the earlier ethnographic research. The reason I felt it was necessary to use materials from a convention held in the second location is related to the type of meetings held in the conventions there. These were actual topic meetings where people took turns in the

manner typical of other AA meeting. The meetings held during conventions in Cosmo-city were organised as a series of speaker meetings with little or no subsequent turn taking. Without the crucial interactive element, there would be no access to the way participants orientated to the interaction, denying a crucial indicator of the discursual norms underlying the interaction. However, I felt that as the meetings held in the convention at the second location are small, and do not attract much outside attention being made up almost exclusively of AA members and members of Al-anon, they are not significantly different from other AA meetings in the region.

As it happened however, I feel that this decision to rely on data derived from conventions was fortuitous. Meetings held in conventions, though no different in format from regular weekly meetings, attract participants from other 12-step programmes, some of whom, though members of Alcoholics Anonymous, owed their primary allegiance to other 12-step programmes. The data presented in chapter 8 indicates that such members may be more prone to breaching the discursual norms of AA meetings, and that the manner to which other members orient to these breaches is revealing about their understandings of these norms.

3.2.8. Preliminary findings about AA in the group under investigation

The requirement of gaining informed consent from AA members resulted in interaction with the group which effectively transformed my research role from that of observer to negotiator. This had the effect of generating a mini piece of action research which became embedded within the broader research design and resulted in changes to it.

Discouraging as were the difficulties in obtaining taped data from small closed meetings, the experience was reassuring in that it indicated that AA in that location was run in a manner which accorded strictly to the spirit of the Twelve Traditions of AA, i.e. there is no authority outside or beyond the 'group conscience' and this is determined at meeting level through the expression of the collective wishes of the group. This was reassuring as AA in that region, because of its close association with the expatriate community and its distance from larger AA regional bodies, could have developed features of its own, not typical in AA. A question at the heart of the methodology underpinning this study is the relationship between interaction and the

institutional nature of the setting in which it takes place. If the institutional characteristics of this group were an aberration from mainstream AA this would have important implications in interpreting data derived from meetings there.

However, some of the difficulties I had encountered resulted from the particular local characteristics of AA. The usual pattern of AA development as discussed in the previous section, is for the number of groups to grow as the membership and the number of meetings grows, thus there is a close association between a group and one or a small number of meetings, (Mäkelä, 1993). However, in Cosmo-city as the number of meetings grew the number of groups did not. As the group grew in size, the group's business meetings have taken on some of the features of AA intergroup service meetings, and are less closely involved in the running of particular meetings. Thus, group conscience meetings are held at the level of the meeting, not the group. However, because of the large number of meetings available to the membership, the member's relationship of with a 'home group' is less direct. This exacerbated the problems I had related to accessing a particular meeting and gaining informed consent.

3.2.9. Deception and risk of harm

Some researchers have tried to by-pass the obvious problems in gaining consent by deliberately misrepresenting their identities in order to enter an otherwise inaccessible situation. In fact, after the business meeting where I first proposed my research plan, some AA members took me aside and told me to simply go ahead with my work as I was entitled to go to AA meetings and what I did in my own time was my business. The question of *informed* consent was obviously not an important issue for all members.

Intentional deception - a misrepresentation of facts related to the purpose, nature or consequence of an investigation (Drew et al., 1996) - is often considered ethical given no risk of harm to the participants. Intentional deceptions frequently occur in research for methodological and pragmatic reasons, i.e. because of the Hawthorn effect, high costs and time-constraints. In fact cases of intentional deception involved in researching AA have occurred previously.

Lofland, J.F. and Lejeune, R.A. (Lofland, 1970) conducted research involving field observation of 70 AA groups in Manhattan. 'Agents' were sent to 'pose as' AA

newcomers. The research question involved examining the reaction of AA members to newcomers, based on their social class. A controversy erupted on publication of the findings. Erikson (1970: 353) presented the argument that the use of masks, i.e. deception, 'compromises both the people who wear them and the people for who they are worn'. It impinges on the validity of the findings as people only need to wear disguises in order to enter social spheres which are far from their personal experience. Furthermore, inherent in the attempt to deceive is an assumption that it can be done successfully, i.e. that *impersonating* equals *reproducing* modes of behaviour (Erikson, 1970) – a proposition for which there is no evidence. Further, it can be noted that the participating researchers appeared confident in a project in which sociologists impersonate alcoholics, but would probably question the reliability of a project whereby alcoholics impersonated sociologists. As such, this relates to the ethical principle of Justice (Belmont Report, 1979) that requires that research be non-exploitive.

This dispute took place in the 1970's. Present day sensitivities would consider it unethical to 'make clandestine observations of acts that would be considered personal or sensitive in nature' (Berg and Latin, 1994). However, the concept of risk of harm might warrant more prominence today than it did then. It does not take much imagination to realise that the first visit to an AA meeting is probably one of the most sensitive and traumatic occasions for a person whose life is already threatened by serious collapse. The presence of a newcomer transforms the entire meeting as all members make a special effort to reach out, giving of themselves in a particularly urgent and self-revelatory manner. Eliciting such a response fraudulently is a particular violation of trust, which if discovered, would seriously undermine confidence and regard for the community of researchers. Undoubtedly this amounts to harm because it generates suspicion and mistrust.

But more telling, and a point missed by commentators at that time, is that those who were deceived were not the beneficiaries of the research. The Belmont Report (1979) has 'Identification of Consequences' as one of the six norms of scientific research. There was no benefit from this research to AA or its members yet it was they who were exposed to risk of harm. From today's perspective this is unequivocally unethical (Sieber, 1992).

However, as has been remarked by Erikson (1970), some of the richest material in the social sciences has been gathered by sociologists who were true participants in the group under study, but did not announce to other members that they were employing the opportunity to collect data. Ethnographic researchers may have other identities: taxi drivers, hospital patients and teachers. It can be argued that 'masked' observation exists on a continuum. O'Reilly's (1997) work on AA narratives has been derived from hundreds of AA meetings attended first as a true participant and then a few years later solely as observer and analyst. Likewise Wilcox (1998) draws on data obtained from an earlier period of his life when he was a member of AA. Jenson's (2000) work on storytelling in AA is based on attendance at Al-Anon and open AA meetings in connection with a family member's alcoholism. Others could be mentioned whose continuing status as AA members requires anonymity - though concealing this affiliation brings ethical issues of its own. All of these researchers have drawn on data derived from meetings observed without the explicit consent of the participants, which involved no deliberate deception. There is another continuum in such cases, the continuum between observer, participant observer and true participant.

3.2.10. The role and identity of the researcher

At the heart of this issue is a question of identity; a question of whether there are boundaries between the *self* and *role* of researcher. Reinharz (1997) has pointed out that the researcher when seen as 'outsider' is identified in terms of his *role*, not in terms of his *self*. This is the issue that concerned the person who objected to my presence as an observer at AA meetings. She was prepared to avoid meetings where one participant, the researcher, was not manifestly being himself but was assuming a role. Her concern was that ordinary members, through the fact of knowing they were being observed would no longer be themselves but act as 'observees'.

Others being researched, however, are concerned about the *self* rather than the role of the researcher and seek to identify issues of race, age, gender, class, and other social attributes that affect perspective and attitude. An insider has a valuable advantage in that those being researched are less likely to fear being appraised or judged and thus alter their behaviour in accordance to what they perceive as researcher's expectations. However, my experience during this research suggests

that the bipolar construction 'insider' and 'outsider' fails to capture the additive nature of what happens when *insider* becomes *researcher*. The transition is the acquisition of a role not a change in the self. It also involves the application of an additional epistemology.

Some researchers have challenged the bipolar construction insider/outsider altogether. Messerschmidt (1981: 8) sees 'the extent of relative "insiderness" and "outsiderness" between research and informants is best conceived of as a continuum from virtual oneness to marginal nearness.' Naples (1997) also challenges this bipolarity on the grounds that sets up a false separation that neglects the interactive processes through which 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are constructed. Ethnographers who are true members of the group they are investigating, may have to renegotiate their relationship to it. There was no question that one identity can supersede the other, if differing epistemologies are acquired in each role. However, rather than seeing it as a transition to differing points on a continuum it may be seen as an additive, enriching process, allowing an interplay between differing identities and epistemologies.

Collins (1991: 53) looks at the issue from another angle. As a black American woman, she sees herself to be an 'outsider within the academy'. This she sees as part of her 'personal biography'. She sees 'personal and cultural biographies' as significant sources of knowledge. Her insights are particularly pertinent within the context of which she is talking. However, they are not altogether misplaced for those AA members seeking to account for personal experiences and histories in a framework of academic enquiry. Western academic traditions are imbued with the legacy of objectivity, positivism and respect for the empirical. AA members, however, are implicated in a highly subjective, seemingly intangible process which has changed their lives. They use concepts like 'God' or 'a higher power' to give meaning to their experience which may appear intellectually inexplicable, placing them also as 'outsiders in academe'. They may approach the discursal and reconstructive processes in which they have been implicated differently from the observer who remains non-implicated in them. Nonetheless, given a respect for and reliance on demonstrable data, they may bring particular insights to that analysis based on a deeper immersion and a sense of the experiential relevance and immediacy of these processes not felt by a more detached observer .

3.2.11. Conclusion

The overriding concerns of this section have been with gaining ethical access to the AA group in Cosmo-city, the attitudes of the group to being researched and its effect on them. The process of gaining such access was the starting point of this study. It both revealed much about the group itself and impacted on the methodology used and the design of the subsequent research. For these reasons, it warranted full discussion at an early point in this thesis.

AA guidelines on research have been examined and an account has been given of how attempts were made to access the AA group through its business meeting and individual members. I was welcome to observe meetings and talk to members. All members were most positive and supportive in this. However, it was obvious that a small group of members were concerned about the recording of meetings and one was not happy to participate in meetings where this were to happen. Concern was for the sensitivities of newcomers and the effect of such intrusive methods on the dynamics of the interaction itself. I thus opted to do a fine-grained analysis of recorded meetings at AA conventions. In order to ensure a wide range of meetings types, especially of interactive meetings, I also made use of taped materials from an AA convention in another cosmopolitan Asian city.

In discussing ethical access to research AA, methodological issues have been raised. These involve questions about the researcher's attitudes to the group being studied, the acceptability of the researcher to members of the group and impact of the presence of a researcher on the interaction being researched. These and other methodological issues are dealt with more fully in the following two chapters.

Chapter 4 - A review of literature relating to AA

The preceding chapters have introduced AA's general principles and practices and the group which is the focus of this study. The last section explored how the particular problems involved in gaining ethical access impacted on the design of this particular piece of research.

The following three chapters involve a survey of relevant literature both on AA itself and the research design of this study. The purpose of this chapter is to focus specifically on studies previously undertaken of AA itself. This builds on some of the discussion in Chapter 2. However, in reviewing macroscopic studies of AA as a social organisation attention is drawn to the reflexive and constitutive relationship between AA social structure and discursive practices. The methodologies which explore this relationship are the subject of Chapters 5 and 6. Thus this chapter starts with a review of literature on AA as a social movement. This is followed by studies which explore both aspects of the alcoholics' psychology and the experiences and voices of recovering alcoholics in AA. The final section is a review of literature pertaining to the language of AA meetings.

4.1 AA as a social movement

Room (1993) in her studies of the organisational principles of AA takes a macroscopic perspective of AA as a structured social entity and tries to locate it in the context of history and other social movements in the United States. She argues that AA does not fit the usual descriptive categories of social science, as it is not a class-based movement attempting to change society in the interest of that class, nor does it fit into the category of the 'new social movements' which are not specifically class based but seek social change on issues like ecology and world peace. She looks at its formative influences, membership, impact on society and its organisational structure, including the Twelve Traditions.

She points out that 'the heart of AA is a quintessentially oral occasion: the meeting,' and that 'much of how AA operates is carried on in an oral rather than written tradition', (Room, 1993:171). Her discussion of AA's organisational principles is based on, but not confined to, the Twelve Traditions.

She outlines AA's organisational principles as follows:

1. The openness of AA membership (Tradition 3).

2. The group is the autonomous organisational base of the AA (Tradition 4,)

The group is self-governing, subject to no external authority or superstructure (Tradition 9)

- A group has no exclusive territories or franchises. No group can prevent another group operating within its own area even if it is appealing to the same population

The group is financially self-supporting (Tradition 7).

3. AA has no affiliations or distractions (Tradition 5)

Prohibitions on external affiliations and endorsements (Traditions 6 & 10)

Prohibition on property ownership (Tradition 6).

4. AA's social organisation is based on internal equality and democracy

No professional relations exist within AA (Tradition 8)

There is an elected and rotating leadership

Decisions are made by consensus involving Internal openness – no secrecy of process

External anonymity.

Room's work has informed much of the third chapter of this work, especially the section on the reflexivity of the Twelve Traditions. In sum, she feels that 'AA has succeeded in creating an organisation that breaks Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" (1958) by building in structures and principles that minimize the professionalisation of leadership and keep effective organisational power at the level of egalitarian face-to-face interaction' (Room, 1993:171).

Borkman (1999) has reached similar conclusions. Starting with Weber's (1968) theory that the developmental fate of emergent organisations with aging charismatic leaders is either to change towards bureaucracy or die, she explores how AA has defied such predictions. She depicts AA as 'an unusual, non-hierarchical, fluid, and open form of organisation that has evolved from the bottom up over a period of years'. She accounts for this by AA's retention of the circle of sharing as their 'core

technology' (p. 167). This has engendered a culture of experimentally based learning that is protective of local groups while allowing the development of a national and international level of organisation that could accommodate AA's increasing size and complexity. This is achieved through a realisation that groups, though composed of individual members, develop facets that are not traceable to any or all individual members.

4.1.1. Some psychological profiles of the alcoholic

It is a central contention of this study that AA discursal practices reflect and constitute the way AA members align themselves to each other and the AA programme.

Individualism

Room (1993) refers to a larger agenda within AA - beyond simply stopping drinking. 'What AA took on was nothing less than the ideology of radical individualism and the patterns of thinking that sustained it'. She points out how AA took on individualism at three levels (p. 180-1).

At the level of ideology

The *Big Book* singled out pride and egoism as central in the 'deflation of ego' necessary to arrest alcoholism. The individual alcoholic, it claims, is powerless over alcohol. Given this, Room (1993) points out three options: reliance on the professional, reliance on the group, reliance on a higher power. AA did not choose the first option. A doctor may treat a disease, but cannot take on the responsibility for one's life. Nor did it opt to rely on the *group*. It chose the third option; reliance on a *higher power*, thus removing the burden from the individual, without transferring it either to another person or institution.

At the level of thinking

Room (1993) points out AA attacks the legitimacy of rationality, specifically in the form of offering reasons – particularly when they are offered as justifications. 'Consciousness-raising' she sees as a matter of changing the acceptability of offering particular rationales in everyday discourse.

At the level of practice and organisation

She points out how this took many forms, most obviously in the AA structure of non-hierarchical relations, and the central place of the meeting in community formation. AA insists the process of individual recovery can only take place by helping others, in what it refers to as 'Twelfth Step work'.

Ironically however, as Room points out, much of this attack on individualism comes from the influence of a radically individuated protestant tradition. The Quaker meeting (Davies, 1982) offered a model of a non-hierarchical meeting composed on personal testimonies. Within such traditions God spoke unmediated to the individual. Within AA, members are asked to act individualistically in defining the 'higher power' for themselves. Similarly, they confine their sharing to their own individual experiences. Furthermore, within the traditions of radical Protestantism were denominations with 'congregational polity' where acephalous organisations allowed anyone to set up a new congregation. What Room sees as most unusual in this cultural context is the way AA set itself apart from US capitalist traditions in its refusal to own substantial property.

Though Room does refer to the challenge to individualism at the level of ideology and thinking, and refers to AA's attack on ego and the legitimacy of offering reasons, and justifications, she does not examine how ego deflation may be brought about or reflected in discursal practices in the way members align themselves to the AA programme or each other in their interaction. Neither does she look at the discursal processes of attribution at work in AA interaction. Such was not the type of question addressed by her methodology. Chapters 7 and 8 of this study explore, at the level of *discursive practice*, the constraints AA interaction places on the participants as *authors of their own discourse and on the construction of their experiences as uniquely personal*. Pervasively, *AA members present their beliefs as derived from their experiences in AA and themselves as essentially like their fellow alcoholics; that is their relationship with AA is one of dependency; their relationship with each other is one of symmetry*.

Ego, power and control

Individualism refers to the extent of the relative differentiation between the individual's identity and the wider community. Individual power and control in this context may be viewed as related psychological concepts in that they indicate the

extent to which individuals feel they exert influence on that community, themselves and their circumstances.

Three writers in particular have looked at the alcoholic and recovery in relation to the alcoholics' view of their own power and control. Harry Tiebout (1954) has looked at it from a psychoanalytical perspective, Gregory Bateson (1985 {1971}) has looked at it from an anthropological-epistemological-cybernetics frame, and Stephanie Brown (1993) has looked at it in the light of the therapeutic process in Alcoholics Anonymous. A brief review of their work is now provided as it relates to AA and aspects of the AA belief system. It is also necessary to explicate some of their main ideas with reference to AA literature.

Tiebout in his work, 'The ego factors in surrender in alcoholism' (1954), admits to difficulties associated with the use of the term 'ego', referring to the everyday use of the term and the more technical usage of 'Ego' by Freud. The word's meaning in everyday usage presents problems as it is recognised only by its surface features; however, he postulates that the inflated ego is the result of elements of the original nature of the child persisting in the adult psyche. At the start of life the psyche assumes its own omnipotence; it cannot accept frustrations and wants everything done in a hurry.

This is the psychic state of 'his Majesty the Baby' in Freud's terms. When these traits persist into adulthood, the person is deemed to be 'immature'. In an alcoholic they can manifest themselves in a 'grandiosity', that claims 'there is nothing you cannot master or control, though the facts demonstrate the opposite', (Tiebout, 1953:52), and 'defiance' that claims 'nothing can happen to me because I can and do defy it'. These are the traits of the alcoholic which, Tiebout claims, are addressed by Alcoholics Anonymous when an alcoholic 'surrenders' his or her life to the AA programme and a *higher power*, where 'Easy does it' is a key slogan. He concludes 'the object of therapy is to permanently replace the old Ego and its activity'.

His ideas closely reflect major aspects of AA philosophy. The key concept of *powerlessness* is central to AA. It is the admission of powerlessness over alcohol that is the basis of Step 1 and all subsequent Steps. In oral discourse it is usually referred to as *hitting bottom*. This metaphor is central to the origin and nature of AA and the development of its characteristic discourse. The original concept found its way into AA through a tortuous route. Bill Wilson writes in *AA Comes of Age*:

Deflation at depth, yes that was it. Exactly that had happened to me. Dr Carl Jung had told an Oxford Group friend of Ebby's how hopeless his alcoholism was and Dr Silkworth had passed the same sentence on me. Then Ebby, also an alcoholic, had handed me the identical dose. On Dr Silkworth's say-so alone maybe I would never have completely accepted the verdict, but when Ebby came along and *one alcoholic began to talk to another*, that had clinched it. (Anon, 1986:66), original italics)

The concept of 'deflation at depth' Bill Wilson found in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James, though the phrase is actually Wilson's own (Kurtz, 1991). The expression, *hitting bottom* does not actually appear in the 1939 edition of the *Big Book* and only four times in the story section of the third edition. However, it is prevalent in modern AA, and is used regularly in AA meetings. It refers to the emotional and spiritual condition of the member associated with the first step. It involves admission of personal defeat by alcohol and surrender to a higher power; be that AA or a god of the member's own understanding. It is the state whereby one 'seeks help', 'admits defeat' and 'stops fighting'. As such it represents a severe challenge to the Ego, in Tiebout's terms. While this study is not concerned particularly with these psychological states as such, it is concerned to examine if and how they are manifested or constituted in interaction in the AA meetings, suggesting that 'hitting bottom' is a prerequisite experience for engaging in the type of interaction where the participant adopts a footing where face is not generally maintained and members align their discourse in a manner which constitutes and maintains solidarity.

Tiebout's ideas are reflected in the work of Bateson (1985 {1971}) who worked within a different discipline and intellectual framework. Bateson argues that 'the 'sobriety' of the alcoholic is characterised by an unusually disastrous variant of the Cartesian dualism, the division between the Mind and Matter - between conscious will, or 'self' and the remainder of the personality'(p. 312). It is in perpetual intoxication that a subjective correction of this is made. He feels that Bill Wilson's 'stroke of genius' was that in AA's first step a declaration of personal powerlessness broke that dualism, thereby changing the alcoholics' false epistemology' (p. 313). This dualism is manifest in occidental man who sees himself as an agent - a purposive 'self'. The 'self' and 'mind' are restricted and reified within the man. As the alcoholic begins to suffer from or be blamed for alcoholism he pits *himself* against *the bottle*; the challenge is 'I can stay sober'. This sense of challenge, Bateson feels, is the 'pride'

referred to in AA literature. Victory, however, must be short-lived as it leads to the victor becoming, what Bateson refers to using the terminology of AA literature, 'cocksure'. He relaxes and finds himself again 'on a binge'. The contextual structure of sobriety changes with its achievement. The challenge has now become the risk of drinking again.

AA, he argues, changes this contextual structure by permanently placing alcoholism within the *self*, and therefore something to be lived with. The alcoholic in AA declares him / herself to be an alcoholic, and alcoholism to be a sickness within. On the other hand, the contextual structure of alcoholic 'pride' places it outside the self: something the alcoholic pits himself against. As such, this 'pride' is associated with risk-taking as the challenge is to risk another drink. Thus failure becomes a matter of probability or bad luck, placing what happens beyond the scope of 'self'.

Bateson claims the so-called 'pride' of the alcoholic always presumes a real or fictitious other, with which the relationship can be either 'symmetrical' or 'complementary'. The symmetrical relationship is with the similar and is emulative, i.e. the more of a given behaviour in A stimulates more of it in B, for example the arms race or in 'keeping up with the Joneses'. The complementary relationship, however, is with that which is different, but with which there is a mutual fit. Common examples are dominance-submission, nurturance-dependency, spectatorship-exhibitionism. Both relationships are liable to sudden 'schismogenetic' changes, as competition turns to defeat or dominance is reversed.

Bateson notes a strong tendency towards symmetry in the normal drinking habits in occidental culture, where drinkers are impelled by culture to match each other drink for drink. Alcoholics however, increasingly find it hard to 'drink like other people'. They may start to drink alone, responding with symmetry by both resenting those who suggest a weakness and reasserting their will against drink. Symmetrical effort requires continual opposition. Soon it becomes a battle to prove that the bottle cannot kill them. The relationship with spouses becomes one of dependency, promoting shame and the dependency relations with superiors give rise to greater resentment.

In the drunken state however, there is a complementary surrender to the bottle, accompanied by an entire change in the alcoholic's epistemology as anxieties, resentments and panic vanish. Self-control and the need for comparison with others lessen as the step from sobriety to intoxication is a step from symmetrical challenge

to complementarity with the world. Alcohol enables the individual to see himself and act as part of the group. *Hitting bottom*, Bateson sees, as a spell of panic which provides a favourable moment for change. It is the 'double bind' described by Dr Silkworth in the foreword to *Alcoholics Anonymous*, (Silkworth, 1985 {1939}): the *obsession of the mind* which compels the alcoholic to drink and *the allergy of the body* that condemns him or her to go mad or die. This discovery forces the alcoholic to a 'point at which only an involuntary change in deep unconscious epistemology - a spiritual experience – will make the lethal description irrelevant' (Bateson, 1985:331 {1971}).

Bateson relates his discussion to aspects of AA literature, particularly terms like 'higher power', and the slogans 'hitting bottom' and 'an alcoholic can't drink like other people'. Going outside the work of Bateson, it is also interesting to point out that a central metaphor in AA discourse is that of *people, places and things*. This metaphor is used extensively and intertextually in AA sharing. Originating in a story in the *Big Book* (Anon, 1985:449), it is a conceptualisation of those things in the human condition outside the individual and over which the individual is powerless, but against which s/he battles. However, *people, places and things* are constructed as elements that the recovering alcoholic must cease battling against and has to accept. This is how it is described in one of the most frequently referred to stories in the *Big Book*:

And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation – some fact of life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way they are supposed to be at the moment. (p. 449)

Within AA it is believed that if the alcoholic is to recover, only the *self* and its reactions to *people, places and things* can and must be changed. To achieve this, another power must be sought. This is often represented as a personal power within or emanating from the programme itself. It is the construction of *self* as alcoholic, i.e. powerless over alcohol, with access to a higher power that in effect reconstitutes the boundaries between personal powerlessness and personal power as encapsulated in the AA mantra - *The Serenity Prayer*.

God grant me the SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change;

COURAGE to change the things I can; and WISDOM to know the difference.

Alcoholism is seen to reside within the alcoholic and *people, place and things* are represented as outside and fixed. The power to bring about change and the object of change are both represented as residing within members themselves, but only insofar as they have admitted personal defeat and seek power through compliance to a higher, broader process. The aim is to achieve 'serenity' and freedom from the 'disease' resulting from a combative stance taken towards self, compulsive drinking, and the world at large.

Using the phraseology of religion rather than AA, Bateson (ibid) claims 'the religious conversion' of the alcoholic when 'saved' by AA can be described as a dramatic shift from a symmetrical habit, or epistemology, to an almost purely complementary view of his relationship to others and the universe or God (p. 326). The notion of complementarity here involves the notion of *dependency*, no longer the dependency on alcohol but on others, particularly AA and the AA programme. With the acceptance of dependency comes submission – surrender. The alcoholic no longer battles against addiction or life but accepts addiction as integral of self and self as part of life. The alcoholic, it is heard frequently in AA meetings, must learn 'to live on life's terms'. The *self*, especially of the alcoholic, Bateson sees as an improperly delimited and false reification of much larger interlocking processes. The unit of survival is not the organism, or species but the largest system of 'power' within which the creature lives. In AA the alcoholic surrenders *self* to this larger power, or in the terminology of AA, he must 'let go'. The 'higher power' of AA does not reward or punish, unlike the biblical God. Power in the sense of unilateral control is foreign to AA. The healthy relationship between person and power is complementary, in contrast to the 'pride' of an alcoholic. As such AA affects a change in the fundamental premises of the mind of the alcoholic, for which complementarity is preferable to symmetry.

Bateson's analysis is based on studies of alcoholics, with whom he once worked, and AA itself. His approach is to explicate the dynamics of cybernetic systems. He makes only limited use of data derived from AA literature and from interaction between AA members. This study is informed by and explores some of the conceptual relationships outlined by Bateson; particularly the notion of how AA members relate to AA in a dependency manner, and with each other in symmetrical manner.

However, this study uses naturally occurring spoken data derived *in situ* during AA meetings to explore how AA members display and therefore constitute their alignment with their past, each other, the AA programme and processes. Implicit in Bateson is the notion that relationships of symmetry and complementarity exist within a system somehow 'out there'. The approach in this study is to attempt to illustrate that these relationships are displayed, constituted and maintained through actual discursive practices which can be captured and analysed as empirical data through recordings and transcriptions.

Furthermore, it is proposed that during AA interaction a form of discursive symmetry is produced which goes beyond Bateson's definition. He suggests that alcoholics need to arrive at a state of complementarity with each other - through sponsorship and 'carrying the message to other alcoholics' (Step 12) - and with the 'higher powers' that operate within larger systems and processes. States of emulative symmetry are not, he suggests, helpful to the alcoholic. However, this study proposes that AA members create a form of symmetry in their discursive practices which is exceptional and displays a higher degree of symmetry than achieved even in idealised mundane conversation between equals. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) suggest mundane conversation is the ideal from which forms of institutional interaction depart. Institutional interaction is seen as characteristically 'systematically asymmetrical'. It is proposed here that the symmetry achieved in AA interaction in meetings is neither emulative nor competitive, as are Bateson's examples - the arms race and keeping up with the Joneses - but co-operative without being complementary.

Brown (1985, 1993), more recently, has used the work of Tiebout, Bateson and the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Anon, 1985 {1939}) as the theoretical foundation for exploring the process of recovery of self-identified, abstinent AA members. She examines the therapeutic processes within Alcoholics Anonymous in relation to core issues involving the relationship of beliefs about power and control to the maintenance of abstinence and the process of long-term change (Brown, 1993:137). She feels that 'the faulty belief in the power to control one's drinking serves as an organiser of beliefs about self, others and the world'. Paradoxically, it is the acceptance of loss of control - powerlessness - that forms the foundation for empowerment and the internal change required for recovery.

She outlines how the 12 Steps of AA are organised around acceptance of loss of control (Step1), with the acceptance of powerlessness over alcohol. Step 2 maintains this by offering a 'power greater than self'. This facilitates the shift from symmetry to complementarity, and challenges the feeling of omnipotence, defiance and grandiosity, outlined by Tiebout. Step 3 also cuts away at 'self-will'. Thus the first three steps are a direct assault on pathological egocentricity.

Steps 4 and 5 involve the process of rigorous self-examination, piercing the psychological defences of denial, projection and rationalisation. Steps 6 and 7 reflect a change of attitude from self-power and egocentricity to deference and humility, an ability to learn from others and accept that one is 'part of' - dependent on - a greater whole.

Steps 8 and 9 with their emphasis on restitution, involves a recognition and acceptance of responsibility for past actions. This also resolves the sense of guilt felt by alcoholics and allows the development of a focus on interpersonal relationships.

Steps 10, 11 and 12 – the 'maintenance steps' in AA terminology – are geared towards the present and a continuing reliance on a 'higher power' and ego reduction. The continuing cultivation of honesty, humility, gratitude and giving to others help maintain the individual in a 'complementary frame, part of something larger, rather than the centre' (Brown, 1993:146-7).

In this manner Brown explicates the theories of Tiebout and Bateson through the practices of AA, as manifest through the 12 Steps. Brown (1993) concludes that 'acceptance and active construction of a higher power sustain individuals in a complementary frame, which then provides a new foundation for relationships with self and others' (pp151).

4.2 AA voices – ethnographic approaches

Studies such by Room (1993) and Borkman (1993) approach AA as a social organisation within a framework of social theories. Those of Tiebout, Bateson and Brown explore conflicts within the psychology of the alcoholic. Only Brown however, explores the voices of alcoholics in AA, and this primarily in a way which illustrates rather than informs her thesis.

Much ethnographic work has been done to explore the AA experience as articulated through AA members. Milton Maxwell in his work *The AA Experience* (1984), describes his approach as, 'essentially anthropological – that of both participant observation and the use of knowledgeable informants' (p. ix). The study is addressed to professionals in medicine and counselling. By using AA members' accounts to describe the process of becoming an alcoholic and what active alcoholism entails, he allows the perceptions of the informants under study to inform that study. He takes this approach as he feels that, while there has been lots of advice offered to alcoholics in the past, there is little realisation of what it is actually like to be an alcoholic.

Using the voices of AA members, Maxwell outlines the developmental processes involved in the changes in thinking, feelings and perceptions which occur as they emerge from habitual drinking to sobriety through AA membership, involving working the Twelve Steps and engaging in AA practices. As aspects of this study have been used in Chapter 2 to introduce AA, a detailed account of his findings is not necessary here. Suffice to say that there is a considerable similarity in the ways Maxwell's AA informants talk of their alcoholism and AA with the way members I have encountered talk.

A major difference in approach between Maxwell's work and the approach taken here is methodological. It involves the way alcoholic voices are heard. For Maxwell these voices appear to reflect like a mirror, the changing reality to which they are referring. This study on the other hand attempts to explore how discursal practices are both agents in and products of the relationships which obtain and the changes which occur through discursal engagement in AA processes, particularly in AA meetings. Further aspects of this are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

4.2.1. Symbolic interactionism

Another ethnographic study of AA is that of David R. Rudy, *Becoming Alcoholic* (1986). This study of AA in 'Eastville' USA is an exploration of members' meanings as they develop through interactional processes, and the methodology owes much to Mead (1934). Rudy went among the group he was studying, immersing himself in their culture and establishing rapport with informants, describing features of the settings in which AA members met and the types of meetings they held.

The study is framed within the paradigm of symbolic interactionism, focusing on how participants construct and respond to their worlds. The symbolic interactionist approach emphasises the importance of the symbolic as well as physical environment; the main features of the symbolic environment being language, others, self and interaction.

Rudy opens his study with the following remarks:

One of the most anxiety-producing and yet exciting aspects of doing field research is the uncertainty of direction. Rather than beginning a study with a specific question, most field research starts with a setting, an arena of social life, and allows that setting, its participants, and the researchers' perceptions of these to forge themes, questions, hypothesis, and grounded theories. (p. 1)

Entering the 'field' with no 'specific question', Rudy uses a grounded approach (Glaser, 1967) formulating a sociological definition of alcoholism based on members' accounts, and values. Data from the informants is used to generate grounded theory rather than as a mirror to reflect reality, presenting alcoholism as a 'relative phenomenon that is constructed', sharply different from a positivist approach which treats alcoholism as a medical entity with its own discoverable aetiology (Rudy, 1986:95). Unlike Maxwell (1984) he does not use participants' accounts as a source for data on the nature of alcoholism. Rudy's approach to his participants' stories reflects postmodernist concerns about how the stories convey and constitute the informants' realities. He expresses a particular interest in explaining what Schur (1971) refers to as "retrospective interpretation" – the types of new explanations members of AA learn in order to reinterpret their lives.

4.2.2. The analysability of AA interaction

Denzin has approached AA from many different perspectives. His book, *Treating Alcoholism, an Alcoholics Anonymous Approach* (Denzin, 1987) like Maxwell's, is directed at the professionals who deal with alcoholism. The title indicates that it is premised on AA beliefs. Concepts of alcoholism and recovery are presented in a way which is very similar to AA's own. In his book *Interpretive Interactionism* (Denzin, 1989), he discusses, rather than simply uses the language of AA and refers to AA as a distinct linguistic community, describing the steps necessary to learn its language. This, he says, involves isolating and noting how different members use key terms,

reading AA literature and studying how language is connected to personal experience. As such, he approaches AA language as a means whereby it is understood and interpreted.

Denzin (1997) felt that 'the rule-governed structure of AA meeting talk does not admit of easy analysis within the format of conversational analysis' (p. 266). For him AA interaction lacked norms. He felt that an AA turn 'although having rule-governed openings and closings, is filled out by middles that are wholly at the speaker's discretion. Nothing in the preceding talk of another member need be keyed upon, elaborated, or spoken to, although it often is' (p. 267). Arminen (1998b) takes up this point and effectively demonstrates that AA interaction is accomplished through extended turns which members allocate to each other in formally organised ways and that these turns are methodical achievements that rely on members' orientation to the constraints concerning the type of turns they are going to present. That AA sharing at meetings is not the haphazard affair Denzin suggests is the focus of the rest of this chapter.

4.3 The language of AA meeting

This section examines the concept of AA meetings as 'a speech event' outlined in Mäkelä and his associate's in *A Study of AA in Eight Societies* (1996). The section that follows is an account of Arminen's more detailed ethnomethodological conversation analysis of AA meetings.

Mäkelä's is a broad-brush attempt at drawing a composite picture of AA meetings from observation and data from different countries and the description of regional differences and cultures. The major types of AA meetings are described, including 'open' and 'closed' meetings, discussion and speaker meetings and meetings for special interest groups, such as for newcomers, women and gay or lesbian members. Mäkelä and company warn about trying to describe a 'typical' meeting as it is difficult to determine the core characteristics that connect AA meetings in different cultures. However, an account is given of 'typical' locations and features of the setting of meeting rooms in different localities. 'Sharing' is described as the expression of experiences and feelings and the key concept of 'identifying' is described as 'listening emphatically'. Mention is made of the collective purpose of a meeting and the value of spontaneity and immediacy.

The universal or near universal features of the AA meeting are listed. These are the opening rituals, announcements, discussion, money collection, serving of refreshment and closing rituals. The main surface characteristics of turn taking in AA meetings are also outlined as well as the 'rules' which govern this, as they apply in different cultures and in different sized meetings. The use of extended turns and the avoidance of direct replies are noted. Mäkelä also distinguishes between those aspects of interaction which are variable and the core interaction order of AA in Finland. Among the latter, he identifies ten primary 'rules' of speaking in the meeting:

1. Do not interrupt the person speaking
2. Speak about your own experiences
3. Speak as honestly as you can
4. Do not speak about other peoples' private affairs
5. Do not profess religious doctrines or lecture about scientific theories
6. You may speak about your personal problems in applying the programme but do not attempt to refute the programme
7. Do not openly confront or challenge previous turns of talk
8. Do not give direct advice to other members of AA
9. Do not present casual explanations of the behaviour of other AA members
10. Do not present psychological interpretations of the behaviour of other AA members.

The first two of these 'rules' are presented as most critical; the first supports the non-conversational turn taking system; the second restricts turn types to self-narratives. However, there is no attempt to draw a distinction between rules which are merely conventional, which vary according to custom, and the more fundamental ethnomethodological rules which underlie AA turn taking and constitute it. There is no attempt to account for these rules or explore the aspects of discourse they govern, though how they are supported through AA literature is discussed. This requires a more fine-grained description, using recorded data, and was beyond Mäkelä's brief.

Rules 1, 7 and 8 appear to govern interaction, while rules 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 allowable topics. Underlying most of them is an expectation that AA speakers align

their sharing to other participants, the AA programme and issues other than alcohol in a particular way, that is in a manner which does not assume superior knowledge. Interestingly, there is no requirement here that members should talk of alcohol or alcoholism. In fact, Mäkelä points out that the mode of turns is restricted to a specific type, but the content is otherwise quite free. There is also discussion of how the amount of overt connection to previous turns varies from meeting to meeting, and that agreement is more explicitly expressed than disagreement.

Such observations have been derived from an ethnographic observation research methodology. The data presented comes from field observation and interviews rather than recordings off actual meetings. Though these observations seem to have face value validity, the nature or source of these 'rules' is not made apparent.

Within an ethnomethodological study, however, the nature and source of rules governing interaction and topic selection is of great importance. An example given by Mäkelä of rule compliance relates to how AA members are reluctant to answer a newcomer's question on whether the newcomer is an alcoholic. The reason given for this is that by doing so the AA member would be making a medical assessment, which is outside AA guidelines expressed in *If you are a professional* (Anon, 1986). This suggests a prescriptive rule is being followed. However, the question can be raised as to whether the AA member is behaving in this manner because of AA guidelines or because s/he is adhering to a deeper principle embedded in Step 1; that AA membership requires members to admit *their own* alcoholism. The principle of accountability to self and the autonomy of others lies at the heart of AA ideology and, as this present study hopes to demonstrate, is a mechanism through which much of AA interaction is accomplished and has a major role in constituting AA interaction in meetings. It is this deeper principle which informs the guidelines which merely reflect this. The guidelines may therefore be seen not as *prescriptive* but to be *descriptive* of underlying discoursal practices which *constitute* AA interaction.

In regards to the principle of guarding the autonomy of others, Mäkelä here also makes some interesting observations about facework in AA interaction. He cites Brown & Levinson (1987) in describing 'negative face' as referring to freedom of action and freedom from imposition, 'the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others' (p. 61). 'Positive face' refers to one's desire to be recognised by others, 'the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at

least some others' (p. 61). Denzin (1987) has reported how crying, the revelation of deviance while under the influence of alcohol, discussion of bouts of insanity, mention of crippling fears or depression, and talk of failure of marriage and social relationships are all sanctioned and accepted within the talk of AA meetings' (p. 195-6).

4.3.1. The analysis of Institutional Interaction in AA meetings

In a number of works, Ilka Arminen uses the principles of ethnomethodological CA to explore how members of Alcoholics Anonymous produce their talk (1996a; 1996b; 1998a; 1998b). These are descriptive, empirical studies of a number of aspects of AA meetings, including the making of repairs and of how members preserve order and intersubjective understanding during the course of their meetings. His data is derived from recordings of large open speaker meetings of the AA Vuori in Helsinki, Finland and have been translated for these English language publications.

4.3.2. Turn-taking and topic construction in AA meetings

Arminen's (1998b) study of interaction in AA 'Therapeutic Interaction: A study of Mutual Help in the Meetings of Alcoholics anonymous', depicts an AA meeting as:

a setting for mutual help, accomplished with the help of extended turns which members allocate to each other in formally organised ways. (They are) a methodical achievement that relies on a particular system of turn taking and on members' orientation to the constraints concerning the type of turns they are going to present, (Arminen, 1998b:49).

Arminen points out that AA meetings in Vuori are organised in ways that are distinct from group therapy (Turner, 1972; Wooton, 1976; Morris and Chenail, 1995) and other types of business meetings (Atkinson, 1978; Cuff, 1985; Linde, 1991; Schwartzman, 1993; Larrue and Trognon, 1993; Boden, 1994).

He states:

the design of turns and the transition from one to the other have to be interactionally managed at the very time of achievement. Through these instances of local management the whole format of AA meetings becomes an interactional achievement. The order of the meeting depends on the participants (sic) ongoing monitoring of the course of the meeting, through which departures from the ordinary course become accountable and sanctionable when necessary. (Arminen, 1998b: 56).

He shows how members recurrently open their turns with greetings and self-identifications which are followed by a response space during which members display their orientation to co-participants through allusion to prior speakers. This he refers to as 'mutually ratified participation', which displays an orientation to the specific forms of interaction taking place in meetings.

In a more detailed work, Arminen (1996b) illustrates that this orientation to the specific format of the gatherings is revealed in the details of turn openings that manage, sustain and constrain these. He singles out the following practices: occasioning a topic, reformulation of a topic and recycling a topic. He shows their permutations and reductions are contextually sensitive devices through which members provide an alignment relevant for the context of mutual help.

He points out the very strong tendency for members to positively acknowledge the prior contributions of previous speakers early in their turns and sees this as a technique for maintaining solidarity, though they may reformulate the topic in ways which adjust it to their own needs. Thus topical cohesion is achieved through the turn-openings where members display that their talk has been triggered by a previous speaker. Generally members only refer to those aspects of previous speakers to which they align to positively, or that they 'identify with', to use AA terminology. Where there is non-alignment, Arminen states, there is silence. The findings of this study largely confirm Arminen's in this regard. However, they do suggest that a positive alignment to previous speakers is dependent on how far speakers align their own turns to AA beliefs. The findings of this study suggest that solidarity is maintained through a common alignment to these beliefs rather than to a previous turn *per se* and data is presented to illustrate this.

Arminen (1998b: 63) shows a major feature of AA meeting talk is that members' normative orientation is to an avoidance of imposing their own standards on others. He notes that turns display an autobiographical commitment by taking a first-person stance and though this permits almost anything to be said, the focus on personal experience entails avoiding criticism and the imposing personal views on others. Again, this study confirms this. However, what is indicated by the present findings is that the lack of adjacency turn taking enables speakers not to refer directly to previous speakers, this itself equips the speaker with a resource which allows the creation of considerable ambiguity. While framing their own turn in an

autobiographically relevant incident, a speaker may implicitly challenge or refute assumptions embedded in the turn of a previous speaker without making any overt reference to them. Thus it is left to the previous speaker to interpret or identify with the current speaker in an 'if the cap fits' manner.

The suspension of close ordering interaction and the inability of recipients to make responses, he claims, make AA speakers solely responsible narrators and thus particularly aware self-monitors, showing great sensitivity towards other participants. This sensitivity is also displayed through *co-contributor references*, (Arminen, 1998b:113). This is displayed by subsequent speakers acknowledging the topics and sub-topics introduced by prior speakers in a process of joint *topic co-construction*, where each speaker orients to previous contributions, almost invariably in an affiliative manner, as the context for the current turn, thereby displaying, according to Arminen, an understanding of this context, and renewing it. Again, the data presented in Chapter 8 largely confirms this, but goes further by suggesting that this process only takes place in situations where speakers construct the topic in a manner which is aligned to AA beliefs. This constraint prevents the occurrence of joint topic construction in a manner at odds with AA ideology. Data presented there indicates that if a speaker takes an evaluative or less than accepting stance in relation to AA ideology, or if they engage in discoursal practices which upset the symmetry between members this is procedurally relevant to subsequent speakers and may not be simply ignored but may provoke sanctions.

Arminen points out that analysing that which provokes sanctions helps overcome the particular methodological problem (also faced by this researcher) of demonstrating a non-occurrence of a particular feature in the data. If its appearance provokes sanctions it is non-normative. In his work on self-repairs in AA meetings (Arminen, 1996a), he shows how speaker orientation comes to the surface when they treat their own talk as being improper. He demonstrates this by giving examples of speakers reformulating their utterances to avoid any implication of criticism of others. This study similarly uses the occurrence of oriented to breaches in interaction to demonstrate the existence of normative expectations, and that these involve the expectations that certain discoursal practices are avoided. However, it attempts to account for these constraints in terms of the achievement of AA's institutional goals, which are not simply 'therapeutic' as Arminen suggests, but the achievement of a

new alignment to self, others and the greater world. This is a process that goes beyond the treatment of alcoholism, the process implied by the term 'therapy', but involves the transformation of self and perhaps explains why members of AA object to the idea that they are involved in 'self-help therapy'.

Nonetheless, it is in showing, through a close analysis of actual recorded data, AA interaction to be occasioned, context sensitive and recipient orientated, that Arminen convincingly demonstrates that previous ethnographic work, particularly that of Denzin, has failed to capture the normative, rule-governed characteristics of AA interaction.

4.3.3. Going beyond the methodology of Institutional Interaction

Arminen has derived his methodology from an approach based on CA and Institutional Interaction. He has thus limited his observations to an analysis of interpersonal interaction at AA meetings. Though he asks the question whether AA members use the AA programme, by which he presumably means AA texts, as what he refers to as 'an omnirelevant device', (Arminen, 1998:138) in the same way as they use like references to earlier turns of talk, he does not explore the intertextual nature of sharing in AA meetings. His findings lead him to conclude that references to the AA programme seem to rank secondary to references to members' talk; the AA programme has the same 'value' as any other possible topic of talk. He concludes that 'the salience of co-contributor reference arises from the fact that they are not only a technique for the management of topics in monological talk but also a vehicle for displaying and dealing with interpersonal relationships at meetings' (Arminen, 1998b:138).

Data presented in Chapter 8 confirms how aspects of topic cohesion display an orientation to previous speakers' turns, especially at turn-openings. It also confirms the importance and pervasiveness of autobiographical commitment in the sharing. However, it suggests the AA programme and belief system is 'omnirelevant', if by that Arminen means it informs and underpins all the discoursal practices which constitute an AA meeting. The data in this study suggests that the pervasive and recurring normative practice that constitute an AA meeting may be suspended if it is felt that a topic is being constructed or a speaker is aligned in a manner which either:

displays a less than total dependence on core AA beliefs and practices

disturbs the discoursal symmetrical relationship that exists between AA members in an AA meeting.

The data presented in Chapter 8 suggests that AA sharing is primarily ideological in nature, being derived from and therefore sanctioned by the AA belief system. AA turn taking is affiliative and topics are co-constructed only in so far as speakers display an affiliative alignment to AA beliefs and practices and a symmetrical alignment with other members. Autobiographic relevance, it is shown, is displayed through the manner in which verbal interaction is aligned not only to previous speakers but also to these beliefs. AA sharing is thus often densely intertextual; allusions being made to AA literature, slogans, practices and beliefs, as well as to previous speakers. Indeed, there are examples of turns where no allusion to previous speakers has been made, but personal experience is recurrently and pervasively aligned to a common AA discourse and practices. Thus, though the interaction is undoubtedly context sensitive and context renewing, it is ideological in that it orientates to a body of text outside the immediate context of the interaction.

4.3.4. Conclusion

In terms of subject matter and methodology, Arminen's work is the closest antecedent to this study. However, his material is of recordings of large open speaker meetings of AA in Helsinki, Finland where the meetings differ slightly from the AA meetings under study here in important ways. Typically the meetings he has studied are attended by over a hundred Finnish participants; the meetings in this study have a cosmopolitan multi-cultural membership and are never that big, seldom being attended by more than twenty five. This, as will be shown, impacts on the critically important aspect of turn allocation. Arminen's original data was delivered in Finnish and has therefore been transcribed and translated. The material for this study is all in English. This affords an opportunity to make comparisons across languages and cultures.

Furthermore, this study, like that of Arminen, is an ethnomethodological analysis of institutional interaction, however, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6, it is embedded in a methodology based on prior ethnographic immersion. This allows a broader contextual framework to illuminate the fine-grained empirical analysis especially

throwing light on the rich intertextual play in sharing in an AA meeting between the participants' individual footing and the collective ideology of AA as manifest in its approved literature. This is a most critical aspect of AA discourse and relates to the way participants align themselves to co-participants and AA beliefs themselves.

This chapter has reviewed studies previously undertaken on AA as an organisation. Attention has been paid to AA as a social organisation which displays non-hierarchical and egalitarian characteristics, particularly as they pertain to the reflexivity between AA's social organisation and discursal practices. Studies have been reviewed which indicate that alcoholics tend towards a dualistic view of the world, where 'self' is pitted against the world 'out there', and the alcoholic becomes divided against him/herself. This remains a remorseless battle until or unless the alcoholic 'surrenders' and accepts both the fact of his/her alcoholism and that aspect of life are beyond personal control. This view has been related to AA's belief system which sees the alcoholic's life as run on 'self-will', and which requires the member to accept his/her alcoholism as a spiritual, mental and physiologically based problem, i.e. a 'disease', or a sense of 'dis-ease', in the terminology of some AA members. The alcoholic is also required to *accept* a 'higher power' and the 'people, places and things' which constitute the world outside the self.

This study is premised on the thesis that this 'acceptance' is displayed and constituted in part through the way members align themselves to the AA programme and other members in their discursal practices. Therefore, studies of these discursal practices have also been reviewed. Studies of the characteristics of AA meetings as a speech event have been outlined, as well as ethnomethodologically based studies by Arminen which have focused primarily the way AA members align their discourse to fellow members. Whereas Arminen's studies have focused on the interactive order between AA participants as a feature of order in institutional interaction, they have not dealt with the way members align that interaction to AA's belief systems as manifest through its literature, practices and slogans, in order to achieve AA's institutional aims. As Wilson (1993:37) points out, it is necessary to demonstrate how the organisation of a variant speech-exchange system is reflexively connected with the constitution of the objects to which the mechanism is applied and how it is accomplished through the participants' orientation.

Chapter 5 - Ethnographic immersion

The previous chapter made a survey of existing research on AA as a social institution which has attained both a considerable degree of autonomy at group level and symmetry between its members. It also introduced studies that suggest alcoholics display a degree of combative individualism, even egotism, whereby they pit themselves against themselves and the world, struggling in vain to obtain control over both. Studies by Mäkelä have suggested that certain divisive discursal practices are avoided in the language of AA meetings. Arminen's studies using actual spoken data have demonstrated that AA members align themselves positively to each other as they co-construct their stories, turn by turn, at AA meetings.

The central thesis of this research attempts to go further by demonstrating that the symmetry reflected in the non-hierarchical, egalitarian nature of AA, and the display of dependency of the AA programme are largely constituted through the way self is displayed and interaction is managed through AA discursal practices. The attainment of symmetrical relations between members and their display of dependency on AA reflects and constitutes the individual alcoholic's realignment to self and 'the world', addressing the erroneous dichotomising of self against self and self against the world, characteristic of the active alcoholic.

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to examine the methodological basis of this study, explicating and developing the research design in the process. This chapter involves an evaluation of the ethnographic research methods using participant observation and a study of AA texts in order to gain access to the everyday understanding of AA members. Chapter 6 involves ethnomethodological research drawing on CA and analysis of Institutional Interaction.

In particular, this chapter explores the following:

- participant observation in ethnographic research
- some traditions associated with naturalism in ethnographic research, including symbolic interactionism
- limitations of ethnographic observation in locating the constitutive nature of interaction.

5.1 From a macro to a micro perspective

In Chapter 4 a review was made of some the more significant research done on AA as a social organisation. Two perspectives were noted: the macroscopic and the microscopic. Room (1993) in her studies of AA as a social movement takes a macroscopic perspective on AA as a structured social entity and tries to locate it in the context of history and other social movements in the United States. She and Borkman (1999) reach similar conclusions in maintaining that AA is a non-hierarchical, fluid and open form of organisation having evolved from the bottom up over a period of years. Both identify AA's interactive processes as central in defining and maintaining its organisational make-up.

The research design informing this study is one where observation through ethnographic immersion in AA precedes ethnomethodological analysis of institutional interaction of its meetings. The purpose of the ethnographic immersion is not to write an ethnographic report, but to acculturate the researcher in the everyday, commonsensical understandings of AA in order that he may understand the way AA members display an orientation to their shared understandings and discoursal practices. It attempts to illustrate the discoursal mechanisms whereby the constitutive reflexivity between the organisational structures and that face-to-face interaction is made apparent. For this, the more ethnomethodological approach of CA is required.

5.1.1. *Naturalism*

In observing AA as an organisation, it is useful to start by examining Naturalism, being the most fully established form of qualitative inquiry. According to Gubrium and Holstein (1997: 6), 'naturalism seeks rich descriptions of people and interaction as they exist and unfold in their natural habitats'. Implicit in traditional forms of naturalistic ethnography is the notion of a coming together of two separate groups; one being participants or informants and their social world and the other researcher and their methodologies; the former enter the relationship as passive objects of study, the latter as observers and creators of knowledge in the form of a rich description.

Robert Park (1967) and the Chicago School of field research provide a research model which involves accessing those voices and their worlds. A study of AA which broadly represents this approach is Milton Maxwell's *The AA Experience* (1984),

discussed in Chapter 4. He describes his approach as, 'essentially anthropological – that of both participant observation and the use of knowledgeable informants' (p. ix). By using AA members' accounts to describe the process of becoming an alcoholic and what active alcoholism entails, he allows the perceptions of the informants to inform the study, thus to some extent breaking down the positivist dichotomy between the researcher and the objects of research. The following extract is instructive and cautionary. It involves an AA member's account of his alcoholism.

I could neither control the drinking which had brought me to this state, nor could I leave it alone. But, at that time, it was very hard for me to accept the reality of all this – that this had really happened to me. Extremely difficult! What's more, it was impossible for me to picture a satisfactory life without alcohol.

and Maxwell's own commentary on it:

How does AA meet such an alcoholic person 'where he is at'? How does AA help such a person to reconstruct his world – his total field? (p. 37)

Very interesting questions about the nature of representation, viewpoint and the resultant questions arise from this brief extract. First, it is interesting to note how the AA member represents the stage of his active alcoholism. It is done from a perspective of quite considerable distance. It is characterised, as are most AA stories, by persistent use of the past tense and past perfect aspect when referring to the period of active alcoholism, suggesting not only distance in time, but also in distance from the speaker's present reality. This is reinforced by phrases like 'at that time' and the strong suggestion of a person viewing their active alcoholism from the outside - 'it was very hard for me to accept the reality of all this – this had really happened to *me*' (Maxwell's italics) - a stance only acquired through time and recovery. AA stories disclose, according to AA's Preamble, what the alcoholic used to be like, what happened and what he is like now. As such, it can be argued, they are constructs - powerful tools that separate the perceptions and behaviours of the alcoholic in recovery from those of the active alcoholic. They are distancing devices, refashioning the past as distant and fashioning a new view of reality for the narrator. They are also highly interpretive, in that AA stories are expressed in terms of the AA programme and concepts. Phrases like, 'I could neither drink nor leave it alone', 'hard to accept reality', 'a life without alcohol', are the stock and trade of AA discourse. They represent the view of an acculturated member of AA. It is unlikely that this

informant would have described this particular period of his life in the same terms while he were still living it, or subsequently if he were not in recovery, or if he had achieved recovery through some other route. The telling of the past reveals perhaps more about the teller's current state of knowledge than it does about the events being referred to.

Thus Maxwell's question, 'how does AA meet such an alcoholic person 'where he is at?' is a problematic question. Maxwell goes on to ask, 'how does AA help such a person to reconstruct his world – his total field?'. The answer must be that it already has. The 'person' who emerges from the narrative has been fashioned in recovery stories, has been reinterpreted through AA perspectives. AA stories tend to construct the teller's stories around an archetypical narrative. They are an interesting insight into how members have constructed their past. However, Maxwell does not use them as such but as data for describing the developmental stages and nature of actual, active alcoholism itself. Where traditionally sociologists might view such material as a source of data, an ethnomethodologist approaches it as indexical in nature (Garfinkel, 1969) and as itself the proper object of sociological enquiry.

Such an approach reads texts not as 'findings' but as constructs to be interpreted (Rosenau, 1992). Participant accounts in such research are viewed not as sources for discovering the social reality of the member, where it is located and why, but as a resource to find out how the members, through their action and particularly their talk, construct their views of reality (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). We see in Chapter 4 how Denzin (1989) sees language as connected to personal experience and approaches AA language as a means whereby it is understood and interpreted. He talks of bringing 'lived experience before the reader,' (p. 83) by creating a richly descriptive text, a 'thick description', which allows the reader to share vicariously the experiences that have been captured from which the reader can naturalistically generalise. The researcher uses language to *describe* this reality and make it accessible to the reader. In other words, the researcher explores the language of AA in order to understand and interpret its nature i.e. language is seen as a representation and reflection of a social reality. For him 'language structures and creates the process of *understanding* and *interpretation*' (p. 72, my italics). Powerful as such an approach may be, it does not analyse how language itself *constitutes* the very social phenomenon under study.

5.2 Limitations of ethnographic observation in locating the constitutive nature of interaction

In turning attention from naturalistic ethnography and symbolic interactionism to a more language orientated ethnomethodological approach, it can be seen how those methodologies, while seeking out and giving voice to participants' understandings, miss a significant aspect of 'setting'. How one frames the setting of the social group under investigation impacts on the nature of the data generated and how it is represented. Rudy (1986) seems unconcerned about the discursal setting of his data. It is often not clear if the spoken data he refers to derives from interviews or actual AA meetings. His concern was with how recovering alcoholics construct versions of their alcoholism. If one's concern is with the role of language, more particularly interaction, in the constitution of social structures one cannot afford to neglect the setting of discursal data. If the language in that setting is of an 'institutional' character one needs be concerned with how the language is constitutive of the institutional setting and how it is related to its institutional purpose and aims.

Denzin's remarks (1987) that 'AA meeting talk does not admit easy analysis within the framework of CA'. Nonetheless, Denzin seems to indicate that the discourse of AA meetings is normative. This can be seen in the following response of an AA member to the talk of a group of alcoholic patients who participate in AA meetings while undergoing rehabilitation in an alcohol treatment clinic:

I can't take that fucking group. The members don't know how to talk. They interrupt. They talk out of turn. They gossip, they give advice. (Denzin, 1997: 334)

Clearly, this informant's expected norms governing what to say and how to take turns had been violated by this group which is not made up of fully acculturated AA members. There is clearly an expected way of *how to talk* in an AA meeting, and, for this member, it does not include interruptions, gossiping or advice giving. A participant observer taking field notes may detect *prima facie* evidence of the operation of such regularities but would not be able to uncover them fully. To do this an analysis of tape recordings is required. In Chapter 4 we have seen how Arminen's (1998b) application of the methods of ethnomethodological CA, using recorded meetings, has demonstrated how parties orient to the on-going interaction and compose their turns. He has also explored the formal interactional design of

extended turns and the members' methodological ways of dealing with the distribution of knowledge between participants. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

5.2 1. Rule-governed discourse

It will be noted that at the AA meeting discussed above things go wrong; rules appear to be broken. It is at this point that a transition is made across research paradigms; from the ethnographic to the ethnomethodological, the subject of the following chapter. The methodological focus on 'breaches' is ethnomethodological in nature, being similar to the 'breaching' experiments used by Garfinkel (1986) to gain analytical access to the taken-for-granted, common sense knowledge which he sought to analyse through the examination of violated norms. The violations reported in this study however, are naturally occurring, and therefore free from the criticism levelled at Garfinkel's of being contrived. Contriving such an experiment in an AA meeting would be highly unethical.

The idea of breaches implies regularities, which in turn suggests that one is dealing with the deductible, predictable and therefore verifiable, i.e. rules. Searle (1960) proposed two types of rule, one that regulates antecedently existing forms of behaviour, such as etiquette, which can be expressed in imperatives. Certain rules governing the format and content of AA meetings seem to be of this type as we will see in Chapter 7. The other type of rule regulates and defines new forms of behaviour and is therefore constitutive as well as prescriptive, as with the rules of football. These rules however describe overt regularities. Neither of these categories of rules seems to capture what has been observed here. Button (1990) discusses the *rules* that people display and orientation to in their conduct which do not precede the action but are *discoverable* in the action. These he sees as ethnomethodological rules. A challenge for the observer of AA discourse is to deductively analyse the discourse in order to describe the situated practice of this type of rule use in the actual contexts of interaction, explore its function and relate this to AA's institutional objectives.

For these reasons, the ethnographic element of this study does not attempt to give voice to AA members' beliefs. There are no surveys or interviews and no spoken data has been elicited by the researcher. Only data that is *naturally* occurring and

situated has been used (Wetherall et al., 2001). Being recordings of actual AA meetings where the researcher had no identifiable presence, it cannot be claimed that they are artefacts produced for research. None of the data has been elicited by the researcher. Pre-existing tape recordings of meetings are used to analyse the formal interactional design of turns and the members' methodological ways to deal with the distribution of knowledge between participants.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to establish the necessity of ethnographic immersion prior to ethnomethodological CA in the study of institutional interactions in a reclusive organisation, outside the mainstream culture. Immersion is required to develop a degree of familiarity with the established norms of language and practice of the everyday workings of the group in question.

Furthermore, as AA is an ideologically based organisation with a belief system set out in written texts, knowledge of these texts is required in order to observe if or how members' discoursal practices are intertextually aligned to them. Only after observation of and immersion in the situated discoursal practises and written text can a fully informed analysis that takes account of members' understandings take place.

Chapter 6 - Researching Institutional Interaction

The previous chapter outlined the argument for the ethnographic immersion phase in the design of this piece of research. However, limitations in ethnographic methodology were also highlighted, especially in relation to the discoursal mechanism whereby institutional roles were constituted and aligned to. This chapter focuses on concepts and a methodology which have derived from an ethnomethodological approach to discourse and the use of language in interaction, especially in institutional settings.

6.1. Doing things with language: speech acts, footing and speaker alignment

Before exploring the concept of discoursal practices, it is necessary to see how language has come to be seen as social practice.

The remarks made by the AA member (Chapter 5.2) in response to the talk of a group of patients from a treatment clinic who participate AA meetings indicate that for him interruptions, gossiping or advice giving are non-normative, (Denzin, 1997: 334).

Austin (1976) has given us tools to explore aspects of this. He has indicated language not only has propositional content but also a range of functions. Building on this, Searle's (1960) speech act theory focuses on the rules and conditions through which a sentence is understood as a particular kind of *activity*, allowing us to discover what people are *doing with words*. The functional aspect of language he referred to as the illocutionary force of an utterance.

A useful related concept is Searle's (1977) notion of the *directional fit* of speech acts. This can be either *word to world*, if, as in the case with declarations and directives, the speech act effects a change in the outside world or *world to word*, in the case of representatives, where the speech act attempts to represent the world through the word. The notion might appear simplistic in a study of the constitutive nature of language, but as subjective members' notions they are of interest in a discussion of agency, attribution and personal powerlessness in the discursive practices of AA members.

It is clear from the observation of AA meetings and the above remarks of the AA member quoted by Denzin, that members display an orientation to certain illocutionary acts and avoid others *within the meeting*.

The concept that certain types of interaction take place in certain situations and settings is commonplace. However, Bateson (1985) has given us the explanatory concept of a *frame*. When observing monkeys at play, he wondered how they knew the differences between aggressive acts performed in play and acts that were actually hostile in intent. This led him to develop the concept of 'framing', which he viewed as essentially a metacommunicative message which signals, 'this is play', and thereby sets up a series of expectations about what is to follow.

Chapter 7 will show that AA meetings have opening and closing frames consisting of a sequence of relatively fixed modes of discourse, including standard introductions, readings and prayer. The completion of the opening frame sends the metacommunicative message, 'typical AA interaction can now take place'. Other types of interaction occurring within this frame may be considered frame 'breaking'.

This study explores the expectations set up within a frame which not only relate to what the participants may do with language, i.e. the speech acts involved, but also in the way they align what they are saying to each other. Goffman developed Bateson's concept and explored the multiple layers of framing with a particular focus on language. He developed the concept of 'footing', (Goffman, 1981). This notion refers to the reflexive and fluctuating character of frames, and how they are constantly aligned and realigned as participants shift from one frame to another. Gumperz (1982: 162) developed a related concept - *contextualization cues*. These were those aspects of language whose function is to indicate aspects of the context which are relevant in interpreting what the speaker means.

These concepts enable one to explore important aspects of participation in social interaction. Rather than represent participation as either speaking or listening, the concept allows participant involvement to be broken down in various ways to facilitate greater analytical specificity. If speech acts relate to what participants are *doing* with words, footing relates to the way participants *align* what they are saying in terms of their ownership of what is said and to the audience. These relate to:

- their ownership of what they are saying
- their design upon audience 'uptake' of what is said
- their assumptions about audience needs for what is said.

Speakers by utilising various 'production formats' may take up various footings in relation to their own remarks. Useful in this study are Goffman's distinctions between:

- 'the animator' – the person presently uttering the words,
- 'the author' – the one who originated the beliefs and perhaps originated the words through which they are expressed
- 'the figure' – the one portrayed through talk
- 'the principal' – the person whose viewpoint of position is being expressed.

The second point above relates to the fact that within all verbal interaction there is an implicit assumption, shared by the parties, that each turn is intended and accordingly designed for a specific audience. Speakers are held accountable to this principle in designing turns, and the audience is held accountable to understanding that the speaker's turn is so designed. Thus what speakers say – or more explicitly *do* through talk – and how listeners respond, is used as information concerning their intentions, motives, character and the like (Heritage, 1984). As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, there is a marked tendency within AA meetings for the animator not to attribute ownership of what is said to themselves, especially if it involves the principles of the AA programme, but to AA sources and texts.

It is a central argument of this study that the formal characteristics of AA turn taking are shaped by the manner in which participant speakers align themselves to the audience with minimal presumptions about the recipients' need of knowledge or advice, i.e. they respect their inferential autonomy. There is a pervasive tendency to design turns in a way that it does not implicate the recipients in a structurally predetermined response. This has important consequences for the shared understanding of all participants on how turn taking is conducted.

6.1.1. Context as emergent

Drew (1992) has pointed out that the concepts of frame and footing represent a much more complex and dynamic view of context than had previously obtained, where

context largely was viewed as unitary and invariant. Frame and footing implicate linguistic behaviour, especially verbal interaction, deeply in the process of context setting, be it social or institutional. These concepts facilitate a deepening awareness of the significance of context and interaction in speech production (Brown and Yule, 1983). Thus social attributes such as class, age, gender may be viewed not simply as attributes the speaker brings with them to talk but derive their relevance and emerge from the talk which takes place.

All these cross-disciplinary developments have converged in the ethnomethodological approach pioneered by Garfinkel (1969) which explores the *indexical* and *reflexive* characteristics of talk and behaviour. Using such an approach, data are not selected to explicate some pre-existing sociological issue but explored in themselves to see what questions or discoveries emerge from them (Sacks, 1984).

6.2 Conversation Analysis

Though close observation, note taking and a thick description of the interaction may supply good *prima facie* evidence of the existence of the orderly use of language and that the order can be located, it does not supply us with the machinery for securing co-oriented talk or discovering how the interaction actually works (Lee, 1987) or why it breaks down. Undoubtedly assisted by the development of portable recording devices, CA has developed a methodology which does.

Using recorded data of actual language involves a radical reorientation from the linguistic tradition associated with Chomsky, (1969) which saw ordinary language - *parole* in Saussure's terms, *performance* in his - as too disorderly to be systematically analysed. However, the emerging belief that spoken language is orderly and subject to analysis led more linguists to look at naturally occurring utterances. Labov (1966) in his groundbreaking work showed how aspects of phonology, the pronunciation of the /r/, varied systematically between casual and more formal contexts. Such studies placed naturally occurring utterances rather than contrived linguistic possibilities at the centre of linguistic research. Sacks (1984), using recorded interaction, has shown that talk is subject to formal description and that social activities are methodological occurrences. He sees talk as its own social process governed by its own regularities. He has demonstrated there is 'order at all points' in talk-in-interaction. This methodology, termed CA 'combines a concern with the contextual sensitivity of

language use with a focus on talk as a vehicle for social action,' (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 16). Schegloff's (1992) has defined CA as follows:

CA is the point where linguistics and sociology (and several other disciplines, anthropology and psychology among them) meet. For the target of its enquiries stands where talk amounts to action, where action projects consequences in structure and texture of interaction which the talk itself in progressively embodying and realising, and where the participants of the talk inform what action is being done and what sort of social scene is being constituted. (pp 104)

6.2.1. Turn taking in mundane conversation

CA provides useful insights into the nature of turn taking in interaction, Sacks (2001, {1992}) gives the following illustrative example:

- (1) A Hello
 B Hello
- (2) A This is Mr Smith may I help you
 B Yes, this is Mr Brown xx

The numbered elements he terms *units*, which tend to come in pairs. The position for a response he terms a *slot*. Even in these two units he illustrates how procedural rules tend to determine the response. When the first turn is completed we see *Hello* is followed by *hello*, *this is Mr Smith* is followed by *this is Mr Brown*. Sacks likens it to studying a multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle where pieces can be isolated and studied as can the way they fit together. These he calls the rules of conversational sequence. Schegloff, (1979) in his studies of telephone call openings identified the ringing of the phone as the *summons*, and the initial 'hello' by the summoned as the *answer*. He looked at other units where the second turn was conditional on the first and referred to them as *adjacency pairs*, and proposed that the relationship between the first and second turns was one of *conditional relevance*. As Psathas (1995) points out, the power of these kinds of structures is that when a speaker produces the first of an adjacency structure they constrain what the next speaker may do. This involves the principle of *being accountable*. If the second turn is inappropriate, this has to be accounted for by either a failure to hear, or to understand or some such.

This concept of accountability has led many analysts of recorded data, to demonstrate that mundane conversation is characterised by the way turns set up

trajectories in subsequent talk. The varieties of sequential organisation provide the structure for conversational encounters through the turn taking system, which manages the construction and allocation of turns at talk, entry into and exit from a conversation, repair of trouble or engaging in a range of language functions such as requesting, advising etc (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998).

Heritage (1984) refers to these sequential arrangements and patterns as the 'architecture of intersubjectivity'. He goes on to state:

Conversational interaction is structured by an organisation of action which is implemented on a turn-by-turn basis. By means of this organisation, a context of publicly displayed and continuously updated intersubjective understandings is systematically sustained. It is through this 'turn by turn' character of talk that the participants display their understandings of the state of 'the talk for one another' ... Moreover, because these understandings are publicly produced, they are available as a resource for scientific analysis. (p. 259)

The sequential organisation of talk provides the primary context for participants' appreciation and use of what is being said, meant and most importantly, done in and through talk (Zimmerman and Boden, 1993). They are not therefore analysts' constructions but features of participant orientation.

What is significant here is the emphasis on the mutual display of understanding through taking turns which exists within the interaction, rather than on a shared semiotic system which exist outside of it. It is through the unfolding interaction whereby each turn shapes and reshapes the interaction that mutual understanding is displayed as an *achievement*; a mutual *accomplishment*. It is the intensive investigation of such interactions that is CA's hallmark and has led to the conclusion that 'the sense of an utterance as an action is an interactive product of what was projected by the previous turn or turns at talk and what the speaker actually does' (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 18). In the arrangements of closings in conversations, Button (1993) has shown how conversationalists are oriented-to methods that bring about closure. It is in an understanding of these inspectable orientated-to methods which could possibly lead to understanding of what social structure consists of. Garfinkel (1969:33) put it this way, 'any social setting {should} be viewed as self-organising with respect to the intelligible character of its own appearances ... Any setting organises its activities to make its properties as an organized environment of

practiced activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story aboutable, analyzable – in short – accountable’.

Implicit in the assumption that each turn is intended and accordingly shaped for a specific audience is the concept of *recipient design*. Speakers are held accountable to this principle in designing turns, and the audience is held accountable in understanding that the speaker’s turn is so designed. Thus what speakers say – or more explicitly do through talk – and how listeners respond – is used as information concerning their intentions, motives, character and the like (Heritage, 1984).

Activity focus of CA

CA approaches utterances as objects which speakers use to *accomplish* certain things (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). Zimmerman (1993: 8) points out that wherever there is a verbal encounter turns have to be taken, opened and closed, questions asked and answered, requests made and granted and denied and so forth. The organisation of talk provides the formal resources to accomplish these interactive tasks and deploys these resources in a manner which is sensitive to what circumstances participants have at hand locally. So it is both:

sensitive to the local context

an application of a more general, context free interactional mechanism.

It is the focus on *activity* which distinguishes the CA approach to interaction. Rather than beginning an enquiry into interaction from the macro level of culture or social identity, or by focusing on micro features such as phonological variation, word selection and so forth, CA begins from ‘a consideration of the interactional *accomplishment* of particular social activities, (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 17) (italics in the original). This is seen to be the case in such diverse activities as the impromptu asking for directions on the street (Psathas, 1993), and calling a suicide hotline, Sacks (1972).

Structure-in-action

Whereas social structures and institutions are conventional – being culturally variable and contingent on historic variables - talk in interaction is not. It is both *context sensitive* and *context free* (Sacks, et al., 1974), in that members use mechanisms that are general, thus context free, but which are also context sensitive in that parties

to the interaction must be oriented to the context of their action in order to use them interactively. It is what Schegloff refers to as an 'enabling institution'; the machinery that underlies the construction of conventions and is thus basic and primordial, not conventional or contingent (Zimmerman and Boden, 1993).

Talk-in-interaction, especially at the level of mundane conversation, organises the basic forms of social action and interaction out of which the patterns of repetitive activity which are seen as evidence of social institutions are built, i.e. it is prior to and enables social organisation. Indeed, context itself is seen to be a product of the participants' actions, not a pre-established framework within which the participants perform. Context is treated as both the project and product of the participants' own actions (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993:94) in so far as these actions are both context shaped and context renewing (Heritage, 1984). Utterances can only be fully understood within the context in which they are produced which is in turn altered by their production.

From the CA perspective, social structure is also approached as a member's notion. It pertains to the external state of affairs to which members are orientated. 'Orientation to social structure' refers to the fact that members recognise, respond to and render accountable conventional objects like categories of institutional identity and activities associated with those categories.

6.3 The analysis of institutional interaction

The issue of relating the processes of talk-in-interaction to social structures has long been a central activity of sociology. Sociologists such as Parsons (1937) approach social structure in a highly conceptual and global manner stipulating its necessary components. By contrast, the CA approach starts with units that are observable activities. The search is for empirical instances of interaction to examine, describe, and in turn illustrate how they constitute social structure. CA and Institutional Interaction in particular explore how institutions are 'talked' into being (Heritage, 1984).

The constructionist approach studies the situated practices of people and the ways in which these are employed to create and objectify the everyday world without losing sight of institutional and cultural contexts. Everyday practices are examined in the way they *exhibit*, indeed, *generate*, social structure (Mehan, 1993: 75). Schegloff

(1993:65) states, 'it is not enough for us to know what sort of context is crucial, but to discover it, and to discover new kinds of such things'.

Schegloff (1987) has pointed out that talk-in-interaction is an enabling mechanism and provides the fundamental framework of social interaction and social institutions. CA has increasingly focused on the distinctive properties of institutional interaction as opposed to the properties common in other forms of talk (Schegloff, 1993). Drew views ordinary conversation as the 'predominant medium of interaction in the social world' (Drew and Heritage, 1992:19), thus it constitutes a benchmark against which more formal institutional interaction is measured. One way in which the institutional nature of interaction in institutional settings may manifest itself is in the range of differences from ordinary conversation which Heritage terms 'the fundamental matrix through which social interaction is organised' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993:94).

Most influential studies which have dealt with data of an institutional nature have focused on how the institutional character is primarily embodied in its form, particularly in the respective turn-taking systems involved. Defining institutional characteristics emerge from the manner in which these turn-taking systems within conversation depart from that of mundane conversation. Exploring the nature of the contribution of forms of talk-in-interaction to institutional settings allows an approximation of an understanding of how these are configured through selection, adoption and combination to reflexively produce and reproduce social structure.

It is worth pointing out that whereas the mechanisms of mundane conversation, - Schegloff's 'enabling institution' - are basic and primordial, rather than conventional or contingent, they do however provide the machinery that underlies the construction of conventions in institutional talk through this process of reduction and specialisation. These may be the result of legal constraints or other protocols; they may be determined by considerations of task, efficiency, fairness and so on (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993). However, unlike the underlying 'bedrock' mechanisms of mundane conversation, they are subject to change, evolution and the demands of discursive justification. These and the varying interactive rights, demands and status of the participants relate to the participation frameworks and footings outlined by Goffman (1981).

Talk oriented to institutional settings involves repetitive episodes that involve recurrent and relatively specialised sets of situated identities as well as a

concentration and modification of discursial practices. Zimmerman (1993) characterises it thus:

The structure of institutional talk minimally consists of the recurrent pattern of normatively oriented-to, situated identities along with the corresponding discourse identities and the conversational machinery through which the work allotted to participants assuming such identities is done. (p. 13)

There have been many fine-grained descriptions and analyses of the connection between talk and social structure in the conventional configuration of speech exchanges involving multiple participants in 'formal' settings relevant to this study. Heritage (1993) has shown how in news interviews the constraints on the production of types of turn operate with respect to the institutional identities of the interviewer and interviewee and specify that talk should proceed as a sequence of interviewer questions and interviewee responses and the interviewer may not properly engage in actions other than questions, while interviewees should refrain from initiating actions. It is these constraints which distinguish the interview from a discussion. By adhering to these procedures the participants constitute themselves for both other participants and the audience as interviewer or interviewee, i.e. the interview is a collaborative achievement of both parties. There have been other studies of many forms of institutional interaction, including that in courtrooms (Atkinson and Drew, 1979), classrooms (McHoul, 1978) news interviews (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993), (Clayman, 1988).

The explanatory pertinence of these studies is that they demonstrate two major features.

1. The way turn taking is organised, as has been seen with mundane conversation, is a fundamental and generic aspect of the organisation of institutional interaction. Features of this organisation recur *pervasively* over the course of the interaction. It can be shown that the participants *recurrently* display and realise the 'institutional' character over the duration of the interaction, and it is distinctive from mundane conversation.
2. In so far as the participants confine their conduct to some distinctive 'institutional' turn taking system, other systematic differences tend to emerge. These differences may involve specific *reductions* in the range of options

available in mundane conversation, as well as *specialisations* and *respecialisations* of the remaining interactional functions. These orientations contribute to the unique 'fingerprint' identifying the defining characteristics of the particular 'institutional' setting and differentiating it from mundane conversation (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993).

The analysis of institutional interaction involves detailed descriptions of conversational organisation as well as the distribution and relative density of the deployment of discursual mechanisms. It is worth noting that it is not simply the systematic presence or absence of a mechanism which is important but what the systematic presence or absence of a mechanism is doing on and for such occasions (Zimmerman, 1988). The 'fitting' of mechanisms to the work of constituting institutional settings locates the intersection of general contingencies of talk-in-interaction with the specific requirements of particular situated activity systems. As Wilson (1993: 37) points out, the organisation of a variant speech-exchange system is reflexively connected with social-structural context, and constitution of the objects to which the mechanism is applied is accomplished through the participants' orientation to the social-structural contexts of their interaction.

6.3.1. Relevance and procedural consequentiality

The above discussion raises the fundamentally important issue of relevance. Because of the recipient design of actions, parties to the interaction hold one another accountable for knowing who they relevantly are and what the current interaction is about over the course of the interaction itself.

Sacks (1972) has pointed out that of the vast number of category terms that are available to correctly describe a person – white, female, American, teacher, daughter and so forth – not all are relevant on any given occasion. What makes one category relevant or not, and what gives empirical rigour to CA, is that only those categories to which participants demonstrably orient themselves are deemed relevant to the activity at that moment; only those categories are relevant for producing and interpreting conduct in interaction. Psathas (1995: 7) comments on Sacks and his approach, 'the mundane world required close examination on its own terms, not the use of a theoretical microscope fashioned out of abstract terminology or created in domains of study extrinsic to the phenomena being studied'. The problem as Psathas

(1995: 54) sees it is how *not* to reify social structure as though it is some sort of ontological entity determining or at least influencing the social practices within it.

Schegloff (1992) points out that the problem remains of showing from the *detail* of the talk what indeed the parties are oriented to. He sees this as not simply a matter of methodological procedure, but as substantive to the task of demonstrating how 'social structure' enters into the production and interpretation of determinate facets of conduct, how parties are demonstrably oriented to those aspects of who they are, and those aspects of their context that are implicated in the 'social structures'.

It is clear therefore that CA in attempting to characterise contexts in a way that links talk with social structure does not rely on general sociological categories. If utterances are context sensitive and context renewing, it needs to be demonstrated that in the procedure of talk-in-interaction participants themselves display the relevance of such categories. Aspects of the contexts must be *procedurally consequential* (Schegloff. 1992:110), in that they are demonstratively relevant to the participants on any given occasion.

The important question is to determine the nature of the mechanism by which the context-so-understood has determinate consequences for the talk. Schegloff (1992: 111) illustrates how a social-structural location, i.e. an interview in a TV studio, does not of itself endow occasions of interaction with a genre identity. He does this by demonstrating how a news interview by Dan Rather of then Vice President George Bush slips from being an interview into being a confrontation. He demonstrates the interactive features of an interview by how the interviewer moves from preliminaries to questions without the interviewee exploiting a possible unit completion point by taking his turn, as would be likely in ordinary conversation. He also demonstrates how the interviewee defers from turn taking until a specific question is asked, thus orientating to the institutional nature of a TV interview. Heritage has shown similar characteristics of a TV interview in Britain, (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993). However, in Schegloff's exemplar, as the interview progresses, Bush, the interviewee, starts his turns in junctures which appear before question completion which are not normally taken up by the interviewee, 'thus the interview *qua* interview breaks down' (Schegloff, 1992:126) and a confrontation ensues.

A central episode in the data presented in this study (Chapter 8) involves a turn within an AA meeting, but within the normative turn-taking procedures, the non-

normative alignment of speaker to AA ideology and members results in sharing *qua* sharing breaking down and developing into a 'lecture' resulting in non-normative rebuttals from ensuing turns. This is explored as a 'breach' of normative alignment between speaker and audience and thus a fertile episode to explore the taken-for-granted, commonsensical understandings of subsequent speakers in the manner they respond to this breach. Thus in this analysis of AA's institutional interaction, in addition to the normal CA tasks of analysing the conduct of the participants and the underlying organisation of their activities, there is an attempt to demonstrate how its activities embody orientations which are specifically institutional or responsive to constraints which are institutional in character (Heritage and Greatbatch 1993: 94). In this way all relevant characteristics of social interactants are analytically grounded in empirical observation that show that the participants themselves are demonstrably orientated to the identities or attributes in question (Drew and Heritage, 1992:20). Schegloff (1992: 127) goes further by stating that 'establishing relevance and establishing procedural consequentiality can not be a 'threshold issue', that is, once you have enough to show it you are finished. Rather they are questions for continuing analysis'.

This decision to select recordings of meetings where there appears to be a breach of norms is methodological. Schegloff (1992) has pointed out the problem of showing from the detail of the talk what indeed the parties are oriented to. He sees this as not simply a matter of methodological procedure, but as substantive to the task of demonstrating how 'social structure' enters into the production and interpretation of determinate facets of conduct, how parties are demonstrably oriented to those aspects of who they are, and those aspects of their context that are implicated in the 'social structures'. The important question, however, is to determine the nature of the mechanism by which the context-so-understood has determinate consequences for the talk (p. 111).

The ethnomethodological approach which focuses on 'breaches' (Garfinkel, 1986) allows us to gain analytical access to members' taken for granted, common sense knowledge (Goffman, 1959) through the examination of members' orientation to violated norms. These are identified through signals from members. Through locating these through members' responses, we are given a window into members' common understandings. As we have seen, Arminen (1996a; 1996b; 1998a; 1998b) has used

a similar approach, particularly in regard to self-repairs. This study will analyse one meeting in particular, where the orientation of one speaker to the AA programme and his alignment to the audience evokes a negative response from subsequent speakers. Arminen's data and this researcher's observation suggest this is an unusual occurrence in AA meetings as members pervasively respond positively to previous turns (Arminen, 1998b). An analysis of recorded interaction of such a meeting therefore proves a useful indicator of underlying, if violated norms.

6.3.2. *Orientation to goals*

Drew and Heritage (1992) refer to institutional interaction as the principal means through which lay persons pursue various practical goals and the central medium through which the daily working activities of many professionals and organisational representatives are conducted (p. 3); the focus being on conduct that is in various ways shaped or constrained by the participants' orientation to social institutions either as their representatives or clients.

Levinson (1992) also has examined the ways in which conduct in institutional settings may be shaped by goal-orientated constraints. The instantiation of institutional role-based identities is unlikely to occur through a single recursive procedure. The participants' orientation to the institutional- or role-based character of their talk will be located in a complex of non-recursive interactional practices that may vary in their form and frequency. This may be to do with opening and closing encounters, the way in which information is requested, delivered or received and the design of referring expressions, (Drew and Heritage, 1992:8).

Heath (1992) has pointed out that many forms of institutional interaction involve roles that are 'mutually dependent and interrelated'. In a study of doctor-patient consultation, it is shown how the patient is placed in a position involving contradictory and potentially conflicting responsibilities and obligations. The medically unqualified patient must place themselves in the hands of a technically competent doctor, yet modern medicine increasingly relies on the individual's ability to recognise illness and decide when to ask for help as well as describe their symptoms. The asymmetrical relationship between the participants and the differential status of their opinions are accomplished in and through the interaction between doctor and patient in the consultation itself.

In more 'formal' settings, such as in courtrooms and classrooms, turn taking is strongly constrained in sharply defined procedures (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993). The powerful legal constraints which obtain in courtroom settings lend the 'formality' to the interaction. The same is the case in classrooms. These settings involve a listening or 'overhearing' audience to whom the participants are accountable in their institutional roles. Such orientations are *procedurally consequential* in that they have consequences for the 'shape, form, trajectory, content or character of the interaction that the parties conduct,' (Schegloff, 1992:11) in that some features may be *promoted*, others *restricted* in their use, when compared to ordinary conversation. Departures from these conventions are *accountable* and attract possible sanctions.

In contrast are the more negotiable types of understanding involved in the interaction in nurses visits (Heritage and Sefi, 1992) and doctor and psychiatrists consultations, business and the social services. These less formal interactional settings exhibit less uniform patterns of interaction; they nonetheless show distributional asymmetries in patterning of activities between the roles of participants and for at least some of the time, they are institutional in that they involve official task-based and role-based activities. The boundaries between conversational and institutional talk may therefore at times appear 'permeable and uncertain', (Drew and Heritage, 1992).

Drew points out the following features of goals in institutional talk, (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Some interactions may have a clear and manifest purpose from the outset, these being predetermined by the institutional agency, such as emergency calls, (Zimmerman, 1992). Others may have less defined goals and have to be brought about through negotiation within the interaction, as in the case of nurse visits to new mothers, (Heritage and Sefi, 1992). The specifics of their implementation may fluctuate according to local contingencies, whether the interactions be cooperative, as with a doctor's visit (Frankel, 1990), or adversarial, as in courtroom cross-examinations, (Drew, 1992).

The goals pursued by professionals and lay participants are virtually invariably different; the formers' being shaped by organisational and professional constraints and accountabilities understood only vaguely, if at all, by the latter.

The institutional setting in AA meetings is interesting in this regard, as professional relationships are precluded by the Twelve Traditions. This leads to consideration of

the relationship between organisational and lay goals as constituted through discursual practice.

6.3.3. *Symmetry in interaction*

Drew (1992:19) has shown us that one way in which the institutional nature of interaction in institutional setting may manifest itself is in the range of differences from ordinary conversation which Heritage terms 'the fundamental matrix through which social interaction is organised' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993:94). Moreover, Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) characterise the range of differences as 'systematically asymmetrical', when set against an idealised mundane conversation between equals. CA demonstrates how asymmetry in most institutional interaction shows oriented-to structural patterns – for example in questions and answers – which furnish participants with different discursual resources – thus putting some participants in a more powerful position discursively. This asymmetry largely stems from the social and professional roles of members. Frankel (1990) has shown how patients are complicit in allowing doctors to determine the topics to be discussed and define their outcomes. Frankel, (1990) similarly has shown how patients display a particular orientation to expert status of a doctor. Furthermore, turn type reallocation in court cases studied by Atkinson and Drew (1979) show how participants' interaction is constrained according to institutional roles imposed by the courtroom setting. Thus, data is supplied whereby the systematic deviance of a particular form of institutional talk from the norms of mundane conversation can be observed and analysed. By selectively reducing or transforming the scope of conversational practices found in mundane conversation, and by concentrating on some and withholding others, participants display an orientation to particular institutional contexts.

This study demonstrates that the discursual practices in AA reflect, constitute and maintain a symmetry not normally found in institutional interaction where professional and institutional goals are at variance with those of the lay participant. Indeed, it goes further in claiming that the discursual relationships obtained in AA meetings have greater symmetry than those constituted through mundane conversation, the benchmark for symmetry against which institutional interaction is normally measured. Within AA meetings this selective reduction of some and display of other discursual practices leads to greater, not lesser symmetry. Therefore, it is proposed, a fundamentally different type of institutional interaction is taking place determined by

fact that all participants are equipped with the same range of discursual practices. Thus it is characterised by greater rather than reduced participant symmetry.

6.4. The exclusive use of naturally occurring data

Ethnomethodology's 'fundamental insight [is] that the primordial site of social order is found in members' use of methodical practices to produce, make sense of , and thereby render accountable, features of their local circumstances' Boden and Zimmerman (1991: 6-7). The social structure is not exterior or extrinsic, but interior and intrinsic, residing in the local and particular detail of practical practices undertaken by competent members. For the participants, only that which happened immediately preceding is available to them as they produce their actions in an ongoing manner. Thus in this study we look at those workings in discursual practice. Psathas (1995) makes the following comments of Sacks and his approach, 'the mundane world required close examination on its own terms, not the use of a theoretical microscope fashioned out of abstract terminology or created in domains of study extrinsic to the phenomena being studied' (pp7).

It is clear therefore that in characterising contexts in a way that links talk with social structure; CA does not rely on general sociological categories. If utterances are context sensitive and context renewing, it needs to be demonstrated that in the procedure of talk-in-interaction participants themselves display the relevance of such categories. That is other aspects of the contexts apart from member categories must be 'procedurally consequential' (Schegloff, 1992: 110). Such a methodology requires a focus on members' interactional practices, rather than on members' interpretations of them. This research involves a methodology which explores recorded practice rather than recorded interviews and thus cuts across the gap between actions and beliefs; what people say and what they do (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984).

Thus in this study, use is not made of interviews or categories of members' motives, intentions, purposes or feelings except in so far as the participants themselves display these as significant in their understanding of the interaction. There is no intention in this research to construct a theoretical or explanatory framework. 'Order is assumed, the problem is to discover, describe, and analyze that order or orderliness'. (Psathas, 1995:45).

6.4.1. *Treatment of recorded data*

The actual practice of recording and transcription is fundamental to examining any sort of talk-in-interaction. It is the necessary initial step which makes analysis possible as the production of the transcript is an analytical process in itself. The recorded data was repeatedly examined, enhancing the analytic opportunities and potential, both interpretative and quantitative (Drew, 1992). As we have seen, recording and transcribing is essential both for detailed analysis and, just as importantly, the presentation of demonstrable findings. In keeping with an ethnomethodological analysis of talk-in-interaction, the data emerged from a process of 'unmotivated looking', i.e. it is naturally occurring and not produced specifically for the study. Interactional phenomena for the purpose of this study are talk that includes oriented-to features of the setting and well as other persons (Psathas, 1995:48).

Having selected the recorded data, they were transcribed. It must be borne in mind that the transcripts are not to viewed as the data, but a 'representation' of it (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). The data are the actual interaction; the audio tape recordings are merely a 'good enough' reproduction of it (Sacks, 1984). Transcription is a selective process based on theoretical goals and definitions. Most transcription conventions are variations of a common system devised by Gail Jefferson (Have, 1999) which indicates only as much detail as is theoretically desirable. With mundane conversation, the analytical concerns revolve around turn taking and involve marking precise beginning and end points, the duration of pauses and intakes of breath associated with an attempt at a turn. With the suspension of conversational turn taking in AA meetings such detail is unnecessary. Transcription in this study has sought to focus on the alignments of the speakers, both to AA texts, beliefs and practices, as well as other speakers. Therefore, in an attempt to ensure an uncluttered transcript, pauses and breath intakes are indicated only approximately thus giving verbal meaning and alignments more prominence. Transcription conventions are given in Appendix D.

6.4.2. *Researching the discursive practices of a reclusive institution*

Naturalists have treated members' talk as expressing an underlying, shared, cognitive order, but have not explicated the ways in which talk is in itself and essential feature of the setting it describes. They have seen language as essentially

descriptive and interpretive rather than constitutive (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Postmodernism has challenged the assumption that the researcher can act as neutral observer of things social. Sacks has shown that nonetheless, hard empirical data can be found in the language of social interaction. Using this hard data, ethnomethodology can look at language events, 'under the microscope' so to speak, which effectively constitute the very events in which the language takes place. They can demonstrate the circumstances that provide context for meaning are themselves reflexively generated through talk and interaction. In Garfinkel and Sack's words (1970:353) 'social facts are the accomplishments of the members'.

To relate this discussion back to the issue of the role of the observer (Chapter 5), it should be said that CA requires the analyst display cultural competence in recognising how mundane talk-in-interaction is carried out (Arminen, 2000). The very concept 'mundane' suggests its very ordinariness and accessibility. An analysis of mundane conversation should illuminate the common understandings that are relevant to the participants and the practices that provide for those understandings in that it describes both the knowledge that the participants use, and when and how they use it. It requires an 'insider' with intimate knowledge of the language norm and its illocutionary and pragmatic subsystems as well as the culture and context in which it situated. The same 'insider' cultural competence is required in the analysis of institutional settings. Arminen has remarked, 'in institutional contexts, the disclosure of the context-sensitive meaning of the activities may depend on access to participants' knowledge or organisational particulars without which the analysis may remain insufficient' (Arminen, 2000:437).

Whereas the naturalist tradition in ethnography typically asks what is the social reality of the member, where it is located and why, the ethnomethodologist seeks to ask how the members through their action and particularly their talk, construct their view of reality (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). It has given us the tools to re-examine the taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes 'indigenous' knowledge. A researcher, whether studying AA or any other social institution, must have access to the understandings of the insider, be this acquired through ethnographic immersion or through the role of true participant turned ethnographer, in order to interpret a turn and the manner in which subsequent turns orient towards it,

Chapter 7 - The setting, frame and format of AA meetings

The data for this study are derived from an Alcoholics Anonymous group in Cosmo-city, Asia and therefore from outside the cultural heartland of AA which remains the USA. The research design, as has been indicated in previous chapters is underpinned by two methodological approaches involving two distinct stages. The first ethnographic immersion stage involved participant observation of about 100 AA meetings over a two-year period. This was followed by an analysis of tape recordings of AA meetings held during three AA conventions. Two of these conventions were organised by the Cosmo-city group. The other was organised by an AA group in another major city in South East Asia. The reasons for the use of data from two sites have been outlined in chapter 3. However, both groups were comparable in that they mainly serve the needs of an English speaking expatriate community and have a small number of local members.

It is a contention of this study that AA meetings are comprised of different episodes constituted and governed by two fundamentally different sets of rule-governed discursual practices. This chapter focuses on those episodes which are largely fixed and predetermined. These are seen to be framing episodes. Chapter 8 examines the more interactive turn taking episode known as 'sharing'. It is claimed that the nature of the rule systems that govern these two episodes are fundamentally different and belong to differing orders.

In exploring units of interaction, Hymes' (1972) has suggested that it is necessary to study the speech situation, the speech event and the speech act. These subsume such notions as setting, participants, goals, acts, key (tone) instrumentalities - including sequences - norms and genre (Hymes, 1962). This chapter looks primarily at the speech situation and the framing of the speech event. Chapter 8 examines speech acts as well as topic selection and development in AA interactive sharing. A broad ethnographic approach based on participant observation is taken in analysing and describing the topics in this section. The different types of meetings and the interaction before and during them are described, as well as the role of participants. The metaphor of the AA programme as a 'room' is examined as are the framing of

both meetings and individual turns. The chapter includes a preliminary discussion of the intertextual modality found in meetings, involving prayers and reading.

Chapter 8 involves a fine-grained analysis of recorded data of the speech acts themselves, focusing on turn taking and the alignment of speakers to the AA programme and each other. The methodology of ethnomethodological institutional interaction is used.

7.1 The AA meeting

The AA pamphlet *44 Questions* (Anon, 1952) describes the purpose of meetings as, “to give AA members an opportunity to discuss particular phases of their alcoholic problem that can be best understood only by other alcoholics. These meetings are usually conducted with a maximum of informality, and all members are encouraged to participate in the discussions.” As we have seen, many groups, including the one under investigation here, hold most of their meetings in a dedicated room and other rooms hired specifically.

7.1.1. The AA programme as a ‘room’

Such is the relationship between discourse and setting in AA that the most frequently used metonym that refers to both the programme and the fellowship is the expression *these rooms*. The referent of this deictic utterance is metaphoric; it is the AA programme itself not the meeting location. In any observed meeting the expression *these rooms* is likely to be heard. Typically it includes:

I felt at home when I first entered these rooms

I felt safe in these rooms

It is even used as a virtual synonym for the AA programme and membership:

And when I joined these rooms.

Meeting rooms are semanticised as more than convenient locations in that they become embodiments of the AA programme, being the location of the particular discourse event which is the heart of AA. In Lakoff's terms (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) this is a structural metaphor, where the idea AA FELLOWSHIP IS A ROOM creates similarities between the aspects of the fellowship and a location. It frequently collates with terms like *safe* and *home*.

This is extended to the metaphoric entry and exit from the fellowship being through doors which take one into the rooms.

I was beat when I came through these doors

I came through these doors on my hands and knees

I was terrified of coming back through these doors

I realised that the doors opened both ways.

The AA meeting location and frame, 'brackets out' certain content, the manifestation of certain social relations and subject positions in order to create a discursual frame of trust. Giddens (1991: 3) has discussed the notions of trust and risk in high modernity. Trust he sees as 'directly linked to achieving an early sense of ontological security ... It 'brackets out' potential occurrences which, were the individual seriously to contemplate them, would produce a paralysis of the will, or feelings of engulfment'. The identification of the AA programme as a *room* can be seen as a metaphoric representation of the 'bracketing out' effect Giddens (1992) sees as essential to trust. Though the programme is depicted metaphorically as a room with doors, the data reveal no reference to the room having windows - having external vistas. The gaze is typically inward, self-referring. The rooms are opposed to *being out there*, a frequent metaphor for lapsing from the programme. 'X has gone out' refers to a member's relapse.

This identification of the AA programme with the location of its main discursive event strongly supports Drew's (1992) remarks that the institutionalilty of an interaction is not determined primarily by its setting. An AA meeting need not take place in a particular premises, but when any two or members constitute it through their discourse. Indeed this is recognised in the AA saying, 'all you need for a meeting is two alcoholics and a cup of coffee', to this is often wryly added – "and a resentment".

7.1.2. Meeting types

The Cosmo-city AA group offers a wide range of English speaking meetings. These are prescheduled and advertised in a meeting list available to all members and on the group's web site. They can be categorised into 5 types. These are listed from the most to the least frequent format found.

1. The discussion meeting. The topic is introduced by a member voluntarily taking the first turn. If a topic does not emerge from the participants the topic will be generated from a reading from AA literature as in 2 below. 5 'open' and 9 'closed' discussion meetings are scheduled every week.
2. Topic largely predetermined as through AA literature
 - a. *Alcoholics Anonymous* – 2 closed *Big Book* meetings are held per week.
 - b. *The Twelve Steps and Traditions* – 2 closed *Step* meetings are held per week.
 - c. A *Tradition meeting* is held once a month. These focus on a reading of one of AA's traditions.
 - d. *Reflections* or *As Bill sees it* the relevant reading from one of these books of daily reflections is made at a discussion meeting if no topic is volunteered.
3. Topic determined through nature of audience / participants.
 - a. Newcomer – these meetings are not scheduled. Any meeting will become a newcomer meeting if someone is present at their first AA meeting.
 - b. Women's / men's – one per week, both held simultaneously.
 - c. Young people's – one per week.
4. Topic(s) emerge through Opening Speaker's Story – 1 open speaker meeting per week.

5. Topic predetermined by members for special occasions such as AA Conventions.

All regular members will usually be aware of the type of meeting as they follow a weekly schedule.

The groups' meetings, with some variations, largely resemble those described in Arminen (1998b). The following is a reconstruction of typical AA meetings and indicates where and how meeting formats differ. It is based on ethnographic observation of a great number of such meetings. This approach has been chosen as it would be unusual for a single meeting to contain all of the typical elements and none of the recorded data is of a meeting including a newcomer.

7.1.3. Pre-meeting interaction

The meeting secretary usually arrives at the meeting venue in plenty of time to open up the room. Usually, from about twenty minutes before the scheduled meeting time members assemble individually or in groups. It is not unusual for members to appear with a towel around their shoulder and sweating profusely, having incorporated meeting attendance into their jog. Some are casually dressed, others may arrive in smart business suits having come directly from work.

The all-important kettle is also put on for the ubiquitous cups of coffee associated with AA meetings. In fact, many members prefer tea and diet soft drinks. A volunteer member is responsible for ensuring these are in supply. Also, the image of AA meetings taking place in smoke filled rooms (Bufe, 1998) is not fully borne out. Meetings held in the main room used exclusively for AA meetings allow smoking in one section, and have designated some meetings non-smoking. There is no smoking in the venue owned by the Catholic Church; this is a requirement of the church, not the group. Smoking is permitted in the Mariner's Club venue. Where smoking is not permitted there is invariably a fairly large group of people standing outside smoking until the meeting starts. The issue of smoking in meetings is one of the few contentious issue regularly discussed at group business meetings.

Some go to the kitchen to get drinks; others stand outside in the corridors or enter the main meeting room. People sit or stand in groups according to their inclination, greeting each other informally and engaging in ordinary conversation. This may or may not be related to alcoholism or Alcoholics Anonymous. Conversations involve the updating of information between members of issues such as work, family, trips or social events. People who have not met for some time greet each other warmly with hugs and handshakes. There is quite a lot of laughter and a number of people move from group to group.

Regular members will be aware of the presence of visitors or newcomers. If a newcomer is present this will be signalled to the secretary. This is an important event and will affect the subsequent meeting. As the scheduled meeting time approaches most will gravitate towards the meeting room and take seats.

7.2 Framing meetings and turns

There now follows a discussion of the opening and closing protocols for AA meetings in Cosmo-City. It attempts to show how activities accomplished in an AA meeting are interactively accomplished through fixed opening protocols. These involve a sequence of modes of discourse which effectively frame the central interactive element known as 'sharing' which follows.

7.2.1. Initiating and conducting a meeting

At the scheduled meeting time, the Secretary will raise his/her voice, typically in the following manner:

Chair: Hi everybody, welcome to the 6 o'clock (location of meeting) closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is (chair person's name), and I am an alcoholic.

Participants: Hi, (chair person's name)

The opening has been brought about *sui generis*, signalling a shift from mundane conversation. The utterance marks the initiation of a configuration of normative conventions that are distinctive both from mundane conversation and other institutional forms of interaction,

The start of the meeting involves considerable changes in the participants' location within the room as they take their seats in a large square, orientating their positions communally to each other. These adjustments between pre and within meeting settings constitute easily observed changes in the participants' modes of language, posture, bodily alignment, pitch, volume, rhythm, stress and tonal quality. As such they initiate a marked shift in the way utterances are produced and received within the frames. Goffman (1959) refers to these alignments as alignments of 'footing'. These involve the 'participant's alignment or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self', 'the new footing having a liminal role, serving as a buffer between two more substantially sustained episodes'. In Atkinson's terms, (1982) the switch from mundane conversational practices to more formal ones is necessary as the former do not address a basic requirement of settings which involves achieving and sustaining the shared attentiveness of all parties to a single sequence of actions.

As speech acts, the opening utterances involve a greeting and a welcome as well as a self-introduction. As greetings and welcomes have already been made, and self-

introductions are largely unnecessary as most people already know each other the utterance appears to violate Grice's quantity principle. (1975). However, this greeting is not redundant in the sense that these utterances have the *force* of constituting the beginning of the collective, institutional activity through which participants are assigned and assume collective roles. It has the declarative force of constituting the opening of the meeting and attributing institutional identities to the participants. The greeting and welcome is made to AA members, not individuals.

The greeting starting with 'hi' followed by the speaker's name is highly characteristic of AA meetings. The fact that it is a choral response necessitates the participants slip out of their self-directed roles as individuals and assume a collective identity. Apart from the adjacency of these fixed greetings and responses, a speaker, the secretary initially, speaks in extended turns. Freedom to participate according to the conventions of mundane conversation turn taking (Sacks et al., 1974) is suspended (Arminen, 1998b), and remains suspended, though subject to different constraints, though both the framing and 'sharing' episodes.

The constitutive force of the opening can be accounted for by reference to the participants' mutual knowledge. As Levinson (1992: 72) points out 'to each and every clearly demarked activity there is a corresponding set of *inferential schemata*'. Inferences are made from the structure of the interaction to the role that an utterance plays within it. In this case, the specific activity initiates a new order of interaction and thereby sets up strong expectations based on the background knowledge and beliefs of regular participants. The nature of the contribution has the effect of both *imposing* constraints on utterances and generating correspondingly strong expectations about their function within the proceedings. These constraints determine:

- what is an allowable contribution and
- how what is said is 'taken', (Levinson, 1992:97).

Levinson (1992: 97) argues that along with Grice's very general principles and the very specific organisations of background knowledge there are *activity specific* rules of inference, an understanding of which plays an important part in the reception side of communicative competence, allowing the participants to interpret and respond appropriately to what is said.

Levinson (1992: 69) also refers to the constraints on participants on the kinds of allowable contributions in activity types which are goal-defined, socially constituted and bounded. He feels the categories of constraint exist on a gradient ranging from the totally pre-packaged activity, like the Roman Mass, and largely unscripted activities; these correspond to formal and informal activities respectively. It would appear that the opening protocols, with their fixed elements, and through omissions being subject to sanctions, tend very much toward the formal end of the gradient. Atkinson (1992: 211) while discussing interaction in London Small Claims Courts states that 'the more people are permitted to say what they want to say, the less formal (and less intimidating) will the procedures be deemed to be'.

While there are constraints on interactive practices in the central sharing episode of the meeting, they are of a different order to those which obtain during the framing protocols. Within the framing protocols the constraints are prescribed primarily by custom, within the central sharing episode the constraints emerge from the nature of the alignment between participants and are constitutive, rather than customary by nature.

7.2.2. The opening protocols

During the opening protocols, all participatory actions are sanctioned and invited by the secretary according to established protocols. Omissions or deviations from the normal sequence are subject to sanctions, either by an apology from the speaker or a reminder from a member present. In this, an AA meeting may be typical of other formal meetings. However, the secretary, though opening the meeting in that capacity, does not refer to her/himself in that role, but rather in first name terms and as 'an alcoholic', as does every other speaker when opening a turn. The use of first name or AA names and the opening declaration will be discussed at length later in the chapter. However, it is worth noting at this point that the projected self, and therefore footing, in this self-introduction is not simply that of 'secretary', but also of 'alcoholic' and thus projects a shared rather than distinguishing identity. Arminen has noted (1996b: 90) the secretary (he uses the term *chair*, a term used for the chairperson of the Business meeting in this group) limits his / her role to the accomplishment of procedural tasks only. He relates this 'to the accentuated egalitarianism of AA as a mutual-help group'. This study confirms this and also the use by the secretary of a laconic, non-effusive and non-evaluative style observed by

Arminen (1998b:54). However, the directive role of the Secretary described by Arminen (ibid: 56-7) was less frequently observed in this study as participants are free to self-select turns as the size of the meetings rarely require the length of turns to be regulated. It can be claimed, therefore, that the participants in Cosmo-city have greater interactional freedom to orchestrate and display their orientation to the meeting than those in Vuori group, Finland.

Open and closed meetings

Opening a 'closed' meeting the secretary will say:

Secretary: As this is a closed discussion meeting, anyone is welcome to attend who has a desire to stop drinking. I ask you to restrict your sharing to problems related to alcohol and alcoholism.

If the meeting is an 'open' meeting the following:

Secretary: As this is an open discussion meeting, anyone is welcome to attend. I ask you to restrict your sharing to problems related to alcohol and alcoholism.

Alternatively, rather than introducing a discussion meeting, the secretary may introduce a *Big Book*, Step or Speaker meeting, as described above.

These are key defining and framing statements which determine and are determined by the topics of the meeting, the type of participants and the degree of personal disclosure expected. A 'closed' meeting is attended exclusively by AA members. As we have seen, the Preamble of AA defines the right of membership to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking.

At this point it may be useful to turn attention to participants not simply as producers but also as receivers of utterances. Goffman (1981) distinguishes between ratified participants and those who may be bystanders, overhearing or eavesdropping on what is said, and discusses how the status of the listener affects the footing adopted by a speaker. The location and arrangements of an AA meeting, and the manner through which it is publicised, ensures that all participants are ratified, even if only by themselves by virtue of the requirement of the desire to stop drinking. This filtering out of non-ratified participants is common to most types of organisational meetings, however, it is particularly important to an organisation like AA that endeavours to ensure that participants may feel secure in adopting a footing that is particularly self-

revealing or confessional and where the topics are of a personal and sensitive nature. This allows participants to feel secure in the knowledge that more casual, inadvertent or surreptitious listeners are not present. However, the group holds open meetings, allowing the participation of non-members, enabling an interface with the wider community of friends, relatives and health professionals.

Discussion, reading based and special interest meetings

The secretary, by describing the meeting as a 'discussion meeting' is referring to the prescribed format the meeting will follow. In this AA group, most meetings are discussion meetings. This means that after the opening protocols and standard readings, the secretary will ask if anyone has 'an alcohol related topic for discussion'. Within this AA group, and quite generally (Mäkelä, 1996), there are special interest meetings where the topics under discussion may be of relevance to newcomers, women, men and younger members. This again demonstrates the constitutive relationship between participant and topic in AA discourse. It is worth noting that while traditionally all AA meetings are open to anyone with a desire to stop drinking (Anon, 1990), this is increasingly not exclusively the case particularly in the United States where meetings for ethnic groups and gays and lesbians are increasing (Mäkelä, 1996). AA in Cosmo-city adheres to the inclusive principle by holding men and women's meetings at the same time in adjacent rooms of the same building, thus anyone turning up is assured a meeting. If the number of men or woman present is small one meeting is held accommodating all participants. Also, at the Young people's meeting there are normally a few members who can claim to 'be young at heart'. The designation implies an orientation to topics rather than to the nature of the participants.

Types of AA meetings are therefore differentiated by factors involving the nature of the participants and the source of the topic.

- The nature of the ratified participants determines whether it is a closed or open meeting; the presence of a newcomer or someone in very early sobriety, will result in a beginners or Step One meeting.
- The source of the topic, on the other hand, determines whether it is a discussion, reading or speaker meeting.

Regarding the request 'to restrict your sharing to problems related to alcohol and alcoholism', it can be said that no meeting was observed or recorded where questions were raised as to the relevance to the topic of the contribution of any member. This can be accounted for by the tendency of all participants to take a positive orientation to other member's sharing during meetings (Arminen, 1998b). Also the construct of alcoholism as a spiritual, mental and physical disease, or state of 'dis-ease', allows for a very wide interpretation of relevance. Topic selection and development will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

7.2.3. Intertextual modality

A meeting then typically proceeds in the following manner:

Can we open the meeting with a moment of silence to remember why we are here and the alcoholic who still suffers, (silence) followed by the Serenity Prayer. (recital of the Serenity Prayer by all).

Silence

This statement and the moment of silence strongly aligns the meeting to AA's primary purpose 'to remain sober and help the alcoholic who still suffers' (AA's Preamble) thus 'filtering out' of outside issues.

Prayer

This element and the collective recital of *The Serenity Prayer* clearly places the meeting in a quasi-religious, or as AA members prefer, spiritual frame. However, as we have discussed in Chapter 4, the *Serenity Prayer* addresses what Bateson (1985 {1971}) sees as the unusually disastrous variant of the Cartesian dualism, typical of the alcoholic. *The Serenity Prayer* calls for a realistic view of self as agent, and acceptance by the alcoholic of limitations in the power of the individual will. Thus, key issues related to the power of individual agency are firmly embedded in the frame.

Reading

There are usually two readings in the opening frame. The first is introduced by the secretary who states:

I have asked (name) to tell us who we are.

A prearranged reader then introduces him / herself in the usual AA manner, thus framing their own turn, and reads *The Preamble*. This is followed by a chorus of, 'thanks (name of reader)'. *The Preamble*, presented in Chapter 2, is a succinct definition of AA as a whole, evoking AA in its entirety in the opening frame.

I have also asked (name) to read from the Big Book

A second prearranged reader introduces him / herself in a similar manner. S/he then reads the opening of Chapter Five, which contains the Twelve Steps, referring to the common condition of powerlessness over alcohol. Mäkelä (1996: 137) points out how the opening rituals handle delicate matters explicitly. The negative, deprecating nature of this reference is placed in the context of the Twelve Steps - the programme of recovery, which is framed in the chapter entitled 'There is a solution', thus emphasising recovery rather than degradation. Completion of the reading is followed by the same ritual thanks, effectively closing that element of the frame.

Goffman's concept of footing (1959) enables one to explore the nature of participation in social interaction. Speakers by utilising various 'production formats' may take up various footings in relation to their own remarks. In Chapter 6 we have discussed the distinctions between, the 'animator' as the person presently uttering the words, 'author' as the one who originated the beliefs / words through which they are expressed and the 'principal' – the person whose viewpoint of position is being expressed.

The fact that the opening frame of all meetings have at least one extensive reading whereby the participatory footing is completely limited to that of 'animator' is important in characterising AA meetings as 'ideological' in nature. The individual becomes the articulator of AA beliefs; the 'principal' footing is that of AA ideology itself as presented through its literature.

The two set readings in the opening frame - *The Preamble* and the opening of Chapter five in *The Big Book* - have a different function to readings which take place outside the opening frame as in *Big Book* and Step meetings. Their position in the opening frame places them outside the interactional order of the meeting. They are rarely referred to after they have been read. They act as framing tokens of AA's principle organisational and spiritual beliefs, and are not part of the intertextual,

interactive process of sharing. Most members are already very familiar with them and they are frequently intoned in a manner suggesting a routine practice.

This intertextual orientation of AA participation to the 'principal' footing of AA ideology is a central feature that distinguishes AA from most other purely institutional interaction. Reading *The Preamble* and the Twelve Steps within the frame of the meeting signals an orientation to the AA programme in subsequent sharing. This feature of intertextuality is pervasive and recurrent in an AA meeting. The opening protocols are characteristically 'formal' in that the manner of participation is largely prescribed; they can also be said to be ritualistic in that they are fixed and contain diverse modes of discourse - silence, prayer and reading. These fixed elements act as discoursal equivalent of architectural features which frame and bring into focus the principle features of the setting.

As will be demonstrated, in the less 'formal', less ritualistic interactive turn taking which follows the opening protocols, this alignment of footing through the extensive use of intertextuality remains prevalent but is more complex being displayed through the use of embedded quotations from and allusions to AA literature, AA slogans and sayings.

7.2.4. Initiating interactive turn taking

After the readings the secretary initiates a transition to a different mode of participation by asking if there are any AA visitors from other areas who wish to introduce themselves, thus sanctioning voluntary participation and truly interactive turn taking. If there are visitors, they introduce themselves briefly from their seats, giving their names and identifying themselves as alcoholics, usually briefly stating where they are from and often expressing their gratitude to be at a meeting. It is then asked if there are any newcomers or anyone in 'early sobriety' who wishes to introduce themselves. Any such participants quickly introduce themselves, sometimes with a brief history of how many meetings they have attended or the numbers of days / weeks since their last drink. Usually anyone at their first AA meeting has already been identified and may be accompanied by a regular member through prior arrangement by phone or earlier conversation and the meeting has already been constituted as a beginner's meeting.

Depending on how the meeting has been defined in the opening protocol, the meeting will then go in one of three trajectories.

1. If it is a *discussion* or *topic* meeting, the Secretary will ask if anyone has a topic, stipulating that it be alcohol related. At this point, a participant will then introduce themselves in the customary manner, declaring their alcoholism, and outlining their concern or topic. This topic is usually the focus for subsequent sharing. If no topic is forthcoming, the secretary may initiate a topic, often related to some personal current concerns, though these may be framed as customary AA topics, such as 'resentments', 'gratitude' or 'fear'. The topic may be related to AA practices such as the importance of regular attendance at meetings, or to a specific AA Step, such as acceptance (Step 1) making amends (Step 9). Otherwise, the Secretary may choose a reading, usually from *Reflections* (Anon, 1990) or *As Bill Sees It* (Anonymous, 1967), both of which are AA conference approved (see 2.3.1).
2. If it is a *reading* meeting, a part of the *Big Book* or a chapter of the 12x12 will be read aloud, usually from a point where the group left off the previous week. Participants read in turn going around the room, introducing themselves in the customary manner at the start of their reading turn. This topic will then be the focus for subsequent sharing. The readings chosen for *Big Book* and Step meetings are outside the ritualised, invariable opening protocols, and constitute the opening turn of the sharing. They are referred to throughout the interactional part of the meeting and are part of the interactive process itself. They function not as tokens of AA, as do the earlier readings, but their content is alluded and oriented to and informs subsequent sharing. The contrasting functions of these two episodes of reading, one within the opening protocols and the other outside it, illustrate the constitutive nature the meeting frame.
3. If it is a *speaker* meeting, the secretary introduces a prearranged speaker with more than six months sobriety who will then 'tell their story' usually for about twenty minutes which becomes the focus for the subsequent sharing. This is the type of meeting most commonly associated with AA. However, in the group studied here there is only one such meeting a week which is also an open meeting.

The above three types of format are determined by the meeting schedule. However, the discovery of the presence of a newcomer or someone in very early sobriety will result in the meeting being reconstituted as a Beginner's Meeting or First Step meeting.

4. With a newcomer in attendance, if the meeting had previously been designated as a *Big Book* or Step Meeting the readings will then be taken from the chapter 'More about Alcoholism' or from Step 1, respectively, as both chapters relate to early sobriety and initiation into AA. Subsequent sharing will then focus on individual experience with alcohol and early experience of AA. This again demonstrates how in and out of frame readings differ. The choice of the out of frame reading is contingent on current circumstances; in-frame readings are not.

The purpose of the above description is to introduce the various forms of meeting. It also attempts to illustrate that, despite the differing forms of meetings, all meetings, properly constituted, have two distinct elements: fixed framing elements and variable elements. It also demonstrates the multi-mode nature of the opening protocols, particularly the use of readings from sanctioned texts. This intertextual feature is also a pervasive feature of the interactive element of the meetings, indicating that much of the meeting is orientated towards a particular set of beliefs. Orientation to this belief system is displayed through a characteristic footing or alignment, both to AA literature and, as is the subject of the next chapter, to other members' turns.

7.2.5. Meeting closing frame

After the framed sharing episode, and at the appropriate time the secretary signals the closing of the meeting, thus resuming a management oriented, directive role. By attributing his / her intervention to the time the secretary displays that this decision is not his / her own, but taken in compliance with group arrangements. The secretary also states:

We have no dues or fees but we do have expenses. There is a basket on the table.

This is a reminder to members to make a contribution without specifically making a request. It is also reference to the preamble, 'there are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions' and Tradition 7, 'every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions'.

This episode related to business and AA housekeeping is embedded in the closing frame, yet the preference is for a formulaic, fixed expression couched in the terminology of AA.

All members then stand, some stepping forward to place money in the basket. This signals a frame shift, as at this point the secretary may call for announcements, or another member may volunteer one. These involve announcements about events like group meetings, change of meeting secretaries or conventions of other special group occasions. Occasionally information about the hospitalisation of a member or news of a member who has left the country might be given. It is procedurally relevant that members embed an information-giving episode outside the meeting proper and within the closing frame. By so doing, members clearly display that information giving *per se* is outside the permissible discoursal practices of an AA meeting proper.

On one observed occasion during his extended turn, an AA visitor indicated difficulties in getting information about the group meeting times and venues. This was not alluded to in subsequent turns as giving information, including advisory information, to another within the meeting displays an asymmetrical relationship implying the possession of information another member lacked. However, this was addressed in the closing frame by a local member who told the visitor he would talk to him after the meeting. The display of such asymmetries is commonplace in mundane conversation, but is not evidenced in AA meeting interaction. We have seen how Schegloff (1993) has opposed the properties common in ordinary forms of talk to the distinctive properties of institutional interaction. Drew and Heritage (1992:19) see mundane conversation as constituting a benchmark against which more formal institutional interaction can be measured. The institutional nature of interaction manifests itself in the manner in which it differs from ordinary conversation which Heritage terms 'the fundamental matrix through which social interaction is organised' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993:94). When measured against mundane conversation, AA discoursal practices may be seen as achieving greater, not lesser symmetry, thus making it unusual compared with other forms of institutional interaction where the tendency is to greater asymmetry.

After the announcements, the secretary calls on a member to lead the Serenity Prayer. All members then hold hands in a circle as that member intones 'God' and

the rest of the members join in to complete the prayer in unison. On completion of the prayer, many members then add:

Keep coming back. It works if you work it

At or before this point some members disengage hands while others may continue:

So work it you're worth it,

while emphasising the metre with slight up and down movements of the hands.

The holding of hands in a circle during the closing frame is not universal and is seldom done in Finland, Iceland and Mexico, (Mäkelä, 1996).

This is the only point at the meeting where a slight disengagement from a collective orientation has been observed. Subsequent discussion with members revealed that some members did not like the 'cult-like chanting' involved in this practice. However, overt criticism was not heard, just disengagement. This disengagement response will be discussed in the following chapter.

This little ritual closes the meeting. Some members leave quite quickly while others fall into groups to chat, perhaps smoke and have a drink.

7.3 Framing turns and turn transitions

This section deals with how participants manage the opening, closing and transitions between turns in the absence of closely ordered turn taking procedures. Particular attention is given to the way AA members orientate to the format and procedures of the meeting.

Self introductions and address forms

The use of the trademark declarative phrase, 'I am (AA name) and I am an alcoholic', may be seen as framing the individual turn. Like the opening protocols, it is a fixed, ritualised element. Omitting it is subject to sanctions, usually by way of an apology. It has been observed that when a speaker starts a turn having omitted the opening declaration, a frame-breaking interjections such as, 'sorry, did I say "Jim – alcoholic"?' will be made. Less frequently sanctions may come from other participants, perhaps in the form of the question, 'who are you Jim?'. This is more likely if the speaker is someone who is given to frequent slips or whose adherence to

the programme practices and principles is in doubt. It would not be made to a newcomer, as admission to self of one's alcoholism is the basis of Step 1.

As a framing declarative, it constitutes the speaker as an alcoholic and a member of the group and thereby entitled to participate as a ratified participant. Ford, (1989:124) points out, 'from the Puritan theocracy to modern encounter group therapy, public confession represented in a statement such as "I am a sinner" or "I am an alcoholic" serve to define, not only one's repentance and desire to change but also such statements represent "a rite of passage to the new community that magically and tacitly infuses identity and pride," (Dumont, 1974:)' Within AA, the term 'to qualify' is sometimes used of this statement, as well as of sharing where one's credentials as an alcoholic are displayed, as is discussed in Chapter 8. As Arminen (1998b: 53) points out, its use involves the participants displaying their orientation to the specific nature of the gathering. Some speakers may use more elaborate forms, 'Hi, my name is x and I am a gratefully recovering alcoholic', or less elaborate one, 'Hi, Tony – drunk'. The former is frequently said by members to be particularly disliked when they first heard it, but which they have learned to use as their involvement in AA has made them grateful for the circumstances that brought them to it. For the newcomer especially, this statement is a declarative (Searle, 1977) which can be said to bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred to object, in this case, the self. As a declaration it is one of the rare uses in AA discourse of a speech act whose directional fit, using Searle's terminology, is 'word to world', but it may be noted that the change wrought to the world here is limited to the speaker's identity.

In AA belief, alcoholism is a 'sickness' characterised by 'denial'. This declaration is therefore not a one-off occurrence, but is done regularly, framing every sustained turn during the meeting. Arminen (1998b:53) sees 'the attribute 'alcoholic' ... as an ongoing accomplishment which demonstrates the person's orientation to be an AA member', in effect a ritualised re-enactment of Step 1: 'we admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable'.

Some members also addicted to other substances may refer to themselves as, 'alcoholic and addict'. The presence of members with addictions to substances other than alcohol has caused friction in AA groups elsewhere, (Johnson, 1987) but was subject to no observed sanctions in the group discussed here.

The origin of this opening self-introduction and declarative probably goes back to the early OG days, where Frank Buchanan, the founder and leader of the OG, used to refer to himself as Frank B. Early AA members attended O.G. meetings where members sat in a circle for the 'sharing' sessions, which would start with, "My name is so-and-so" (Anon 1984:219). This custom evolved before the tradition of anonymity was developed and it was used as a means of identification. However, despite it being a regular tease of many comedy scriptwriters, its use is not universal. Mäkelä (1996) reports it is not used in Finland, Iceland or Poland.

In this opening declarative, and in all interaction in AA meetings, titles and surnames (TLN) are avoided in meetings even when the member is a Catholic priest, doctor or holds a military title. Interestingly, this avoidance of titles is also a feature of Quaker talk, (Davies, 1982). In AA, this is now undoubtedly related to anonymity, especially with new members, but as most members frequently know each other's surnames, it is not the sole factor.

Brown (1960) points out that Americans call someone they are only acquainted with by TLN and expect the same in return, though the use of first name (FN) is permitted after a short acquaintance usually with the tacit permission of the more powerful person and signifies solidarity. The choice of FN or TLN they see as a function of solidarity (T) and power (V) respectively.

The use of FN is relevant here as an example of how AA discourse avoids use of discourse marked by status and power differentials. Goffman, (1959) discusses how when an individual enters the presence of others, 'they will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude towards them, his competence, his trustworthiness etc.' (p. 13). The use and acceptance on initial acquaintance of FN address disclaims possession of status or lack of it. However, the rejection of TLN name entirely in AA meetings goes beyond this. The FN is the most personal address form available and gets closest to the identification of self devoid of social or familial status. This helps construct AA's concept of anonymity, described as 'the spiritual foundation of the programme' where 'principles are placed before personalities' which includes social, familial and professional identities.

Closing turns

Closing an extended turn in AA meetings where turn taking procedures of ordinary conversation have been suspended is reflexively related to AA's formal turn taking procedures (Arminen 1998b:141). It displays completion of one turn and in effect allows the initiation of the next. However, the meetings described by Arminen may be attended by over a hundred people and time management is important. Stopwatches and alarm clocks are used to signal the end of turns and meetings respectively. In the Cosmo-city group all members who wish to speak usually get the opportunity, be the meeting attended by six members or by twenty eight. It would appear that speakers adjust the length of their turn based on the number present. Sometimes this is oriented to by the speaker remarking that they are speaking at length because of the small number present, or that they will be brief in order to give everyone a turn. Where a meeting is attended by just a few members a speaker may take a second turn if a long pause indicates that all members who so wish have taken a turn.

Thus turn closure is initiated and managed solely by the current speaker, as reported by Arminen (1998b:141). He has pointed out, following Schegloff and Sacks (1974), a one-sided departure from interaction may be taken as a sign of 'brusqueness'. Being given an opportunity to respond is normative and is embedded in the closing of turns. This is also seen to be the case in institutional settings (Clayman, 1989). In AA interaction, however, the avoidance of closely ordered interaction means that the current speaker alone closes the turn. This is particularly the case where turns are not timed and speakers self-select once the previous turn is closed. In this regard, it can be seen that the AA spirit of voluntarism is possibly displayed more fully in smaller meetings than in larger ones where meeting size imposes a more directive role on the secretary who determines when a turn is taken and for how long.

Table 1 is a comparison of the five elements usually associated with turn closing as presented by Arminen (1998:146) and the elements observed to be usually present in the Cosmo-city group. To this are added further elements which mark the transition between speakers also described by Arminen (ibid: 57).

Arminen has demonstrated in his data that 'all the closings exhibit, what we may call, the rhetoric of gratitude', (Arminen, 1998:152). Overwhelmingly AA members display the salience of AA for the resolution of their personal problems. Talk about problems, particularly unresolved problems, is treated by the speaker and recipients as an

improper environment for closing in AA. Closings with expressions of gratitude are related to the complementary dependency AA members both express and display in their sharing turns and is discussed fully in the next chapter.

Vuori Group, Helsinki	Cosmo-city Asia Group
Speaker produces some closing relevant utterance before or after the time signal	Speaker produces some closing relevant utterance – no time signal
Closure is further signalled by an expression of thanks to the audience for listening	Closure is further signalled by an expression of thanks to the audience for being allowed to share
Audience recognise the closure with applause	Audience thanks speaker by name in unison
thanks from Secretary	Not applicable
Secretary summons next speaker by name and alerts other speakers who are to follow	Not applicable
Selected speaker takes podium and starts turn with customary self introduction	Self-selected speaker starts turn from present position with customary self introduction

Table 1 Comparison of the elements associated with turn closing presented by Arminen and the elements observed in the Cosmo-city group

7.4 Conclusions

It has been noted that the AA meetings observed in this study, like AA meetings observed elsewhere, (Arminen, 1998b; Mäkelä, 1996; Denzin, 1997) tend to be rigidly formatted. This study has attempted to differentiate between two episodes in meetings - the opening protocols and the sharing episode - in ways not previously done.

We have seen that the opening protocols of an AA meeting are pre-scripted and involve a wider range of modes of discourse which effectively ‘frame’ the meeting as

such. The opening protocol is constituted by a series of framing moves involving a sequence of different modes of fixed discourse. All moves are initiated or sanctioned by the secretary. They consist of greetings and self-introductions, a brief silence and prayer, followed by two readings. The opening frame is ritualistic and largely invariable. All participants align themselves to the proceedings in a collective manner, either through reading, reciting responses to greetings and reciting prayers as called on to do so or as is customary. Spontaneous utterances are replaced by customary ones of a routine nature.

The fact that some features may be in the frame of the meeting and others are not is not accounted for in Mäkelä's description of AA meetings, (Mäkelä, 1996), nor is the fact that some involve spontaneous interaction and others are fixed, using a variety of written and spoken modes of discourse. To simply describe the elements of a meeting as though they are a sequence of interchangeable events fails to acknowledge that a meeting does not simply involve the following of a prearranged script but is accomplished anew every time it is talked into being.

An interesting distinction between the framing protocols and the framed turn taking system is that deviance from following the customary sequence can and often will be corrected (Mäkelä, 1996). This may be done by way of a quiet reminder to the secretary from a participant if an element is omitted, or by self-correction with an apology for an omission or deviance from the established sequence. This contrasts with the general lack of negative feedback in the central, framed turn taking element.

The opening sequences are not true turns but may be termed 'rituals'. True turns are endogenously generated sequential opportunities, whereby members display alignment to previous turns and are held accountable to other participants. The opening protocols, being predetermined, do not display these features. Zimmerman, (1988:13) in discussing talk oriented to institutional settings sees 'institutional talk' as involving 'recurrent and relatively specialised sets of situated identities as well as a concentration and modification of particular machinery'. As such, the opening protocols cannot be conceived of as 'talk', however they are selected and configured in such a way as to reflexively constitute the particular setting of an AA meeting. Borkman (1999:170) describes the AA meeting as 'a 'delineation of a "sacred place" in which conventional rules of interaction no longer obtain'. She characterises it as 'a "holding environment," wherein the most valued and characteristic AA discourses

practices take place; a special place of interaction where members can work out issues and learn new ways of behaving in the safety of a sacred non-judgemental space'. This concept of *space* is captured in the pervasive metaphor of the AA programme as a 'room'. This 'space', it is argued here is constituted through the opening protocols.

Chapter 8 - Dependency and symmetry in AA interaction

An attempt has been made in the previous chapter to describe the varied discoursal modes and sequence of the elements which comprise the opening and closing protocols of AA meetings. The discoursal practices which govern these episodes have been shown to frame the sharing episode which it encloses, which itself is constituted by a different set of discoursal practices. This has been illustrated by the differing ways participants orient to texts which are read both within and outside this frame.

This chapter focuses on the true interactive turn taking (Mäkelä, 1996) which the opening and closing protocols frame. It examines the manner in which participants align their talk to AA's belief system, texts and practices as well as to each other. Close reference is made to actual spoken interaction as represented through tape transcriptions of recorded AA meetings that took place during AA conventions as described in Chapter 1.3. The interaction of one meeting in particular is discussed whose topic is *Principles before personalities*. Data from this meeting are presented in detail under the heading **Principles before personalities**. The speaker is also indicated as is the turn number in the meeting itself, e.g. **Charlie, 1 of 15**. This indicates that the data are from the first turn (by Charlie) of 15 turns in total. This meeting is presented sequentially throughout the chapter. Line numbers, which restart with every new turn are also indicated. A transcript of the first five speakers at this meeting is presented in Appendix D. A tape recording of the entire meeting accompanies this volume and is enclosed in the binding.

This meeting has been chosen for detailed study from the eight meetings recorded and transcribed as it appears to be non-normative. This is demonstrated as procedurally relevant by the participants who orient toward these as 'breaches', thus allowing analytical access to the taken-for-granted, common sense knowledge which underlies normative interactional order in an AA meeting. Furthermore, the findings of Arminen are also used to establish the characteristics of normative discoursal practice in the AA meetings he has studied. An alternative approach would be to present a great deal of data from the different speakers in different meetings to illustrate that certain discoursal practises are recursive and pervasive. Constraints on

space have meant that this approach is not practical. However, some data from other taped meetings are also presented by way of further explication and illustration. The topic of the meeting, the speaker's name and the position of the turn is presented before the data itself. Data from other meetings cannot be presented as appendices, but the tapes and transcripts are available for viewing on request.

The chapter opens with a discussion of the opening turn. It attempts to show how the speaker constructs his story based on an archetypical AA narrative depicting the alcoholic as living an egocentric, unmanageable, alcohol obsessed life until 'surrendering' to a higher power. The subsequent turn is presented as non-normative, breaching AA discoursal practices. This is followed by a discussion of two subsequent turns which orientate to this deviancy.

This is followed by a discussion of the alignment AA members display to each other. Data are introduced which illustrates that this alignment is pervasively symmetrical, being sanctionable if not so. These two sections aim to illustrate the central claim of this study that the alignment of AA members is typically:

- complementary to the AA programme and beliefs
- symmetrical to each other

and that this orientation is related to the achievement of AA's institutional aims.

8.1 The personal and the prototypical AA story

The data are derived from a small meeting at an AA conference. The transcript of the entire meeting is in Appendix D. The topic, - 'Principles before personalities', a common AA slogan taken directly from AA Tradition 12 - has been pre-selected by the organising committee. 15 people, excluding the chairperson, participated, one twice. After the opening protocols and usual self-introduction, similar to those described in Chapter 8, the member invited to open the sharing commences thus:

Meeting topic - Principles before personalities

Charlie - opening speaker, 1st of 15 turns

3. I'm a bit unprepared (.) I didn't know I was going to be doing this meeting (.) until around 15 minutes ago (.)

4. but er (...) you know one of the principles I've been taught is also to *never say no to service* (.) so here I am (.) um (.)

5. I thought about this for a good long ten minutes before I came in here (.) and you know

6. [audience laughter]

7. one thing that jumped out in my mind was (.) umm (..) in the 12th step it talks about carrying the erm principle of this programme into all of our affairs (..)

8. and umm (.) the thing that jumped out at me is that (...) umm (.) >anonymity being the spiritual base of our programme (.) it reminds us to place principles before personalities< (.)

9. so in all our affairs (.) to me that means in all my life um (...) trying to like live and walk a spiritual path today umm (..) >I should keep that in mind at all times (.) not just in meetings (.) you know< (.)

....

13. >I feel really unprepared for this< (...)

14. so (.) umm (.) I guess I'm going to give you a little bit of my experience (..)

There is nothing unusual in the practice of asking a member to take an opening turn a few minutes before the start of the meeting. As here, this may be referred to early in the turn. It is also normative for the opening speaker to clearly indicate a determination to comply with one of AA's informal precepts, particularly 'never say no to service' despite being uncomfortable with the topic, as Charlie does here. He thus displays an orientation to the belief that sharing and participation in meetings is not undertaken solely for self but is displayed as a 'service' to AA. Once a meeting has been properly framed, as it was on this occasion, AA speakers usually can sustain a turn even if the topic has been just introduced. This, however, is not the case here. The speaker at first refers to Step 12 and 'carrying the principle of the programme into all of our affairs' and then to Tradition 12 which refers to placing 'AA principles before personalities'. In the following line the reference to 'in all our affairs' involves a

reference back to Step 12. The speaker is clearly floundering with the topic or else, untypical for an AA speaker, trying to use a rhetorical device and connect Step 12 and Tradition 12 through the word 'principle', which occurs in both.

8.1.1. The alignment of topic to collective experience

However, what is of interest is that the speaker, though he can not sustain and develop the topic, does attempt to relate his turn to AA beliefs by making allusions to AA texts, i.e. the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. However, encountering difficulties, he decides to abandon the designated topic and reverts to the most pervasive AA topic - topic default mode, if you like - personal experience, or in AA terminology 'to share his experience, strength and hope', (AA Preamble). He therefore quickly places the topic on an autobiographical footing:

15. umm (.) I'm from San Francisco (.) er grew up there and um started drinking and using very young and we're from an alcoholic family (.)

He aligns that experience to that reported by another AA member:

16. and umm (.) /pretty much the same as the speaker last night (.) um in my family we had those gallons of wine around the house at all times and I was umm (.) you know- (..)

Arminen, (1998b: 63), notes that turns display an autobiographical commitment and features that construct tellable items, particularly by taking a first-person stance. Although, he states that AA does not have a clear set of rules on how members should speak, he nonetheless refers to two 'prescriptions', (which he subsequently refers to more precisely as 'embedded understandings' (p. 68)). The first is that participants take a first-person stance, the other is these experiences are related in a particular way, i.e. be 'shared'. This is demonstrated here, however, on this occasion the first speaker aligns his turn, not to a previous turn, but a turn in a previous meeting, thus indicating that topic relevance is not confined to the specifics of one particular meeting but can span across them, drawing on a perceived communality of experience and belief beyond a specific occasion of interaction.

8.1.2. The personal narrative as an exemplum of the prototypical AA narrative

The speaker continues:

19.umm (.) I ended up getting into a lot of trouble very young um and (...)

...

20. by nineteen umm I'd been- (.) I spent most of High School in juvenile hall and I'd been living on the street in San Francisco for two years (.) um I was in er a gang and I was facing a 5-year jail sentence (..)

The speaker typically constructs his AA autobiography around a prototypical AA narrative which frequently starts with an account of early experience of alcohol. The focus on alcohol, even in childhood, is designed for the recipients (Heritage, 1984) to whom it signals that, for the speaker, alcohol has been a central and abiding problem and is, in the words of the *Big Book*, an *obsession of the mind* (Silkworth, 1985 {1939}). The details of the narrative with the references to spending time in juvenile hall, living on the streets and the prospect of imprisonment demonstrate the credentials of speaker as an 'alcoholic' implicitly witnessing to the speaker's life as 'unmanageable' and therefore exemplifying a relevant prelude to taking Step 1. The narration of experience of this type, establishes the speaker's right to participate in the meeting, displaying that the speaker is 'qualified'. Though the specific details of the narrative may be unique to the narrator, the story is constructed in a way which conforms to a prototypical AA story.

The inherent interest is not in the events themselves – in AA group meetings most members are already very familiar with the events in each other's lives - but that the speaker illustrates the relevance of Step 1 to his life by constructing it as 'unmanageable'.

We may note that though the speaker tells of alcohol problems in the family, there is no theorising on the causes of his alcoholism or attributing it to inheritance or particular aspects of his environment of upbringing. The narrative focuses on personal 'experience' and is free of explanatory glosses, thus serving as a device to enhance 'reciprocal relevance' (Arminen, 1998b), as it avoids personal points of view and interpretations which may involve 'outside issues' (Tradition 10) - be they medical, biological or social - which may be divisive. Furthermore, explanatory

glosses involve adopting an asymmetrical footing with the audience, suggesting the speaker has particular expertise, insights or knowledge which have to be transmitted to a less knowledgeable audience.

The speaker continues by presenting himself as initially resistant to AA, thus again aligning his personal narrative to a larger AA story which presents alcoholics as 'in denial' of their problem and as at odds with saner council.

24. I started listening to some of these people and I remember at one point a guy sitting me down and saying (.) you know /do you believe you're powerless over drugs and /alcohol

25 (.) I said hell \no you know (.) that's the one thing in my life that I have /going for me right now (.) that's the only thing that I like okay

By stating that alcohol and drugs is 'the one thing in my life that I have going for me right now' the speaker is implicitly depicting his life as 'insane' and thus marking the relevance of Step 2 - 'came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity'. It is the councillor, a 'power outside himself' who is presented as the one who first challenged the speaker with AA's central tenet – the powerlessness of an alcoholic over alcohol. The speaker makes no attempt to attribute any aspect of his journey to recovery to any personal quality or initiative.

29. I was nineteen years old and I was potentially at this point facing twenty /five years in jail and this was like (.) my life was over (.)

30. I was like /skinny (.) I had done nothing with my life but like (.) hang out on the streets and drink (.)... (.) I just- (.) I saw like (.) I was hopeless at that point and I became more willing to hear the *principles of this programme* and um I finally got sober (.)

Sobriety, when it is finally achieved, results from the loss of the hope or belief in oneself – a hitting of bottom, in AA's terminology (Anon, 1952:24). It is attributed to 'willingness to hear' resulting from desperation and hopelessness brought about by the speaker's inability to manage his own life. Thus, sobriety, unlike alcoholism, is attributed to something *without* not *within* the speaker – to what is 'heard' - the principles of the AA programme - not to anything initiated by or inherent *within* the speaker, such as decency, common sense, determination, intelligence or self-interest. This discursal attributing one's sobriety to others is a major characteristic of AA discourse. Edwards and Potter (1992:103) point out that the cognitive psychologist views the attributional reasoner as receiving inputs from a scene,

discerning patterns and thereby computing attributions. However, a discursive approach does not separate reality from the mental operations of the attributor, but would see them as bound together; causal relations are constructed as versions, they are not necessarily discerned from events whose reality is taken as given, but are produced through discourse. 'People do descriptions and thereby do attributions' (p. 103). By attributing changes in his thinking processes - how he views and aligns himself to the 'world' – to others, particularly AA members and discourse, the speaker's discourse is seen to be aligned to the AA concept of surrendering to a higher power, i.e. an influence beyond himself on which he is dependent.

The speaker continues by stating the centrally important position of his sobriety in his life.

32.and the most important thing in my life today is uh (.) my sobriety (.) and *the daily maintenance of my spiritual condition* (.) which umm (.) believe it or not (.) >you know< (.) that doesn't always stay as my first priority (.)

33.it's /amazing (.) this is the most amazing gift that I've ever been given and I don't take care of it very well (.) I don't cherish it the way I should (.) you know (.) umm (.)

'The most important thing in my life today' is an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), frequently a rhetorical resource in persuasion, especially in complaints, but in AA talk is typically associated with gratitude to AA and sobriety, here typically depicted as an 'amazing gift', something unearned and coming from without. The underlying notion is one of indebtedness, of having had something bestowed upon one. Thus we see the alignment of the AA speaker to AA is one of complementarity (Bateson, 1985 {1971}) and complete dependency; an alignment in which the 'ego' of the speaker, the sense of power to direct one's own life, is negated.

The speaker continues intensifying the already extreme formulation, attributing all that is good in his life to the AA programme.

34.I can honestly say that everything that's good in my life is a result of (.) uh /staying /sober and /working the steps of this \programme (.)

However, though the programme is depicted as coming as a 'gift' from without, the AA member is not presented as a mere passive recipient but is responsible for 'working the steps of this programme', a commonplace expression in AA which

suggests a certain purposeful energy, counterbalancing the passivity inherent in depicting the recovering alcoholic as totally dependent. This dependency is frequently stated explicitly but is also displayed through the merging of and construction of each participant's individual experience in the larger collective AA narrative. This is exemplified by specific instances of how he 'works the steps' and undertakes other AA practices.

35.umm (.) I've worked with several different sponsors (.) I've been through the steps a couple times and (.) I would say (..) maybe three months ago I felt like I finally (.) uh achieved the 12th step (.)

36. I finally had a spiritual awakening and uh (.) I try to maintain that

...

By making reference to Step 12, the final step, and the achievement of 'a spiritual awakening', the speaker is presenting himself as a longstanding and committed member of AA, who has engaged in its practices and experienced its rewards. But as is frequently the case when referring to personal spiritual development, a hedge is inserted.

36. and some /days I (.) feel like I /have it (.) some days I feel like I \don't (.) ...

Just as all that is good in his life is attributed to following the principles and practices of AA, difficulties are attributed to the assertion of one's own will.

39.one thing I learned very quickly is that my way doesn't work< (.) when things suddenly aren't going my way if I pause for a second (.) usually what I can see is that erm I'm trying to force my own will on the situation (.)

40.I'm trying to see umm (.) what I can take or what I can get out of the situation for a person and ummm (.)

This reversal to a more ego driven life is attributed to the failure to follow the principles and practices of the AA programme, thus highlighting the speaker's dependency on AA.

41.when I /pause for a second (.) usually I can see that I'm not practising the principles that I've been taught in this programme and /you /know?

42.(.) one very important principle I've been taught in the programme is that when I do practice these principles (.) when I do work the steps to the best of my ability (.) I'm happier you know and I would never /expect that (.)

43.I mean everything that I think that I know teaches me that (.) if I get my will I'm going to be /happy (.) and it's umm (.) it's a ridiculous irony that it's exactly the other way around (.) that it's uhh (.) it's when I \let \go and when I \trust \god and when I help others that's when I'm actually happier (.)

This statement presents two opposing and constant dynamics in the speaker's life referred to above, the self-centred, self-destructive dynamic of the ego and the dynamic of the AA programme, represented here as 'letting go' and 'trust in god'. It reflects a belief that, left to his own devices, thinking and knowledge, he demonstrates a belief in an inherent, deep-seated tendency to behaviour which is dramatically at odds with his personal happiness. The fact that he presents this thinking and knowledge as something to be *let go* of, not *resisted*, indicates a non-combative alignment to his own behaviour and psychological tendencies and displays and perhaps constitutes the 'surrender' required by Step 1 to 3, further signalling that the speaker qualifies as a participant in the AA programme.

The speaker moves to close his turn without the display of what Arminen terms the 'rhetoric of gratitude', (Arminen, 1998b:152) discussed in 7.3. However, AA had previously been affirmed as the means to resolve personal problems. The speaker thus completes his turn, having already displayed the proper dependency on AA.

45.that's about all I have (.) I hope that was somewhere close to 10 minutes

46.[laughter]

47.and I'm going to pass you to my co-chair (.) \thank you

The turn is closed on a humorous self-mocking footing, as a duty only minimally completed; alluding to the difficulties the speaker encountered in keeping on topic at the start of the turn.

The quintessential AA story, exemplified in *The Big Book* (Anon, 1985 {1939}) by Bill W's story (p.1-16), is retold here. It involves disclosing 'in a general way what we

used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now' (p. 58). Much of the purpose of an AA narrative is for the narrator to display the right to participate. Rudy and Griel, (1987:54) point out, 'one acknowledges one's embracement of an alcoholic identity by telling one's story'. This is achieved by depicting oneself as powerless over alcohol, indeed over the circumstances and events of life itself, and as dependent on AA, and other manifestations of an outside power. In modelling his personal stories on this narrative, Charlie is essentially narrating a conversion story shaped by the Twelve Steps of AA. He presents himself as 'powerless' over alcohol (Step 1) and his life as fractured, self-obsessed and 'at odds' with others and their surrounding circumstances. In presenting himself thus, he is presented as a 'ratified participant' (Goffman 1981), a member of AA.

This involves a degree of confessional self-revelation which may also be highly cathartic, especially when engaged in by newer members. However, here, this experienced exponent of AA sharing does not display the emotional disturbance often displayed by newcomers. His tone is detached and matter-of-fact, displaying that he has 'come to terms' with his past; that his past is accepted and in broad terms is typical, part of a collective AA experience and not unique. It is indeed the basis of his 'qualification' for AA membership and therefore participation.

8.1.3. Density of intertextuality

In constructing and structuring his life story as an exemplum of a shared narrative shaped by the Steps of AA and AA's practices and beliefs Charlie merges his story into a larger narrative. The relationship of his story to the prototypical AA narrative is essentially derivative, complementary. A parallel process is seen in the manner he systematically merges features of AA discourse into his personal narrative in a manner which shapes it as shared and communal and embedded in and derived from AA beliefs.

Charlie's phraseology	Original in AA literature or spoken discourse
the daily maintenance of my spiritual condition	What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition , Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:85)
this is the most amazing gift that I've ever been given	the metaphor of sobriety as ,a gift, is a common place in AA spoken discourse.
everything that's good in my life is a result of staying sober	Common AA phraseology.
working the steps of this programme	the metaphor working the steps of the programme is a common place in AA spoken discourse. It is not used in the <i>Big Book</i> where the expression, <i>working with others</i> is used
had a spiritual awakening	Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:60)
when things suddenly aren't going my way if I pause for a second when I pause for a second usually I can see that I'm not practising the principles that I've been taught in this programme	As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:87)
I'm trying to force my own will on the situation	Common AA phraseology.
I'm not practising the principles that I've been taught in this programme try to practice some of the spiritual principles that I've learnt when I do practice these principles ... to the best of my ability	And practice these principles in all our affairs, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:60)
my way doesn't work	But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:66) I had tried my way and it had failed, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:383)
it's when I let go	And some of us have tried to hold onto our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:58)
trust god	the only condition is that he trust in God and clean house, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:98)
principles before personalities	Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, (1953)
selfishness and self-centeredness	selfishness - self-centeredness, these are the roots of our trouble, Alcoholics Anonymous (1985:62)

Table 2 present a comparison between the phraseology used by Charlie and that used in AA literature

Table 2 allows a comparison between the phraseology used by Charlie and that used in AA literature and common in AA spoken discourse. It reveals the extent of the intertextual allusions displayed in the extracts presented above from lines 58 – 84.mWe notice intertextual allusions are highly pervasive; especially in those episodes in his life where the speaker consciously displays the effect of AA principles on his life. It is done in such a manner that the boundary between these aspects of intertextuality and the voice of the sharer is ill defined. It derives its institutional identity from AA texts. In Foucault’s terms (1974), the subject hardly exists outside of or independently of the discourse but is a function of it. The speaker subsumes his own identity through merging his voice in the discourse of AA.

An interesting example from another meeting of how AA members use AA texts to construct their identity is given below. It is part of the story of a ‘gold card’ drunk.

Meeting – Spirituality
Speaker – Jill – Topic speaker
I had I had been working (.) I lived in (location) in a very small town and I had in a very large house with a lo:t of gardens and stuff
uh (.) not gardens (.) grass that needed to be mowed and I had been out there mowing the lawn on a Saturday morning (.)h
and uh I had to have a beer I had a I just had a nee:d for a beer and I went down to the local store
we were thousand population so there was one store (.)h
and uh (.) I went in and bought my beer (.) I didn't put any make up on I didn't do anything at all (.)h
I just went in those sweaty dirty clothes (.) h
and I am an Elisabeth Arden fan (.) I cou:ldn't mo:ve when I was drinking without (.) you know (.) having the who:le thi:ng altogether (.) I mean I had to have the clo:thes and the fa:ce and the who:le business you know (.)h
I mean if I had a chipped nail I couldn't go (.) you know I mean it was- that was the way I that I was

Inherent in the detailed attention to fashion and appearances is the speaker's presentation of the alcoholic as *perfectionist*. Within the context of AA, perfectionism is seen as a common trait among alcoholics though is not generally viewed as such by outsiders. Such a reading would be inaccessible to someone not sensitive to this aspect of the AA context and may be read as related to Tiebout (1954) and Gregory Bateson's (1985 {1971}) view of alcoholics, discussed in Chapter 4, as suffering from 'grandiosity' and a competitive dualism, resulting in a tendency to 'pit' themselves against the world at large.

the way my drinking did to me I think was to build up that facade because otherwise I didn't have any self worth (.)h

I mean I didn't have any self worth anyway (.) but if I had the facade I could prete:nd (.)h

The speaker reference to the need, 'to build up that facade because otherwise I didn't have any self worth' suggests adopting a competitive stance against the perceptions of the people around her. By presenting herself in this manner she is presenting herself as an alcoholic and thus qualified to participate.

uh anyhow so I went down to the market to get this bee:r (.)h

and the townees were in there and that's the local guys that are drunks (.)h

and they are called townees and they are used to- do work for the town (.)h

and uh (.) there I was and I I couldn't wait for the beer so I opened the beer in front of the townees (.)h

as though I was starting to drink with them (.)h

She presents her behaviour as the type of degrading behaviour associated with an alcoholic living an 'unmanageable' life. Concern with the accuracy of such assertions, and whether she was actually drinking with the 'townees' basically misses the point.

and uh (.) I knew that this was "lower companions" although I didn't hear it until I came into the programme (.)h

and I kne:w there was something very seriously wrong with my drinking (.)

Her allusion to AA drinking with "lower companions"; is a direct reference to AA's '20 Questions' (Anon, no date), enabling her to answer the question, 'Do you turn to lower companions and an inferior environment when drinking?' in the affirmative, thus

confirming her status as an alcoholic. The element of “retrospective interpretation” (Schur, 1971) involved here is facilitated by AA texts allowing her to interpret the event as a mutual experience within an AA meeting and construct and display this experience in terms which spring from AA practices and beliefs and in a way that allows mutual identification between speaker and audience.

8.1.4. Summary of key features of an AA turn

The following features are found in Charles’ turn and are further exemplified in some of the speakers that follow.

- A display of being qualified to speak. This includes:
- an opening frame declaring oneself as alcoholic
- an autobiographic recount of an unmanageable life,
- a expression of complete dependency on AA attributing sobriety to AA or a higher power
- intertextual allusions to AA slogans and literature
- an autobiographic recount of participation in AA practices
- attributing sobriety through participation in these practices
- a symmetrical footing *viv á vis* other AA members
- positive references to previous speakers
- expression of gratitude to AA.

Though these features may not be displayed in every turn, adopting a negative or independent alignment to AA or an asymmetrical footing to other speakers may be considered non-normative and non-affiliative.

8.2 Breaches in normative alignment

In this section, the turn immediately following Charlie’s opening turn is discussed in detail. The turn is not characterised by the features outlined above and is responded to negatively by a number of speakers. It is therefore presented as a non-normative turn, the negative response to which is procedurally relevant.

The speaker, Dave, commences immediately on the completion Charlie's opening turn, opening with the usual 'qualification'.

Meeting topic - Principles before personalities

Dave - 2nd of 15 –

3. and er (..) I'd like to read just a tiny passage from the big book (.) uhh (.) selfishness (.) self centred (.) that we think is the root of our troubles (.) fed by a hundred forms of fear (.) /self delusion (.) /self seeking (.) /self pity (.) we step on the toes of our fellows and we retaliate (.) sometimes seeming without provocation we invariably find that in sometime in the past we find that we have made decisions based on self which then placed us in a position to be hurt (..)

4. and uh (.) I know this applies to me (.) for sure (.) I can bring out the worst in people as well as the best and uh (.) I notice that in my years of associating in AA that personalities do play an important part (.) whether we want to admit it or not (.)

The speaker, by reading directly from a passage in the *Big Book* (p. 62), appears to be aligning his turn directly to AA principles. The act of reading itself, suggests a degree of preparedness usually not afforded at meetings outside an AA convention where topics are more spontaneously generated. He does not however acknowledge the previous speaker, an omission less common in a turn immediately following the opening speaker, as is this one, than later in a meeting where the number of speakers is greater. The claim that he can 'bring out the best in people', is untypical in attributing to himself alone, not his AA transformed self, sole agency in a positive action and is not found in the rest of the data. The expression, 'in my years of associating in AA' is marked in that the term 'associating' indicates less than total affiliation.

7. alcohol is only one of my addictions (.) I mean I /also have other addictions (.) you know (.) you name it and I've got it and uhh (.) when I- (.) I obsess a lot (.) I fantasize a lot

8. and the whole implication here is that I'm also co-dependant¹ and uhh (.) according to Bill W and others er (.) that we are (.) basically among other things very co-dependant /people (.)

¹ The term 'co-dependent' became prevalent after the establishment of Co-dependants Anonymous (CoDA) in 1986. It is a 12-step group modelled on AA but with an ideology different from AA's in that members' difficulties are attributes to external factors - one's relationship with others, whereas AA insists one's difficulties start with oneself (Mäkelä, 1996).

For a speaker to display himself as multi-addicted is not unusual in AA sharing. However, by stating that the 'whole implication' of this is that he is 'co-dependant' involves orienting to a different institutional identity and brings to the meeting the discourse of other support groups. He attempts to sanction this with the erroneous claim that co-dependency was endorsed as an alcoholic trait by Bill W², the founder of AA.

9. one of the things I find is that (.) uh too often we have what you might say- (.) >to draw a controversy< (.) we have very controversial- (.) very conservative type elements in AA (.)

10. and we have the more >\quote unquote< /liberal elements in AA

and at the same time (.) one of the biggest /aspects of AA is /what? (.) *personality before /principles?* \no

11. (.) principles before person/alities

Here the speaker clearly signals the introduction of a controversial stance with the phrase, 'to draw a controversy' and the subsequent characterisation of AA as comprising two groups of people, the conservative and the liberal. Though such characterisations are common in discussions between AA members and in the AA magazine *The Grapevine*, it is less common for them to appear in AA meetings. The rhetorical devise, 'personality before principles? no, principles before personalities', which asserts a version clearly unacceptable to the group in order that it may be refuted is the rhetoric of disputes and persuasion. The speaker continues, placing what he says on a footing which signals an individual viewpoint resulting from his affiliation to other groups. This again is uncommon in the discourse of AA meetings and can be perceived as a deviation from Tradition 1, 'our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity'.

11. and yet I /find often (.) uh because /I (.) for example am associated with other 12 step programmes (.)

12. for example I'm associated with (.) uhh with uhh (.) /coda- >that's Co-dependants Anonymous<

...

² Bill Wilson died in 1978 before the founding of CoDA.

19. and I also belong to alanon³ ... but both /coda and /alanon state that we should co-operate with AA but nowhere do I see that AA should co-operate with coda or alanon

20. [laughter]

The suggestion that AA should 'cooperate' with other groups challenges AA's strongly isolationist Tradition 6 which states, 'an AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise'.

24. /so /quite frankly (.) >I mean I /love AA (.) don't get me wrong< (.) but too much of our drunkalogues⁴ too much of our past experience (.) are not focusing of the issues (.) the immediate issues of our /current life (.) how to deal with it (.) you know (.) how to deal with the emotional part

The expression, 'quite frankly' followed by 'I mean I love AA, don't get me wrong', again places the speaker on an adversarial footing and displays an awareness that his ambivalent attitude to AA might lead to the audience doubting the strength of his affiliation. This is in marked contrast to Charlie's extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) of his own dependency on and affiliation to AA. Dave's ambivalence is further demonstrated in a display of detachment from as opposed to complete dependency on AA as he stands apart and evaluates AA.

28. though (.) I've noticed a pattern in AA that it's getting more spiritual in a sense of dealing with the immediate issues of life (.)

This evaluative, and therefore asymmetrical stance displays a critical degree of distance from AA ideology. The use of 'though' suggests this positive aspect of AA is contrasted with a broader negative assessment. The use of 'I have noticed' frames the evaluative assessment as perceived by and based on personal criteria of the speaker, rather than on communally held norms of the members. The speaker extends the range of his appraising eye to include another AA speaker.

29. and I've noticed it at this meeting too (.) the speaker last night (.) for example (.)

30. so I (.) I see a lot of things happening here (.)

³ Alanon is a 12-step groups modelled on AA. Alanon developed alongside AA, being organised by the wives of the Bill W and Dr Bob, to support the wives of the early male members of AA. Though not 'endorsed' by AA, it has a close relationship with it.

⁴ The term 'drunkalogue' is used of AA stories that dwell at length on drunken escapades rather than 'recovery'.

Though the assessment here is positive, it is not of the same order as positive 'identification' AA members express towards each other normatively as here it is framed within a section of talk where personal appraisal is being made of the 'spirituality' of the speaker ('I've noticed', 'I see') rather than normative AA identification with a previous speaker's 'experience'.

31. I mean (.) I say (.) there's a lot of things I have to adhere to in AA (.) I'm an alcoholic (.) there's (.) that's a baseline for me (.) that's a given (.)

32. but at the same time I feel that I can grow a lot with my other addictions (.) with my other issues (.) by being with other 12 step groups (.)

From a stance of hedged affiliation, the evaluation of AA and some of its members becomes more negative in regards to AA's relationship with other support and 12-groups.

33. and I also feel (.) quite frankly that AA has not co-operated with these other groups (.) it has pretty much (.) in fact been hostile in some cases (.) particularly by you more (.) sort of conservative rigid type people that maybe can drink 20 goddamn years of coffee drinking and not grow (.) and that's their business any rate

The negative appraisal of AA becomes a negative appraisal of a particular type of member who, despite long-standing membership, has not grown spiritually. Expression 'that's their business any rate' is a token alignment to the normative AA footing which focuses solely on the speaker's experience and life, as other 'people, places and things', are beyond those aspects of life which the speakers 'can change'. The delineation of the line between what can be changed and what cannot is a central purpose of AA discourse and the Serenity Prayer, and will be discussed below. In the language of AA, members may 'take their own, not other people's inventory'.

The speaker then proceeds to shift his footing from that of *appraiser of AA* and some of its members to *persuader to change AA* by 'urging' AA members to adopt his personal view of closer association with Alanon and CODA.

38. and (.) and I find (.) quite frankly that what I would urge maybe (.) is some serious thought as to how we can °co-operate with these more° (.)

39. because as I said (.) after I got sober (.) year after year that more stuff starts coming up (.)

40. ...one of my big problems is co-dependency (.) which alanon and coda addresses (.)

The purpose of his discourse is to affect change, not in himself, the aim of AA interaction, but in AA itself. There is an asymmetry of this footing in relation to the audience in that he has come to bestow something, not 'share' his experience as an alcoholic member of AA in recovery. He presents himself as an outsider who has come to 'urge' the meeting and to 'leave' a point of view for the audience to reflect on.

44. so (.) if I I could leave you with any particular point (.) it's the idea that maybe (.) just maybe we have to look at each programme as an individual programme (.)

The use of the strongly reiterated 'maybe' is a device of persuasion designed to indicate the speaker appreciates but has departed from the audience's point of view, as would the audience, if only they gave this view full consideration. It does not reflect real speaker doubt. The device is designed to suggest the audience start on a tentative reflection on the need for change. It positions the speaker as 'reasonable', but in opposition to the audience whom he is coaxing to his point of view. As such, it has an artful quality of feigned empathy, as does the use of one of AA's most popular slogans to justify his position:

45. (.) I think we have to recognise this *live and let live* with these programmes (.) so with that I'd like to (.) uhh (.) throw it open (.) thank you.

The closing challenge to the audience, 'I'd like to throw it open' is clearly the discourse of the discussion forum or debating chamber. This is in marked contrast to normative AA turn closings which display, as discussed in 7.3, dependency on and gratitude to AA (Arminen, 1998b:152).

The fact that the non-normative alignment to AA and AA members displayed by Dave is procedurally relevant is made clear by the following (third) speaker, who immediately after qualifying commences:

Meeting topic - Principles before personalities

Speaker - Norman - 3rd of 15

3. this is the first time I've shared since I've been here (.) but you hit a few buttons there Dave
(.)

4. so I thought I need to say something

5. [laughter]

Norman here signals that his taking a turn is in direct response to Dave's and that he found it provocative ('hit a few buttons'). This aligning of topic directly to the previous speaker is non-normative. Current speakers align to previous speakers' in a manner which affirms their experience, the topic, AA beliefs or other aspects of the AA programme. Commenting negatively or challenging a previous speaker is referred to as 'cross-talk' by the Cosmo-city group and is discouraged. The term 'cross-talk' also applies to interrupting a speaker before they have signalled the completion of the turn, or by engaging in adjacency turns. Arminen (1998b) has illustrated the very strong tendency for members to positively acknowledge early in their turns the prior contributions of previous speakers and sees this as a technique for maintaining solidarity. He also illustrates how speakers reformulate the topic in ways which acknowledge the contributions of former speakers but adjust it to their own needs, showing how members both orient towards communal aspects and to the individuality of personal experience.

Arminen (1996a; 1998b) shows how subsequent turns are designed to exhibit the speaker's analysis, understanding, and various degree of alignment with the previous turn' (1998:179) through what he refers to as *co-contributor references*, (ibid:113). This is displayed pervasively by subsequent speakers acknowledging the topics and sub-topics introduced by prior speakers in a process of joint topic *co-construction*, (Jacoby and Ochs, 1995), (Staske, 1996). Generally AA meetings are described as a context in which members only chose to refer to those aspects of previous speakers to which they align to positively, or that they 'identify with', to use AA terminology. Where there is non-alignment there is silence. Arminen (1998:134) also illustrates that where AA members engage in the controversial issue of discussing drug-related problems in AA meetings, they do so extremely cautiously, and avoid direct personal challenge. He shows that, 'even if there are undercurrents of discontent or

disagreement, AA members maintain a public consensus', (p. 134). We see that Norman's initial alignment to Dave's turn is clearly non-normative in that it involves a direct rebuttal.

6. >number one (.) we're not affiliated with any other groups< (.) we're AA as a whole(.)

By starting to number his points, Norman is clearly signalling he is engaging in a process of systematic refutation of the previous speaker on a number of points. However, he contents himself to reiterate AA's non-aligned position *viv á vis* other groups as stated in *The Preamble* and Tradition 6.

I'm a grateful member of alanon (.) and I'm a grateful member of co-dependency

This claim to membership of Alanon and CoDA are clearly designed to indicate his shared experience with Dave. However, it is not the alignment to a previous speaker typical of AA meetings as he continues by distancing himself from Dave's position by displaying the fundamental and over-riding importance of his identity as an *alcoholic*.

but if I take a drink you can forget about co-dependency and you can forget about alanon and forget about coda (.) because I am an alcoholic you can forget about /jobs (.) you can forget about /marriage (.) you can forget everything that we're (unclear) (.)

All aspects of his life are displayed as totally *dependent* on his not taking the first drink, i.e. that he is powerless over alcohol, (Step 1). This appears to be designed to contrast with Dave's equivocation and hedged affiliation. Norman presents his affiliation with AA as of being of a different order to his affiliation with other groups. The stance is one of total and unequivocal dependency, normative in AA sharing but absent in Dave's.

Further, we notice Norman positions himself on a first person footing, ('if I take a drink', 'I am an alcoholic'), with the marked individuality of first person subsumed into an inclusive, generalised 'you can forget about...' reiterated five times.

7. this is my programme and we're not affiliated with any other programme (.) we don't have to support anybody (.) nobody supports us (.)

8. I love alcoholics anonymous and I don't care (.) if alanon is there it's beautiful for people that have it (.) I love it myself

9. but I don't take a drink one day at a time with alcoholics anonymous and I'm not-(...)

Though signalling at the start of his turn his intent to rebut Dave in what is clearly non-normative 'cross-talk', Norman reverts to AA norms by confining his subsequent sharing to his own experience and affiliation to AA and avoids further explicit reference to Dave or his arguments. In this manner, Norman can assert his own affiliation to and dependency upon AA in a manner which contrasts critically with Dave's but nevertheless avoids further overt 'cross talk', having established a comparative frame by referring to his and Dave's membership of Alanon and CoDA. Norman's affiliation with AA is such that he claims total ownership of it. The statement 'this is my programme', indicates much closer affiliation than Dave's phrase 'in my years of associating in AA'. Norman's assertion of the life and death nature of alcoholism is designed to contrast with Dave's less life-threatening concerns.

Though Dave's initial response to Norman was explicit and negative, the grounds for this remained implicit as he did not explicitly challenge the nature of Norman's affiliation, therefore his qualification as an AA member. He simply displayed his own affiliation in a manner which suggested a contrast with Dave's . Finally, Norman moves to present his display of negative position as consistent with AA honesty and closes on a conciliatory footing.

10. this programme has taught me to say w what I feel (.) Dave is one of my best friends and I love him very dearly (.) I just don't agree with him

11. [prolonged laughter turning to clapping and cheering]

The audience response of clapping and cheering is the strongest audience response to any turn found in the data used in this study. Cheering was not observed or recorded on any other occasion. The cheering appears to be a total endorsement of Norman's turn which in many ways appears not to be normative, especially in that it did not display a positive alignment to the previous speaker. This suggests that a positive alignment to other speakers is dependent on those speakers properly ratifying their right to talk by displaying their powerlessness over alcohol and their dependency on the AA programme. Dave failed to do this so a negative response to his turn is not subject to sanctions but is enthusiastically endorsed, primarily because it is a rebuttal of Dave who had displayed a non-dependency alignment to AA and an asymmetrical alignment to his audience through the ambivalence of his affiliation to AA. Norman initially aligns himself directly against Dave, but moves towards a display

of total dependency on AA. This involves disengagement from and finally conciliation but not alignment with Dave. By so doing he attempts to reconstitute normative AA interaction.

It may be worth noting that this data, derived as it is from an AA convention and not the site of my ethnographic immersion, may not be totally typical of the meetings I observed in Cosmo-city. An AA Convention is a special occasion and is attended by members from other 12-step programmes and by AA members whose strongest affiliation may be to other 12-step programmes. This seems to be the case with Dave. However, the presence of non-expert exponents of AA discourse in the meetings perhaps results in a higher incidence of discursal breeches. For the ethnomethodological researcher, this may be fortuitous as the reaction of members to breeches gives an insight to what they consider normative.

The speaker who takes his turn immediately following Norman displays the minimal AA turn.

Meeting topic - Principles before personalities

Speaker - Min – 4th of 15

Min My name is Min (.) I'm an alcoholic

Aud: Hi Min

Min: I'm in (name of location) now and thank you for teaching me how to love (.) how to solidate (.) have an open mind and have an open-heart thank you very much

Aud: thank you

Totally ignoring conflicting issues and the responses displayed by the second and third speakers, Min contents himself by simply 'qualifying' as an alcoholic and expressing gratitude to all present. As is usually the case with the use of 'you' in such cases, the audience is not addressed as individuals, most of whom would be unknown - this being a convention not a group meeting - but as representatives of AA. He thus identifies the members present with the AA programme, in a similar manner to the metaphorical identification of the word 'room' with the AA fellowship and programme discussed in Chapter 7.

Whether there is any interactive element in this turn is extremely difficult to disambiguate and it illustrates a key feature of interaction in AA meetings. We noticed

in the previous turn that Norman's initial negative and explicit response to Dave's turn was moderated as he adopted the more exclusively autobiographical footing. Without the initial rebuttal, it would not be clear that the rest of his turn was constructed to contrast his affiliation to AA to Dave's. Similarly here, it is difficult to determine whether Min's turn, with its avoidance of controversy and display of gratitude to AA members is designed to contrast with the preceding turns and therefore act as an exemplum of AA discourse. Arminen (1998b) notes that typically positive references are stated directly and addressed explicitly, whereas negative responses are stated implicitly and without direct address. He states that:

through this procedure, members establish their individual position in each meeting without posing challenges to other members. The allusions occasions (sic) initiation of a subsequent topic of the turn that characteristically is biographically relevant for the speaker. This procedure of organisation of talk permits AA meetings to handle delicate issues in a sociable, nonconfrontive way. (p. 88)

However, as is so often the case when a speaker need not align himself to a previous turn, there is a lack of explicitness. It is a feature of AA discourse that this is designed to be ambiguous. There is no institutionalised 'final say'. It is ultimately left for the audience to disambiguate what is said in an 'if the hat fits' manner.

A similar occurrence is found in another meeting at the same conference. The topic is *Sex and Sobriety* and the speaker, Don, is the third of ten speakers. His turn has been characterised by some explicit sharing about his early sexual behaviour.

Meeting – Sex and sobriety

Speaker – Don – 3 of 10

I had many women when I was drinking (.) you know and I even got arrested in a main park in a big city (.) you know (.)

me and her were having sex- I think she was giving me oral sex (.) and there's buses and all the children were around this park and I got arrested and I couldn't remember it (.) and I woke up the next morning and the charge was outrageous indecency (.) and believe you me (.) the woman (.) if you'd seen her- (.) only a mother could love her (.) if you know what I mean

Aud: [laughter]

aah (.) it was awful (.) it was in the papers /sex in the small park (.) I thought /oh (.) my sister will see this (.) the mother of my son shall see this' ahhh (.) how humiliated I was (.) you know (.)

and as I said like booze took me to the gutter and I came in to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous (.)

...

This account, though dramatic, lacks the characteristic features associated with 'hitting bottom' usually displayed when members relate the events which precede their first AA meeting. Though the sharing has a self-revelatory, autobiographical, first person footing, there is little sense of 'ego-deflation' and surrender to the AA programme that signals to other members the speaker has had the experience of taking Step 1. One of the main problems of his alcoholic behaviour is presented as a lack of proper discrimination in his choice of women. The experience was presented as extremely shameful and degrading, not however, in itself but in the eyes of his sister and the mother of his son. It is not couched in terms that it was life changing, ego-destroying.

today I say like /I'm a /no woman (.) /no cry (.) \man (.) you know (.) I love women (.) but the trouble is (.) I love every woman (.) you know (.)

that's why I'm single and I'm not married and I've no intention (.) like sharing (.)

Though the speaker testifies that his behaviour has changed, this is not attributed to the abandonment of his own will, his dependence on AA or a higher power. He presents himself as 'a no-woman, no-cry man'. This behavioural change is presented as attributable to his decision made to avoid personal pain. His 'ego' and his personal power is displayed as still intact, not broken. He continues:

there's a nun back in London (.) like a Catholic nun who really wants (.) ah (.) to get to know me (.) she wants to come out of the order (.) and it'd be good for my ego to have a virgin catholic nun (.) but you know (.) I would suffer for guilt (.)

...

I know myself that it can't be (.)

see this is an honest programme and I can't go out (.) and meet this nice girl and go out with her and say umm (.)

/what should we do tomorrow or the next \day because I live by 24 hours and I do not trust my infidelity (.) and I don't want to hurt any women's feelings (.)

so I stay away from my drink one day at a time and my women one night at a time (.)

thanks very much (clapping)

'I know myself that it can not be'. This statement depicts him as a man who has used his own knowledge and resources to change his behaviour. It is not an AA story in the usual sense, as it does not exemplify the effect of the 12-steps and a power greater than oneself in one's life. Thus the rhetoric of gratitude to AA, to its principles and beliefs - none of which are embedded in the narrative - is absent. However, the focus on compulsive sexual behaviour is sanctioned by the topic; topic relevance being widely interpreted in AA meetings, though its treatment is more explicitly revealed than is usual in AA meetings, the principle being, 'we reveal *in a general way*, what we used to be like', (Anon, 1985:65 {1939}) (my italics).

However, the three speakers who follow make no allusion to Don's turn. In closely ordered conversational interaction, a response displays an understanding of the prior utterance, and is a resource whereby a hearer can monitor a speaker's apparent understanding of the question (Button, 1992). A lack of response would be subject to sanctions. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) point out that both mundane conversation and institutional interaction are characterised by the use of adjacency pairs which set up trajectories in subsequent talk. Sacks (1992 (1964-72)) and Schegloff and Sacks (1974) demonstrate that some sequences in talk form an interconnected pair of utterances which share the particular characteristics that the non-initial utterance has been occasioned by subsequent activity: an answer is preceded by a question, an acceptance by an invitation. In most forms of institutional interaction, incumbents are frequently apportioned the role of either making an utterance which occasions an adjacent response, or being the respondent.

The avoidance of adjacency pairs and the use of extended turns in AA discourse equip the participants with the option of selecting the topics to which they may wish to respond, giving them greater interactional autonomy. The practice does however create methodological problems for the researcher. Adjacency responses allow the current speaker to display his/her understanding of previous utterances. Without this display, the researcher is deprived of an important interpretive device to

disambiguate certain utterances. Nonetheless, this feature specifically promotes ambiguity which is both constitutive of and a display of the institutional character of AA and relates to its institutional aims by reducing the implicative, directive role of speaker and enhancing the inferential role of the listener, giving the listener greater autonomy. The following extract illustrates this.

The seventh speaker of the meeting containing Don's turn is a woman Liz. When referring to her own abusive relationships she reveals:

Meeting – Sex and sobriety

Speaker – Liz – 7 of 10

these are some of the issues I had to deal with when I came into sobriety (.)

was looking at sex (.) sexuality (.)

how I had used and abused men and how in turn I had also been victimised (.) (.) you know (.)

that's part of the game when I was running about drinking (.) was uhh (.) I could get you, I could manipulate you (.) I could get what I wanted from you and uhh (.)

you know (.) we could play that dance (.) and I see that here and I hear that in reflection in men's voices saying (.) uhh (.) you know it's a big ego trip to be wanted and desired and all these women want and desire them and they get this attention (.)

and I think (.) you know when I was out there drinking and drugging (.) you know (.) I'd let you know where you were at and if you were a fat (.) pig alcoholic (.) you know I'd tell you that

[laughter]

The reference, 'and I see that here and I hear that in reflection in men's voices ... you know it's a big ego trip to be wanted and desired,' though non-specific is capable of being interpreted as a reference to Don's much earlier turn. However, such frankness is presented as to be avoided by an AA member in recovery, being a feature of her previous life, 'when I was out there drinking and drugging... if you were a fat pig alcoholic, you know I'd tell you that'. The use of 'if you were' functions as making the situation hypothetical, further giving the impression that the speaker is avoiding any possibility of making a direct imputation about anyone present. Thus, typically, the speaker uses discursive practices which are *implicatively vague* and thus allow the audience *inferential autonomy*; i.e. it is left up to individual members of the audience

to decide the relevance of the remarks as to what has gone before. Through this practice, even in the face of what may be seen as seriously offensive remarks, an AA member will tend to avoid displaying an intention of prevailing upon the audience to come to the speaker's point of view, leaving the listeners to disambiguate the remarks for themselves.

The data presented are intended to further exemplify the discursal avoidance of negative evaluation and a footing indicating an attempt to direct the audience; a footing adopted by Dave throughout his turn and by Norman in his opening.

To illustrate the preference for disengagement over criticism discussed in the previous chapter it is worth looking at a short piece of the transcript of a meeting which was taking place simultaneously with this meeting at the AA convention. John has just introduced himself and qualified as an alcoholic.

Meeting – Step 4 and 5

Speaker – John – 6th of 8 speakers

I just (.) uhh (.) left a meeting next door and it's the first time in a long (.) long time that I've walked out on a meeting

and it's funny because the paradox is that the meeting is 'principles before personalities' and I've never been in a meeting in a long time and heard so much cussing (.)

Unlike Norman, who challenged Dave, John simply withdraws from the meeting as another meeting is available. This behaviour is presented as untypical but necessary.

and I heard uhh (.) other twelve steps programme's discussed and you know I belong to alcoholic anonymous

...

I don't belong to any other organisations because if I practice the principles and I practice the programme and I take the steps ... to the best of my ability (.) then the book of alcoholics anonymous and the programme of alcoholics anonymous and the fellowship of alcoholics anonymous provides me with everything I need (.) t

The AA programme is presented as central and sufficient in his life. The rhetoric of gratitude and personal dependency on AA are again displayed. The differing responses of both Norman and John illustrate the mechanisms whereby AA

members display their total affiliation exclusively to AA, the principle of non-endorsement and the commitment to AA's primary purpose.

To return to the meeting that is central in this discussion, the fifth turn, by Jim, proceeds thus:

Meeting topic - Principles before personalities

Speaker - Jim 5th of 15

Jim: I'm Jim I'm an alcoholic

Aud: Hi Jim

Chair: could you stand up when you speak?

Jim: no

Chair: okay (.) don't stand up (.) what the hell!

[laughter]

Jim's overt defiance of the chair and the procedures for the meeting is again highly non-normative. However, it is accepted by the chair and audience with laughter. As with Norm's negative response to Dave's turn and the uncharacteristic cheering which followed Norm's turn, it appears to be viewed as an acceptable display of non-normative behaviour perhaps provoked by Dave's turn. The other participants do not allude or respond to it in subsequent turns. It is, however, interesting and worth including in the discussion as it illustrates what types of breach are subject to sanctions in an AA meeting and what are not. Whereas the adoption of a non-aligned position towards AA or an asymmetrical footing towards other speakers may be regarded as breaches of the rules which constitute AA interaction, i.e. an ethnomethodological rule, and therefore subvert the very understandings which underpin meetings, this breach of a procedural rule is cheerfully tolerated.

Jim:

7. no (.) these principles (.) they're a guide to progress (.) so (.) when I came to this programme um (.) you know (.) I didn't wake up with an education (.) a /job (.) a /family (.) a /driver's license (.) /freedom (.) /anything (.) you know (.) I was /fucked

8. (.)I didn't know what the hell was going on (.) you know

Despite his defiant opening, Jim quickly aligns his turn to AA discourse, framing it with the intertextual allusion to, 'these principles are a guide to progress' the clause immediately preceding the meeting topic, 'ever reminding us to place *principles before personalities*' (Tradition 12). Having thus framed his turn within AA discourse, he proceeds to qualify, by presenting his life as unmanageable: 'I was fucked', (Step 1). His education, job, family, driver's license and freedom, which he did not 'wake up with', he implicitly attributes to AA.

8. but the judge told me to go to AA two nights er a week and in my hometown at that time we were all in trouble and uh (.) the hand that AA reached out to me (.) in the form of a plucky little Russian guy that emigrated up from Southern California with his Southern California twist on AA (.) wo:w

Like Charlie, who attributes his first contact with AA to a councillor, Jim attributes his to a decision of the court. Neither attributes it to any decision or determination of their own. Jim's metaphor, 'the hand that AA reached out to me' is typical and captures the notion of AA bestowing friendship and support unasked and unconditionally, reminding one of the metaphor of 'the gift' used previously by Charles.

8.3 Establishing topical coherence

Jim continues by describing the role of his sponsor, the 'plucky little Russian guy'.

17. but he kept tahking me to ahhh these /meetings and huh (.)

18. but it just it came to me years later that even during that I was being taught principles before personality because even though I didn't like him (.)

19. I I didn't agree with anything he said (.) I didn't even like the way he looked (.)

20. you know it's crazy (.) but I ended up doing- (.) learning the principles of the 12 steps from that man and er (.) even though he was weird (.) you know (.)

21 but now (.) today I love him dearly (.) I can see now he's saving my life (.)

The parallels with Charlie's turn are clear. Sobriety and life itself is attributed by both speakers to submission to AA's principles, in this case represented by his AA sponsor. The alignment of personal submission is manifest in both speakers who present themselves as resistant to AA and as inherently at odds with saner council. By attributing their recovery to agents outside themselves, they both deny their own

egos any role in their present well-being. Jim represents himself as being involved in a process of which he was not even aware at the time, 'but it just it came to me years later that even during that I was being taught principles before personality'. The effect of the discourse is to reconstruct and diminish the role of their own ego, will and consciousness as active agents in their lives.

Jim has at this point aligned his turn with the topic of the meeting. Charlie, the opening speaker, failed to do this and simply told his own AA story. Dave used his turn to promote his own vision for AA, and Norman used his turn primarily to display his own affiliation to AA in a manner which contrasted with Norman's. Jim's account of his relationship with his sponsor is typical of an AA narrative exemplum in that it is a story based on personal experience which illustrates the principles of AA. In it, Jim depicts himself as a rather witless actor whose life is determined by others, first the judge and then his sponsor. He appears to have no agency in or real awareness of what was happening in his life, neither did he particularly like what was happening to him. But he did go to AA meetings and he did rely on his sponsor; that is he presents himself as *following the principles of AA* despite his *antipathy for the personalities* involved. Thus, topical cohesion has been established, not primarily through creating cohesive links with previous speakers, but through aligning his narrative to AA principles. Thus it would appear that the AA meta-narrative, as an exemplum of the working of the Steps of AA is 'an omnirelevant device'. His story is an exemplum of the topic 'principles before personalities' and is aligned with AA principles and beliefs as well as the topic of the meeting.

Topical cohesion, Arminen (1998) claims, is achieved through the turn opening where members display that their talk has been touched of by a previous speaker. This may be the case where the previous speaker's own contribution is aligned with AA principles and beliefs. Where it is not, as with the case with Dave's turn, there is no attempt by subsequent speakers to cohere with it or co-construct their turn around it. Arminen, (1998) asked the question whether AA members use the AA programme as 'an omnirelevant device' in their interaction. By this he appears to ask whether the AA programme is a highly recursive feature of the discourse which pervades AA turn taking in the same manner that references to earlier turns of talk do. He concludes that references to the AA programme seem to rank secondary to references to members talk; the AA programme has the same 'value' as any other possible topic of

talk, and has to be made relevant via a reference to the ongoing interaction (Arminen, 1998:138). He concludes that 'the salience of co-contributor reference arises from the fact that they are not only a technique for the management of topics in monological talk but also a vehicle for displaying and dealing with interpersonal relationships at meetings', (Arminen, 1998:138-9). Through co-contribution 'an individual speaker displays that he/she has had exactly the same experience or feeling as the prior speaker'.

It is hard to concur with such a conclusion in view of the data presented above. References to AA practices, the 12-steps, sponsorship and trust in a higher power pervade the discourse of Charlie, Dave, Norman and Jim. We have also noted the density of intertextual echoes of AA literature, slogans and sayings. However, AA beliefs do more than pattern the surface allusions of the discourse. Members tend to construct their personal narrative based on an archetypical AA conversion story, depicting themselves as so powerless over their unmanageable lives that they had to surrender to AA practices and beliefs before they could be restored to sanity. This is the story of the 12-steps in their lives. Thus the AA programme and AA texts act as more than a discursual device for the management of topics in extended turns and a means of displaying solidarity between members. They are embedded in the very narrative structure of the stories which reshape members' personal existential identities as alcoholics within AA. Thus, when a member like Dave fails to construct his identity as dependent upon and refashioned by AA, indeed who displays a desire to refashion AA itself, there is no attempt by others to develop his contribution. Though Norman does allude to both his and Dave's membership of Alanon and CODA, it is not done to heighten a sense of shared experience but to contrast Norman's less than total affiliation to AA with his own and to implicitly question its soundness.

Reference to other speakers is done primarily to co-construct a member's personal narrative. Through the device of the narrative, AA members construct their personal stories as exempla of how AA principles and practices, especially the 12-steps, manifest themselves in their lives.

8.4 Turn taking

The feature whereby personal stories exemplifying the necessity and efficacy of the 12-steps are constructed to conform to a prototypical AA story enables AA members to constitute themselves as possessing a shared identity. The construction of this shared identity has a constitutive effect on the distinctive and normative types of turn taking in AA, which in turn constitute the pervasive footing required to sustain this shared identity. In this manner, AA discourse accomplishes a degree of non-emulative symmetry between participants which also challenges the 'false epistemology' of the alcoholic (Bateson, 1985 {1971}).

The extended form of turn taking pre-empts any mechanism of control of the contribution through interruption or evaluative feedback, both indicators of hidden power differential between participants. Fairclough (1989:46) has demonstrated that 'power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants'. Respecting participants' rights to uninterrupted monologues precludes the exercise of this power.

The taking of extended turns is conducted in a manner which displays the distinctive institutional and ideological character of AA and this is done recurrently and pervasively. Like other forms of institutional interaction, the nature of the turn taking can be contrasted with those of mundane conversation and other forms of institutional interaction. It can be seen that AA turn taking suppresses utterances which are designed to elicit responses from others. It is through this context sensitive deployment of turn taking devoid of adjacency responses, i.e., through the deployment of specific interactional practices, that a sequence of talk reveals its 'institutional' character. By avoiding utterances that require an adjacency or near adjacency response the participants are displaying their orientation to the institutional character of AA. Participants forego the right to fashion a specific response from co-participants. It is a recursive and pervasive instantiation of how AA sharing in meetings minimises interactional impositions of the actions of others. These constraints on interaction limit what participants say in their turns to their own experiences. By not eliciting responses from other participants, the turn taking system imposes specific constraints on speakers. It is a mechanism which both enables close attention to personal experience and it imposes constraints on the participants' ability to set up discursal trajectories which in turn predetermine and

thus constrain subsequent turns. It both enables participants to focus on reconstructing their own stories and frees them from the need to answer to others.

Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) characterise most institutional interactions as 'systematically asymmetrical', when set against an idealised mundane conversation between equals. This has been illustrated in many settings. In teaching, the teacher's third evaluative turn has been shown to belong to the sequence structure of instruction (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Drew and Heritage (1992) point out that such an evaluative third turn would be bizarre in ordinary conversational being a feature of instruction. In courtrooms it has been demonstrated that asymmetrical roles determine the nature of turn taking; council properly ask the question and witnesses respond, (Atkinson and Drew, 1979). In classrooms the respective roles are allotted to teachers and pupils, (McHoul, 1978), (Mehan, 1979), (Mehan, 1985); in news interviews to interviewer and interviewee, (Greatbatch, 1988), (Greatbatch, 1992), (Clayman, 1988), (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993). It has been amply demonstrated that there are institutional and role-based constraints on the production of turns within these settings. Turn-taking procedures are associated with the management of a number of the tasks central to the institutional goals.

However, Linell and Luckman, (1991) warn against the oversimplification in dichotomising mundane and institutional interaction as respectively symmetrical and asymmetrical. They observe, 'if there were no asymmetries between people ... there would be little or no need for most kinds of interaction' (p. 4). Conversation exists largely because of communicatively relevant inequalities of knowledge. There are several dimensions to the asymmetries embodied in ordinary conversation. There are asymmetries between those who initiate adjacency pairs and those who respond; between those who are more active in introducing and shaping topics and those who do not; between those whose intervention in a conversation are decisive and those whose are less so. On a moment-to-moment basis, all social interaction must inevitably be asymmetrical to some extent. In mundane conversation, the asking of a question occurs where there is asymmetry of knowledge between the participants. This is indicated by the *Oh response*, used to display one participant has receive news or new information, (Schiffrin, 1978). It is a 'change of state' token (Heritage, 1985) which may be contrasted with 'that's right' which avoids such an implication. Adjacency pairs serve the purpose of rectifying inequalities of information through

obtaining information, advice and the like. They constitute roles which are marked by asymmetries, even socially trivial ones.

Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that the management of institutional tasks and roles result in the characteristic differences between mundane conversation and any form of institutional interaction. These differences involve specific *reductions* in the range of discursal options displayed and also involve *specialisations* and *respecialisations* of the remaining interactional functions, stamping a specific institutional interaction in its entirety with a distinctive 'fingerprint', differentiating it from mundane conversation and other forms of specialised interaction. Participants constitute their role through the manner in which they adhere to the turn-taking procedures (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993) and turn taking is the instrument through which the activity is accomplished on any given occasion (Heritage, 1984), be it mundane or institutional.

The extended turn taking characteristic of interaction in an AA meeting precludes adjacency pairing - the heart of most oral interactive communication and institutional interaction. The use of the extended turn and the resulting preclusion of adjacency pairs is a function of the institutional aims of AA interaction. These aims involve the display, reconstruction and co-construction of personal identities around and within the prototypical AA narrative. The aim of the turn is to furnish participants with similar and equal institutional identities. This symmetry and commonality of this identity may only be displayed and constituted if the same set of discursal practices and constraints applies to all participants.

We have seen earlier how Dave's turn failed to display the normative affiliation to AA characterised by dependency and gratitude. We also noted how he oriented towards the audience in a manner which displayed intent to refashion their views and their alignment to AA itself. This non-affiliative, asymmetrical footing resulted in a direct rebuttal from Norman. It was in effect an adjacency response elicited by Dave's challenge to controversy, though Norman attempted to re-establish symmetry by then confining his sharing to his own experience.

Drew and Heritage (1992) point out the goals pursued by professionals and lay participants in institutional interaction are virtually invariably different; the formers' being shaped by organisational and professional constraints and accountabilities understood only vaguely, if at all, by the latter. Ten Have (1993: 140) has pointed out

how within doctor-patient interaction the nature of the topic itself introduces asymmetries of role. It is the patient's not the doctor's health which is under review. Within an AA meeting however the topics pre-empt this type of orientation. All participants are 'patients' in that all declare themselves to be alcoholics and discuss their 'disease'. There is no task distribution, thus precluding the discoursal tasks of case investigation, diagnosis or prescription which 'naturally' involve doctor/councillor dominance.

AA discoursal practices tend to preclude role differentiation. We have seen in Chapter 7 how AA members effectively strip themselves of societal, professional and familial identities when they enter the meeting frame. They do so in order to enable symmetry in interaction. Therefore, unlike the turn taking procedures in other institutional settings, such as news interviews, classrooms or courts, the constraints of specialisation and reduction are not imposed by the differing institutional identities of the participants. Rather they are to enable them to display similar and therefore symmetrically aligned identities.

However, we have seen that discoursal practice in AA do involve a *specialised* form of story telling whereby participants co-construct their individual story to conform to a communal AA story. We have also seen that participants *reduce* the use of certain discoursal practices which demonstrate a footing that suggests negative evaluation of others and access to specific knowledge or opinions not commonly shared, except that which is both unique to themselves and possessed by all - their particular personal experience. Thus the manner in which turn taking is suspended (Arminen, 1998) facilitates the achievement of an unusually high level of inter-member symmetry, achieved largely through the suppression of societal, professional and familial identities, as well as certain discoursal practices. In so far as all participants adhere in similar manner to identical discoursal roles and avail of a range of identical discoursal practices they constitute their role in similar ways therefore constituting identical institutional identities.

8.5 The transmission of AA beliefs and practices

The question then remains of how AA beliefs and practices are transmitted in a discoursal environment which disallows displays of expertise or authority. The extract below presents a transcript of sharing at an open meeting at an AA conference in

Cosmo city. As the speaker has been asked to speak at an open AA conference, he is assumed to be a skilled exponent of AA discourse. The topic is Step Four, *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves*.

Meeting – Step 4

Speaker – Topic speaker

step four for me was a very painful process (.)

because it it demanded of me a er fearless and very vigorous self-examination process (.)

and er I really wasn't ready to do that (.)

at least I didn't think I was (.)

so I tried to take the easier softer way (.)

Though this is an exposition of AA principles and practices, it is presented as a narrative based on the speaker's personal experience. Pollner and Stein, (1996:204) describes how experienced members provide 'narrative maps' to neophytes, pre-presenting for them the dimensions and denizens of the new social world. He also notes how the 'voice of the expert' appeals to training in professional methods and knowledge to establish its pronouncements but the 'voice of experience' appeals to 'having been around' or 'through' the activity, (p. 207).

The text displays a density of intertextual allusions to AA literature, particularly that dealing with the steps. The word *fearless* and the phrase *take the easier softer way* come directly from the *Big Book*. His reluctance to work the steps echoes the phrase *at some of these we balked*. As with earlier speakers, a lack of awareness of the required process is displayed in the phrase *at least I didn't think I was*.

I wasn't going to write it down I was going to tape it (.)

you see I thought that if I (cough)_ could tape it that perhaps it would not sound so bad or look so bad or whatever (.)

Though this is a display of the voice of experience, it is not a prescriptive voice. It is at this point the speaker introduces voice of the recalcitrant novice who wants to *tape* rather than *write* his 'moral inventory' - a practice at variance with usual AA practice. This voice is represented through a constructed dialogue between himself as novice and the voice of AA experience:

one of the things I lacked when I first tried the fourth step was any sense of balance at all (.)

and I didn't clearly understand the meaning of the word 'moral' in 'moral inventory' (.)

and I thought of all these funny places I had woken up in with funny people and I thought (.)

gosh you know I am a pretty immoral person and I am never going to be able to do this (.)

Through the device of constructing a recalcitrant voice of inexperience, which is of course his own, the speaker creates a dialogue between the novice and the experienced AA member. Tannen (1989:105) has noted how the narrative device of casting thoughts and speech in dialogue allow universals to be represented through the particular. It is the particular that moves the listener by establishing and building on a sense of identification between the speaker and listener. 'The accurate representation of the particular communicates universality, whereas direct attempts to represent universality often communicate nothing'.

By presenting the fears and doubts of the novice as beings his own fears and doubts he avoids imputing them to anyone present. The speaker thus displays his reluctance to make assumptions about, evaluate or direct the audience. This device also allows the speaker to disclaim any authority or expertise for himself. Authority is invested in the sponsor and in AA tapes, which point to the necessity of doing the 12 Steps:

and I began to understand with the help of my sponsor (cough) that the morality of all this (.)

wasn't wasn't the main the main thrust of this step (.)

that in looking at the moral implications of my own life it was really a question of balancing the good and the bad (.)

the things that were deeply disturbing me the things I still felt guilty about the things I felt ashamed about and the things I felt dirty about (.)

and there are a lot of those things (.) a lot of those things (.)

so I also heard on a Father Martin tape um you know (cough) that you can get sober on one step and you might stay on two steps but if you really really want quality sobriety you have to go for all twelve (.)

and I think that that was the motivation that I needed to sit down after looking at myself very closely um and do step four (.)

As we have noticed with previous speakers, all that is learned about recovery in AA is imputed to the programme or other people. Members contribute to their own sobriety by accepting what is presented in AA texts and by other members, not through any initiative, quality or insight of their own.

I was very fortunate because AA had been there before me um every one in these rooms had been there before me (.)

and some wonderful people had also published one of these books 'the forth step guide' (cough) which I used (.)

and I wrote it all down

And I wrote it all down, represents the triumph of the programme over the constructed voice of the speaker as recalcitrant. The account is presented as an exemplum of how, after initial resistance, a new member of AA developed a complementary dependency relationship with AA principles and beliefs and incorporated them into his own behaviour, submitting his will to AA practices. We see therefore that it is yet another display of submission to AA principles and beliefs and curtailment of personal will.

The discursive device of creating a dialogue between the speaker as a recalcitrant or novice and the speaker as a more expert exponent allows the ideology and practices of the programme to be transmitted without imputing recalcitrance or naiveté to the listeners. These features indicate a particular nature of the relationship between speaker and audience in AA turn taking. Neither makes any claim to determine or control the discursive practices or behaviour of the other; listeners are permitted inferential autonomy. The discursual elements in the sharing and the ideology and practices of the programme are seen to constitute and to exemplify each other.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the sharing episode within an AA meeting. An attempt has been made to demonstrate that the non-hierarchical, egalitarian nature of AA is reflected in and constituted through the symmetrical way interaction is managed. Members create this symmetry though aligning their biographies to an AA meta-narrative thus constituting for themselves shared identities characterised by a dependency on AA and the relevance of the Twelve Steps in their lives. It was

demonstrated that the same institutional discorsal constraints were imposed on all members thus equipping them with identical institutional identities and roles. This is highly unusual in institutional interaction where participants are equipped with differing range of discorsal practices depending on the different nature of their roles, constituting asymmetrical institutional interaction reflecting the asymmetrical nature of these roles.

Within their turns, members characteristically align positively to the contribution of others and disavow any personal authorial role in their discourse, attributing the source of what is said to the beliefs, principals and practices of AA. By displaying symmetry among themselves and minimising their role as agents of their own destiny, alcoholics adopt an atypical stance, helping to rectify their over-assertive ego and non-acceptance of 'people places and things', discussed in Chapter 4 (Bateson, 1985 {1971}).

Data were presented which illustrated how these normative alignments were both displayed and breached by particular members in the course of meetings, thus demonstrating their normative nature.

Chapter 9 - Conclusions

9.1.1. *Research questions*

This study has involved participant observation of AA meetings, including a study of AA literature and practices and an analysis of the institutional discourse of AA meetings.

In chapter 1.2.3 it was asked what are the discorsal features which characterise the meeting frame and the central interactive sharing episode. Chapters 7 and 8 have attempted to demonstrate how AA meetings are composed of two distinct systems of discorsal practices involving a 2-part framing episode and an interactive sharing episode. Chapter 7 explored the *meeting frame* comprising two parts which open and conclude the meeting. These have been seen to be a sequence of formal, largely invariable, quasi-religious readings, prayers and rituals framing the central interactive episode involving 'sharing' turns.

Chapter 8 explored the sharing episode. It is claimed that the symmetry reflected in the non-hierarchical, egalitarian nature of AA is largely constituted through the way interaction is managed. This symmetry involves members engaging in biographically relevant discourse which pervasively is positively aligned to the contribution of others. Furthermore, they adopt a footing which suggests dependency on AA beliefs, principles and practices. The institutional constraints on discorsal practice typically and pervasively involve the participants adopting a footing which disavows any personal authorial role or ownership of their own discourse but attributes the source of what is said to the beliefs, principals and practices of AA derived from AA texts or transmitted by AA members; the validity of which is attributed to the members' sobriety. Through discorsal practices which eliminate or reduce speakers as agents of their own destiny, AA members are equipped with the discorsal resources to rectify the alcoholics' over-assertive ego and erroneous, and markedly dualistic epistemology, discussed in Chapter 4. This depicts the alcoholic as in conflict with himself, others and the world (Bateson, 1985 {1971}).

The study has endeavoured to demonstrate that throughout both episodes, members' adhered closely to two separate but rule-governed systems of discorsal interaction. It went on to demonstrate that the discorsal practices of an AA meeting allow

members to accomplish both a *complementary* relationship with AA and a *symmetrical* relationship between themselves.

9.1.2. *The complementarity of the alcoholic's dependency on AA*

The meeting frame is marked by attentive readings from AA literature and the reading of the Serenity Prayer. Within the sharing episode, members tend to adopt a discursal stance toward AA principles and beliefs which displays their relationship as complementary; the AA member adopting a position of dependency on AA. This has been demonstrated in the data through a range of discursal practices. We have seen that these involve constructing their personal narratives in conformity to an AA meta-narrative exemplifying the necessity and efficacy of the Twelve Steps in their lives and the making of statements which declare their dependency on AA. This may also be manifest in extreme case formulations of personal gratitude and indebtedness to AA, regularly given metaphorical expression through representing AA as a 'gift' and as 'a hand reaching out'.

As well as adopting a footing of dependency on AA, members also minimise the role of personal agency and ego in their lives through the attribution to self of the origin of their alcoholism and its attendant problems. This is accompanied by the attribution of sobriety and 'recovery' to involvement in AA. This is frequently accompanied by recounting the necessity of engaging in AA practices to maintain sobriety, even life. Furthermore, participants pervasively subsume their personal voices into AA discourse through the extensive use of AA texts in their discourse. The effect of these practices is that members display and constitute shared identity of 'alcoholics' as dependent on AA for their sobriety.

Arminen (1998:p138-9) feels that AA draws therapeutic power from the nature of its interaction. Through co-contribution 'an individual speaker displays that he/she has had exactly the same experience or feeling as the prior speaker'. He has shown AA members reciprocally acknowledge their emotional experiences in order to reinforce their identities as recovering alcoholics, co-constructing their experiences in order to orientate to their lives anew; a process whereby contributions are made reciprocally relevant. In this, he draws upon Harvey Sacks 'Lectures on Conversation', Vols. I and II, (1992 (1964-72)). Sacks contends that mutual aid works in the following way:

A collection of people get together and tell a series of stories, one alike to the rest, i.e. places like AA involve a series of stories where we come to see that we're all in the same boat, and people figure that they are understood and are not alone – where among the problems present in therapy is that for all you know, given that the therapist doesn't respond with telling you he had the same experience, nobody had the same experience as you.

Data from this study, however, indicates that much of the story telling in AA is not simply to find similarities in experience and thus lessen the member's sense of alienation. Rather it is also a device through which members reconstruct their histories around an AA meta-narrative in order to reconstruct themselves as similar and reorient the alignment between 'self', their alcoholism and 'other'. AA stories suggest that as alcoholics they have been forced to a point of 'schismogenetic' change, in Bateson's terminology; 'hitting bottom' in the terminology of AA. This is a 'point at which only an involuntary change in deep unconscious epistemology - a spiritual experience – will make the lethal description irrelevant' (Bateson, 1985:313 {1971}). At this point the combative dualism is broken as alcoholics accept their inability to combat alcoholism alone and enter a 'fellowship' of other alcoholics who submit to a programme of change. This represents a change in the alcoholics' 'false epistemology' (Bateson, 1985:331 {1971}). Bateson's hypothesis is expressed in terms of the dynamic of the *cybernetics of 'self'*. The aim of this study has been to illustrate these dynamics through the study of how AA members align in terms of their discursive practices towards themselves, the AA programme and each other. This is characterised by a spirit of 'acceptance'. The acceptance of dependency, alcoholism and responsibility constitutes a correction of, in Bateson's terms, the disastrous dualism (1985 {1971}:313) that inflicts many modern occidental personalities, resulting in aggressive individualism and a combative stance towards self and others which becomes rampant in certain alcoholic personalities.

Data in this study suggest that the way AA members present their ideal alignment to 'the world', is also one of acceptance. A recurrent metaphor in AA discourse is that of *people, places and things*, deriving from a story in the *Big Book* (Anon, 1985:449). The phrase is a representation of those things in life the alcoholic must cease battling against and accept. One of the most frequently referred to stories in the *Big Book* puts it like this:

And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation – some fact of life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that some person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way they are supposed to be at the moment. (p. 449)

Constraints on time and space have meant that this aspect of the data could not be dealt with here and will be a subject of my future research.

9.1.3. Symmetry between AA members

Within Bateson's perspective of cybernetics, in order to maintain a common stance of dependency on AA, AA members need to display and constitute the commonality of their identity. The data presented here illustrate how the communicative dynamics of cybernetic relationships play out in discoursal practices, where members avoid discoursal practices which display a complementary, dependency and therefore unequal relationship between themselves. This study has endeavoured to demonstrate that discoursal symmetry is maintained, displayed and constituted through a number of discoursal practices: These include framing each turn with a personal declaration of alcoholism and the exclusive use of personal names which preclude professional, social, marital or familial status.

There is also a pervasive tendency to express communal dependency on the AA programme and the avoidance of 'outside issues' as topics of the turn. This results in an exclusive focus on alcohol and alcoholism and the confining of turns to recounting personal experience and the avoidance of the display of any personal expertise expressed discursively through explanations, advice giving and evaluation, negative or positive, of other members. Formally, this is manifest through the avoidance of adjacency pairs or close ordered interaction.

Supporting these findings, Arminen (1998) has demonstrated that overwhelmingly in normative AA talk in meetings, reference to previous speakers is designed to display a commonality of experience, i.e. to 'identify' with others in AA terminology. This is confirmed in the present data, with the proviso that such endorsement is contingent on the previous speaker not overtly displaying independence from or challenging AA principles and beliefs. AA interaction, according to Arminen (1998), largely involves topic co-construction around issues of autobiographically relevance. The data presented here tends to confirm this, but again a proviso is added that co-

construction tends to occur in a manner which allows the speakers to present their personal experience as confirming them as members of AA and demonstrating the necessity and efficacy of AA principles and practices, particularly the Twelve Steps, in their lives. Autobiographic relevance is determined by AA's meta-story which exemplifies the working of the Twelve Steps in the live of recovering alcoholics.

To Arminen's findings however, we can add our findings about speaker alignment to audience. The audience is aligned to by an AA speaker in a manner which allows it to remain *inferentially autonomous*; the members of the audience being largely free to make what inferences they may about the experience and purpose of the speakers, who project themselves as having no intent or design to modify or change the behaviour, beliefs or attitudes of that audience. It is of course true that members participate in an AA meeting precisely because they wish to modify these. But it is central to AA beliefs that change can only be effected by individuals who themselves see the necessity of bringing about that change. Suggestions to change which come from without tend to be resisted.

9.1.4. The 'institutional' nature of AA interaction

We have seen that participants in an AA meeting employ a distinctive 'institutional' turn taking system. The way turn taking is organised is a fundamental and generic aspect of the organisation of institutional interaction. It generates systematic differences involving reductions in the range of options available in mundane conversation, as well as specialisations in interactional functions. These characterise the unique 'fingerprint' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1993) of AA's 'institutional' discourse. Furthermore, we have shown, these features of organisation recur pervasively over the course of the interaction in an AA meeting.

AA interaction therefore appears to be another form of institutional interaction, employing its characteristic reductions in and specialisations of the discoursal practices available in mundane conversation, and therefore having the typical features of institutional interaction as outlined by Heritage and Greatbatch (1993). However, Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) characterises the range of differences in institutional interaction as 'systematically asymmetrical' when set against mundane conversation between equals. CA demonstrates how asymmetry in most institutional interaction shows oriented-to structural patterns equipping participants with *different*

discoursal resources; placing some participants in a more powerful position discursively. This asymmetry largely stems from the social and professional roles of members.

The interaction in an AA meeting is not 'institutional' in this sense however. We have demonstrated that in AA meeting participants have access to and employ the *same* range of the discoursal resources. This range is reflexively determined by the collective nature of their 'institutional identities' as AA members and alcoholics. Absence in differentials in institutional roles is reflected in an absence in differentials in the range of discoursal resources available to members. It would appear that AA interaction is *more* rather than *less* symmetrical than mundane conversation.

We have seen that Linell and Luckman (1991) have warned against oversimplification in presenting mundane and institutional interaction as respectively symmetrical and asymmetrical. They have pointed out that if there were no asymmetries between people there would be no need for most kinds of interaction and that conversation exists largely because of communicatively relevant inequalities of knowledge. This insight leads us to the concluding question of what is the point of the interaction in AA meetings if members resist the display of inequalities of knowledge and the apportionment of tasks through role differentials.

9.1.5. The goals of AA institutional interaction

Drew and Heritage (1992) and Levinson, (1992) see institutional interaction as the principle means through which various practical goals are achieved and focus on the various ways these are shaped or constrained by the participants' orientation to social institutions. However, the following pertinent observation is made by Mäkelä (1996) :

Every meeting is a unique social event and never directly based on what happened in a previous meeting, nor does it carry any promise for future meetings. What goes on in a meeting is the point of the meeting: the gathering does not have any collective purpose beyond the meeting's process. (p. 134)

This insightful observation suggests that the discursive practices that characterise AA interaction are the point of the interaction itself. This study has suggested that through these practices members re- and co-construct their identities to align them to an AA meta-narrative exemplifying the efficacy and necessity of the Twelve Steps in

their lives. In doing so, they construct shared and equal identities for themselves as dependent for their recovery from alcoholism and its attendant 'dis-ease' on AA texts, principles, practices and beliefs. These discursal practices appear to be eminently suitable for the alcoholic personality as represented by Bateson (1985 {1971}) who views 'the 'sobriety' of the alcoholic as characterised a mind which pits Mind against Matter, will against compulsions, self against the world. This combative stance and the suspicion, resentment and fear it generates leads active alcoholics to deny having a problem and resent any suggestion that they have. Self-knowledge has to come from within. The non-directive self-revelatory characteristic of the interaction in AA meetings engenders this.

References

- Alexander, J. (1940). An Article by Jack Alexander. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, World Services, Inc.
- Anon (1952). The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, World Services, Inc.
- Anon (1984). "Pass it on": The Story on Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world. New York: Alcoholic Anonymous World Services.
- Anon (1985 {1939}). Alcoholics Anonymous - the Story of how Many Thousands of Men and Women have Recovered from Alcoholism. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anon (1986). Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anon (1986). The Conference Charter. Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anon (1986). If you are a professional. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anon (1990). Daily Reflections. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, World Services, Inc.
- Anon (1990). The A.A. Group. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anon (1999). Alcoholics Anonymous: The original manuscript. Reno, Nevada: Purple Salamander Press.
- Anon (2001 {1939}). Alcoholics Anonymous - the Story of how Many Thousands of Men and Women have Recovered from Alcoholism. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anon. (No date). Memo on Participation of AA Members in Research and Other Non-AA Surveys. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Anonymous (1952). 44 Questions. New York: Works Publishing, Inc. (*Now known as A.A. World Services, Inc.*).

- Anonymous (1967). As Bill Sees it: The AA Way of Life. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, World Services, Inc.
- Anonymous (1998). AA Fact File. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc.
- APA (1982). Ethical principles: in the conduct of research with human participants. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, Committee for the Protection of Human Participants in Research.: 76.
- Arminen, I. (1996a). "On the moral and interactional relevance of self-repairs for life-stories of members of Alcoholics Anonymous." Text 16(4): 449-480.
- Arminen, I. (1996b). "The Construction of Topic in the turns of talk at the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous." International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy 16(5/6): 88-130.
- Arminen, I. (1998). "Organisation and Participation in the Meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous." Issues in Applied Linguistics 9(2): 59-95.
- Arminen, I. (1998). Therapeutic Interaction: A study of mutual help in the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. Helsinki: The Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies.
- Arminen, I. (1999). "Conversation Analysis - A quest for order in social interaction and language." Acta Sociologica 42(3): 251-7.
- Arminen, I. (2000). "On the context sensitivity of institutional interaction." Discourse and Society 11(4): 435-498.
- Atkinson, J. M., Cuff, E. & Lee, J. (1978). The recommencement of a meeting as a member's accomplishment. Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction. J. Shenkein. New York: Academic Press: 133-154.
- Atkinson, J. M. (1982). "Understanding formality: notes on the categorisation and production of 'formal' interaction." British Journal of Sociology 33: 86-117.
- Atkinson, J. M. (1992). Displaying Neutrality. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: x, 580.
- Atkinson, J. M. and P. Drew (1979). Order in court: The organisation of verbal interaction in judicial settings. London: Macmillan.

- Austin, J. L. (1976). How to do things with words. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bateson, G., Ed. (1985). A theory of play and fantasy. Steps to an ecology of mind. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bateson, G. (1985 {1971}). The cybernetics of 'self': A theory of alcoholism. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Berg, K. E. and R. W. Latin (1994). Essentials of modern research methods in health, physical education, and recreation. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Boden, D. (1994). The Business of Talk: Organisations in Action. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boden, D. and D. H. Zimmerman (1991). Introduction. Talk and Social Structure: Studies in Ethnomethodology and Social Structure. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Borkman, T. J. (1999). Understanding Self-Help Mutual Aid: Experiential Learning in the Commons. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- BPS, T. B. P. S. (2000). Code of conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.
- Brown, G. and G. Yule (1983). Discourse Analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. and S. C. Levinson (1987). Politeness : some universals in language usage. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, R. a. G., A, Ed. (1960). Language and Social Context. London: Penguin.
- Brown, S. (1985). Treating the Alcoholic: A developmental model for recovery. New York: Wiley Press.
- Brown, S., D (1993). Therapeutic processes in Alcoholics Anonymous. Research on Alcoholics Anonymous. B. McCrady, S and Miller, William, R. New Brunswick: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies.
- Brown, S. and D. R. Brown (2001). A Biography of Mrs Marty Mann. Center City, Minnesota: Hazeldon.

- Bufe, C. (1998). Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure. Tuscan, Arizona: See Sharp Press.
- Button, G. (1990). Going up a blind alley: Conflating conversation analysis and computational modelling. Computers and conversation. P. Luff, Gilbert, N., and Frohlich, D. London: Academic Press.
- Button, G. (1992). Answers as interactional products. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Button, G. (1993). Conversation-in-a-series. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.
- Chomsky, L. (1969). Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Clayman, S. (1988). "Displaying neutrality in television news interviews." Social Problems 35: 474-492.
- Clayman, S. (1989). "The production of punctuality: Social interaction, temporal organization, and social structure." American Journal of Sociology 95(3): 659-691.
- Collins, P. H., Ed. (1991). Learning from the outsider within: sociological significance of black feminist thought. Beyond Methodology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Coulon, A. (1995). Ethnomethodology. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cuff, E. S., W (1985). Meeting Talk. A Handbook of Discourse Analysis: Discourse and Dialogue. T. A. van Dyke. New York and London: Academic Press. III: 149-160.
- Davies, A. (1982). "Spaces between silences : verbal interaction in Quaker meetings." Nottingham Linguistic Circular 11(1): 44-63.
- Denzin, N., K (1987). The Recovering Alcoholic. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., K (1987). Treating Alcoholism : An Alcoholics Anonymous Approach. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., K (1997). The Alcoholic Society. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

- Denzin, N. K. (1989). Interpretive Interactionism. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Department of Health, E. a. W. (1979). The Belmont Report. Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education and Welfare.
- Drew, C. J., M. L. Hardman, et al. (1996). Designing and conducting research : inquiry in education and social science. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Drew, P. (1992). Contested evidence in cross-examination. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: x, 580.
- Drew, P. and J. Heritage (1992). Analysing talk at work. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: x, 580.
- Drew, P. and J. Heritage (1992). Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Dumont, M. P. (1974). "Self-help treatment programs." American Journal of Psychiatry 131: 631-635.
- Edwards, D. and J. Potter (1992). Discursive psychology. London: Sage.
- Erikson, K., T. (1970). A Comment on Disguised Observation in Sociology. Qualitative Methodology: Firsthand Involvement with the Social world. W. Filstead, J. Chicago: Markham Publishing Company.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and Power. London and New York: Longman.
- Ford, L. A. (1989). "Fetching Good out of Evil in AA: A Bormannean Fantasy Theme Analysis of The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous." Communication Quarterly 37(1): 1-15.
- Foucault, M. (1974). The archaeology of knowledge. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Frankel, R. (1990). Talking in Interviews: a dispreference for patient-initiated questions in physician-patient encounters. Interaction Competence. G. Psathas. Washington D.C.: University Press of America: 231-62.
- Garfinkel, H. (1969). Studies in Ethnomethodology. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Garfinkel, H. (1986). Ethnomethodological studies of work. London ; New York: Routledge & K. Paul.
- Garfinkel, H. and H. Sacks (1970). On formal structures of practical actions. Theoretical Sociology. C. McKinney and T. E.A. New York: Appleton-Century - Crofts: 338-366.
- Giddens, A. (1991). Modernity and self-identity : self and society in the late modern age. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Gilbert, G. N. and M. Mulkay (1984). Opening Pandora's box: an analysis of scientists' discourse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glaser, B. G. a. S., Anselm (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1959). The Presentation of Self in Everyday life. Hammondsworth: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. (1981). Forms of Talk. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Greatbatch, D. (1988). "A turn-taking system for British news interviews." Language in Society 17: 401-30.
- Greatbatch, D. (1992). On the management of disagreement between news interviewees. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan. New York: Academic Press. III: 41-58.
- Gubrium, J. F. and J. A. Holstein (1997). The new language of qualitative method. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gumperz, J. (1982). Language and social identity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Have, P. T. (1999). Doing Conversation Analysis. London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Heath, C. (1992). Diagnosis in teh general-practice consultation. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: 66-100.

- Heritage, J. (1984). Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. (1985). Analysing news interviews: aspects of the production of talk for an 'overhearing' audience. A Handbook of Discourse Analysis: Discourse and Dialogue. T. Van Dijk. London: Academic Press. III.
- Heritage, J. and D. Greatbatch (1993). Institutional talk: News interviews. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.
- Heritage, J. and S. Sefi (1992). Dilemmas of advice. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: x, 580.
- Hutchby, I. and R. Wooffitt (1998). Conversation analysis : principles, practices, and applications. Cambridge Malden, Mass.: Polity Press ; Blackwell.
- Hymes, D. (1962). The Ethnography of Speaking. Anthropology and Human Behaviour. T. Gladwin and W. Sturtevant. Washington: Anthropological Society of Washington: 13-53.
- Hymes, D., Ed. (1972). Language and social Context. Language and Social Context. London: Penguin.
- Jacoby, S. and E. Ochs (1995). "Co-construction: An Introduction." Research on Language and Social Interaction 28(3): 171-184.
- James, W. (1958). The varieties of religious experience : a study in human nature, being the Gifford lectures on natural religion delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902. New York: New American Library.
- Jenson, G., H. (2000). Storytelling in Alcoholics Anonymous. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Johnson (1987). Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1980's. Sociology. Los Angeles: University of California.
- Kurtz, E. (1991). Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous. Minnesota: Hazelden.
- Labov, W. (1966). The Social Stratification of English in New York. Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

- Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Larrue, J. and A. Trognon (1993). "Organization of turn-taking and mechanism for turn-taking repairs in a chaired meeting." Journal of Pragmatics 19: 177-196.
- Lee, J. R. E. (1987). Prologue: Talking Organisation. Talk and social organisation. G. Button and J. R. E. Lee. Clevedon, Avon, England ; Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters: 335.
- Levinson, S., C (1992). Activity types and language. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: 66-100.
- Linde, C. (1991). "What's next?: the social and technical management of meetings." Pragmatics 1: 297-317.
- Linell, P. and T. Luckman (1991). Asymmetries in dialogue: some conceptual preliminaries. Asymmetries in dialogue. I. Markova and K. Foppa. Hemel Hempstead.
- Lofland, J. F. a. L., R.A. (1970). Initial Interaction of Newcomers in Alcoholics Anonymous: A Field Experiment in class symbols and socialisation. Qualitative Methodology: firsthand Involvement with the Social World. W. J. Filstead. Chicago: Markham.
- Madsen, W. (1980). The American Alcoholic. Springfield. Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.
- Mäkelä, K. (1993). Implications for research of the cultural variability of Alcoholics Anonymous. Research on Alcoholics Anonymous. B. S. a. M. McCrady, W.R. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Center of alcohol Studies.
- Mäkelä, K. (1996). Alcoholics Anonymous as a Mutual Help Movement: a Study in Eight Societies. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Maxwell, M. (1984). The AA Experience: A Close up View for Professionals. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McHoul, A. (1978). "The organisation of turns at formal talk in the classroom." Language in Society 7: 183-213.

- McHoul, A. (1978). "The organisation of turns at formal talk in the classroom." Language in Society 7(183-213).
- Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, Self and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mehan, H. (1979). Learning Lessons: Social organisation in the classroom. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mehan, H. (1985). The structure of classroom discourse. Discourse and Dialogue. T. van Dyke. London: Academy Press. III: 120-132.
- Mehan, H. (1993). The school's work of sorting students. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.
- Messerschmidt, D. A. (1981). On anthropology "at home". Anthropologists at home in North America. D. A. Messerschmidt. London: Cambridge University Press: 3-14.
- Morris, G. H. and R. J. Chenail, Eds. (1995). The Talk of the Clinic: Explorations in the Analysis of Medical and Therapeutic Discourse. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Naples, N. A. (1997). A Feminist Revisiting of the insider/outsider debate: The 'outsider phenomenon' in Rural Iowa. Reflexivity and Voice. R. Hertz. Thousand Oaks London: Sage Publications.
- Norris and Leach (1977). "??".
- O'Halloran, S. (2000). Power and Solidarity in the discourse of Alcoholics Anonymous. Research & Practice in Professional Discourse Conference Paper, Hong Kong City University.
- O'Reilly, E. B. (1997). Sobering Tales: Narratives of Alcoholism and Recovery. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Park, R. E., E. W. Burgess, et al. (1967). The city. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Parsons (1937). The Structure of Social Action. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Pollner, M. and J. Stein (1996). "Narrative mapping of Social Worlds: The Voice of Experience in Alcoholics Anonymous." Symbolic Interaction 19(3): 203-223.

- Pomerantz, A. M. (1986). "Extreme case formulations: a way of legitimizing claims." Human Studies 9: 219-229.
- Psathas, G. (1993). The structure of direction-giving in interaction. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.
- Psathas, G. (1995). Conversation analysis : the study of talk-in-interaction. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Raphael, M. J. (2000). Bill W and Mr. Wilson. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Reinharz, S. (1997). Who am I? The need for a variety of selves in the field. Reflexivity and Voice. R. Hertz. Thousand Oaks London: Sage Publications.
- Room, R. (1993). Alcoholics Anonymous as a social movement. Research on Alcoholics Anonymous. B. S. a. M. McCrady, W.R. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Centre for Alcohol Studies.
- Rosenau, P. M. (1992). Postmodernism and the Social Sciences. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rudy, D., R (1986). Becoming alcoholic: Alcoholics Anonymous and the Reality of Alcoholism. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rudy, D. R. and A. Griel, L (1987). "Taking the Pledge: The Commitment process in Alcoholics Anonymous." Sociological Focus 20(1): 45-59.
- Sacks (1984). Notes on methodology. Structures of social action : studies in conversation analysis. J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York Paris: Cambridge University Press ; Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme: xvi, 446.
- Sacks, H. (1972). An initial investigation into the usability of conversational data for doing sociology. Studies in Social Interaction. D. Sudnow. New York: Free Press: 31-74.
- Sacks, H. (1992 (1964-72)). Lectures on Conversation. G. Jefferson. Oxford: Blackwell. 2.

- Sacks, H. (2001, {1992}). Lecture 1: Rules of Conversational Sequence. Discourse Theory and Practice. M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S. J. Yates. London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Sacks, H., E. Schegloff, et al. (1974). "A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn taking for conversation." Language 50(696-735).
- Sadler (1979). The 'crisis cult' as a voluntary association: an interactional approach to Alcoholic Anonymous. Beliefs, behaviors and alcoholic beverages. M. Marshall. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 388-394.
- Schegloff, E. (1979). Identification and recognition in telephone openings. Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology. G. Psathas. New York: Erlbaum. 70: 1075-95.
- Schegloff, E. (1987). Between micro and macro: Contexts and other connections. The Micro-macro link. J. e. a. Alexander. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Schegloff, E. (1992). On talk and its institutional occasions. Talk at work : interaction in institutional settings. P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press: x, 580.
- Schegloff, E., A (1993). Reflections on talk and social structure. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.
- Schegloff, E. and H. Sacks (1974). Opening up closings. Ethnomethodology. R. Turner. Hammondsworth: Penguin: 233-264.
- Schiffrin (1978). Discourse Markers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schur, E. M. (1971). Labeling Deviant Behavior. New York: Harper and Row.
- Schwartzman, H. (1993). The meeting. Gatherings in Organisations and Communities. New York: Plenum.
- Searle, J. (1960). What is a speech-act? Language and Social Context. P. Giglioli. London: Penguin.

- Searle, J. R. (1977). Indirect Speech Acts. Proceedings of the Texas Conference on Performatives, Presuppositions and Implicatures, Texas, Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Sieber, J. E. (1992). Planning ethically responsible research : a guide for students and internal review boards. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Silkworth, W., D (1985 {1939}). The Doctor's Opinion. Alcoholics Anonymous - the Story of how Many Thousands of Men and Women have Recovered from Alcoholism. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.
- Sinclair, J. and M. Coulthard (1975). Towards an Analysis of Discourse: the English used by Teachers and Pupils. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Staske, S. (1996). "Talking feelings: the collaborative construction of emotion in talk between close relational partners." Symbolic Interaction 19(2): 111-135.
- Tannen, D. (1989). Talking voices : repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ten Have, P. (1993). Talk and institution: A reconsideration of the 'asymmetry' of doctor-patient interaction. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: 138-163.
- Tiebout, H. M. (1953). "Surrender versus compliance in therapy with special reference to alcoholism." Quarterly Journal of Studies in Alcohol 14: 58-68.
- Tiebout, H. M. (1954). "The ego factors in surrender in alcoholism." Quarterly Journal of Studies in Alcohol 15: 610-621.
- Trevino, A. J. (1992). "Alcoholics Anonymous as a Durkheimian Religion." Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion 4: 183-208.
- Turner, R. (1972). Some formal properties of therapy talk. Studies in Social Interaction. D. Sudnow. New York: Free Press.
- Weber, M. (1968). Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology. New York: Bedminster Press.

- Wetherall, M., S. Taylor, et al. (2001). Discourse as Data. London, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Wilcox, D., M. (1998). Alcoholic Thinking: Language , Culture and Belief in Alcoholics Anonymous. West Port, Connecticut: Praegar.
- Wilson, B., Ed. (1988). The Language of the Heart. New York: The AA Grapevine Inc.
- Wilson, B. (1988 {1945}). Modesty One Plank for Good Public Relations. The Language of the Heart: Bill W's Grapevine Writings. L. W. New York: The AA Grapevine, Inc: 1-6.
- Wilson, B. (1988 {1945}). 'Rules' dangerous but unity vital. The Language of the Heart: Bill W's Grapevine Writings. L. W. New York: The AA Grapevine, Inc: 1-6.
- Wilson, T., P (1993). Social structure and the sequential organisation of interaction. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.
- Wooton, A. (1976). "Sharing: Some notes on the organisation of talk in a therapeutic community." British Journal of Sociology 10: 333-350.
- Zimmerman, D. (1988). "On conversation: the conversation analysis perspective." Communication Yearbook 11(406-32).
- Zimmerman, D. H. (1992). Achieving context: openings in emergency calls. Texts in Context: Contributions in Ethnomethodology. G. Watson and R. Seiler. Newbury Park, New Jersey: Sage. C.
- Zimmerman, D. H. and D. Boden (1993). Structure-in-action: an introduction. Talk and social structure : studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. D. Boden and D. H. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Polity Press: x, 305.

Appendix A – AA's Twelve Steps

From Chapter 5 of Alcoholics Anonymous (1985) 'How It Works' The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.**
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
- 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
- 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**
- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**
- 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**
- 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**
- 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**
- 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

Appendix B – AA's Twelve Traditions

In 1946, in the Fellowship's international journal, the AA Grapevine, the following principles were drawn up by the founders and early members. They were accepted and endorsed by the membership as a whole at the International Convention of AA, at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1950.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Appendix C –Tape Transcript

Service Meeting Principles before personalities	BTpM-Pribper	Topic meeting, 15 speakers	10.400 words
Charlie – 1C15, Dave – 2D15, Norman – 3N15, Min – 4M15, John – 5J15, Miles – 6M15, Johnnie – 7J15, Kay – 8K15, Bob – 9B15, Jamie – 10J15, Servo – 11S15, Guss – 12G15, Geof – 13G15, Jed – 14J15, Bud – 15B15			

Charlie

1. 1C15: Hi my name is Charlie (.) I'm an alcoholic
2. Aud: Hi Charlie
3. 1C15: and umm (.) I'm a bit unprepared (.) I didn't know I was going to be doing this meeting (.) until around 15 minutes ago (.)
4. but er (...) you know one of the principles I've been taught is also to *never say no to service* (.) so here I am (.) um (.)
5. I thought about this for a good long ten minutes before I came in here (.) and you know
6. (laughter)
7. one thing that jumped out in my mind was (.) umm (..) in the 12th step it talks about carrying the erm principle of this programme into all of our affairs (..)
8. and umm (.) the thing that jumped out at me is that (...) umm (.) >anonymity being the spiritual base of our programme (.) it reminds us to place principles before personalities< (.)
9. so in all our affairs (.) to me that means in all my life um (...) trying to like live and walk a spiritual path today umm (..) >I should keep that in mind at all times (.) not just in meetings (.) you know< (.)
10. I travel and go to a lot of countries and a lot of times a meeting will be run in a different format than I'm used to at home and /sometimes I don't like the way it's run (.)
11. sometimes I like it more than the way it's run (.) but umm the essential idea (.) is you know (.) um to have another day clean and sober (.) another day without a drink and
12. >everywhere I go the book is the same also < (.) and I feel that's important to remember (.) and that's like umm the core of the programme (...)

13. >I feel really unprepared for this< (....)
14. so (.) umm (.) I guess I'm going to give you a little bit of my experience (..)
15. umm (.) I'm from San Francisco (.) er grew up there and um started drinking and using very young and we're from an alcoholic family (.)
16. and umm (.) /pretty much the same as the speaker last night (.) um in my family we had those gallons of wine around the house at all times and I was umm (.) you know- (..)
17. /when my parents would have company one way that my parents would keep the guests entertained was to get me and my sister drunk and let us run around and uh (.) entertain everybody (..) um (.)
18. /and we didn't have a lot of supervision other than \that (.)
19. umm (.) I ended up getting into a lot of trouble very young um and (...) let's see (.) >I'll jump right to the end< (.)
20. by nineteen umm I'd been- (.) I spent most of High School in juvenile hall and I'd been living on the street in San Francisco for two years (.) um I was in er a gang and I was facing a 5-year \jail \sentence (..)
21. when I was in jail in San Francisco I went to 'H and I meetings' because you got to (.) umm (.) get out of myself for an hour and get free coffee (.)
22. I had gone to H and I meetings before that in Juvenile Hall and I had been told my >\you know< countless councillors and probation officers that this was my problem (.) umm you know (.) I (...) um (....)
23. >I got a public defender< and the public defender told me that (.) uh if er I went to these meetings then they could get me a \better \deal (.)
24. so I kept going when I got out and um I started listening to some of these people and I remember at one point a guy sitting me down and saying (.) you know /do you believe you're powerless over drugs and /alcohol (.)
25. I said hell \no you know (.) that's the one thing in my life that I have /going for me right now (.) that's the only thing that I like okay (.)
26. /my /life \is unmanageable at the moment (.) I've got a few problems (.) I've gotta do this (.) and I've got to do that and I've got to do the other thing and then when I'm done with all that I can go back to using the way I want to (.) ummm
27. (.) so I didn't stay sober very long (.)

28. umm (.) it was about another 6 months of (.) uh going down hill (.) erm well I was- (...) for the time in California there were some laws impending in California that were really scaring the hell out of me (.)
29. that being that for the position I was in I was nineteen years old and I was potentially at this point facing twenty /five years in jail and this was like (.) my life was over (.)
30. I was like /skinny (.) I had done nothing with my life but like (.) hang out on the streets and drink (.) you know I was about a hundred and maybe 40 pounds and uhh (.) I just- (.) I saw like (.) I was hopeless at that point and I became more willing to hear the *principles of this programme* and um I finally got sober (.)
31. umm (.) I'm 25 years old today (.) I'm (.) God willing in 8 days I'll have 6 years clean and sober (.) umm
32. and the most important thing in my life today is uh (.) my sobriety (.) and *the daily maintenance of my spiritual condition* (.) which umm (.) believe it or not (.) >you know< (.) that doesn't always stay as my first priority (.)
33. it's /amazing (.) this is the most amazing gift that I've ever been given and I don't take care of it very well (.) I don't cherish it the way I should (.) you know (.) umm (.)
34. I can honestly say that everything that's good in my life is a result of (.) uh /staying /sober and /working the steps of this \programme (.)
35. umm (.) I've worked with several different sponsors (.) I've been through the steps a couple times and (.) I would say (..) maybe three months ago I felt like I finally (.) uh achieved the 12th step (.)
36. I finally had a spiritual awakening and uh (.) I try to maintain that and some /days I (.) feel like I /have it (.) some days I feel like I \don't (.)
37. and when I feel like I don't the things I feel like I should do (.) are like (.) to look around at the situation I'm in and try to umm (.) be helpful to the people around me (.) try (.) umm (.) you know (...)
38. try to practice some compassion for the people around me and try to practice some of the spiritual principles that I've learnt because (.)
39. uh >one thing I learned very quickly is that my way doesn't work< (.) when things suddenly aren't going my way if I pause for a second (.) usually what I can see is that erm I'm trying to force my own will on the situation (.)

40. I'm trying to see umm (.) what I can take or what I can get out of the situation for a person and ummm (.)
41. when I /pause for a second (.) usually I can see that I'm not practising the principles that I've been taught in this programme and /you /know? (.)
42. one very important principle I've been taught in the programme is that when I do practice these principles (.) when I do *work the steps* to the best of my ability (.) I'm happier you know and I would never /expect that (.)
43. I mean everything that I think that I know teaches me that (.) if I get my will I'm going to be /happy (.) and it's umm (.) it's a ridiculous irony that it's exa:ctly the other way around (.) that it's uhh (.) it's when I Vet \go and when I \trust \god and when I help others that's when I'm actually happier (.)
44. so umm (.) /yeah >principles before personalities< is also practising these principles (.) before my own personality (.) before my own selfishness and self-centeredness umm (...)
45. that's about all I have (.) I hope that was somewhere close to 10 minutes
46. [laughter]
47. and I'm going to pass you to my co-chair (.) \thank you
48. [clapping]

Dave

1. 2D15: Hi my name is Dave (.) I'm an alcoholic
2. Aud: Hi Dave
3. 2D15: and er (..) I'd like to read just a tiny passage from the big book (.) uhh (.) selfishness (.) self centred (.) that we think is the root of our troubles (.) fed by a hundred forms of \fear (.) /self delusion (.) /self seeking (.) /self pity (.) we step on the toes of our fellows and we retaliate (.) sometimes seeming without provocation we invariably find that in sometime in the past we find that we have made decisions on self which then placed us in a position to be hurt (..)
4. and uh (.) I know this applies to me (.) for sure (.) I can bring out the worst in people as well as the best and uh (.) I notice that in my years of associating in AA that personalities do play an important part (.) whether we want to admit it or not (.)

5. and uh (.) I happen to be sensitive- of course /none of you \are (.) er but (.) uh the whole point is that I can be rubbed the wrong way sometimes (.)
6. but sometimes it's been for a teaching experience (.) a learning experience for myself and particularly (.) you know maybe rubbing away some of my self-centeredness but I (.) also noticed that I (.) have an addictive personality (.)
7. alcohol is only one of my addictions (.) I mean I /also have other addictions (.) you know (.) you name it and I've got it and uhh (.) when I- (.) I obsess a lot (.) I fantasize a lot and
8. the whole implication here is that I'm also co-dependant and uhh (.) according to Bill W and others er (.) that we are (.) basically among other things very co-dependant /people (.)
9. which means that we /what? (...) think and worry about what other \people say or /do and one of the things I find is that (.) uh too often we have what you might say- (.) >to draw a controversy< (.) we have very controversial- (.) very conservative type elements in AA (.)
10. and we have the more >\quote unquote< /liberal \elements in AA and at the same time (.) one of the biggest /aspects of AA is /what? (.) *personality before /principles?* \no (.)
11. principles before person/alities and yet I /find often (.) uh because /I (.) for example am associated with other 12 step programmes (.)
12. for example I'm associated with (.) uhh with uhh (.) /coda- >that's Co-dependants Anonymous< and uhh they claim if you're a co-dependant (.)
13. that when you're dying instead of enjoying the death experience (.) you're worried about what other people are thinking or feeling (.) when you're /dying (.)
14. bhut at any rahte ((laughs))
15. [laughter]
16. uhh (.) the implication is that that (.) uh mu most alcoholics are co-dependant (.) and this is pretty much verified (.)
17. in /fact Bill W says that one of the reasons why he got so depressed and he said basically because he got dependant too much
18. and once he starts cutting the roots of these dependencies (.) he got way less depressed (.) this is from his actual /statements (.)

19. but any rate (.) th the idea here (.) though is that in /coda \and I also belong to alanon- >we're having a meeting tonight ye know< (.) but both /coda and /alanon state that we should co-operate with AA but nowhere do I see that AA should co-operate with coda or alanon
20. [laughter]
21. in fact (.) I find (.) quite frankly a lot of hostility toward it (.) /particularly by some of the more conservative people (.) you know ((mock irascible accent assumed)) />oh the /God /damn AA- (.) \I mean the Alanon< you know and we don't find this the other way (.) you know (.) they're happy to
22. [laughter]
23. and you know a lot of us (.) quite frankly are what you call double winners and I'm a /triple winner /see? (.) where we belong to both AA and Alanon (.) /see?
24. /so /quite frankly (.) >\I mean I /love AA (.) don't get me wrong< (.) but too much of our drunkalogues too much of our past experience (.) are not focusing of the issues (0 the immediate issues of our /current life (.) how to deal with it (.) you know (.) how to deal with the emotional part (.) you know (.) and that's what Bill W did after he sobered up (.) I mean (.) getting sober's the easy part (.) I think
25. it's working (.) staying alive (.) growing (.) er working one's emotions after you get this awareness that really counts I think (.)
26. and too often I've been bored at AA meetings to be honest with you (.) too much drunkalogue (.)
27. too much er ah of all of this kind of stuff and I basically feel that (.) more and more (.)
28. though (.) I've noticed a pattern in AA that it's getting more spiritual in a sense of dealing with the immediate issues of life (.)
29. and I've noticed it at this meeting too (.) the speaker last night (.) for example (.)
30. so I (.) I see a lot of things happening here (.)
31. I mean (.) I say (.) there's a lot of things I have to adhere to in AA (.) I'm an alcoholic (.) there's (.) that's a baseline for me (.) that's a given (.)
32. but at the same time I feel that I can grow a lot with my other addictions (.) with my other issues (.) by being with other 12 step groups (.)

33. and I also feel (.) quite frankly that AA has not co-operated with these other groups (.) it has pretty much (.) in fact been hostile in some cases (.) particularly by you more (.) sort of conservative rigid type people that maybe can drink 20 god damn years of coffee drinking and not grow (.) and that's their business any rate
34. [laughter]
35. it's something like college teaching (.) they teach the first year and then they just repeat that 20 times you know (.) /what the hell good is it (.) god damn teachers that way
36. [laughter]
37. anyway (.) my p point is that at here too (.) in essence these twelve steps are a vital part of AA but they're also a vital part of the other programmes (.) a very vital part and these (.) as far as I'm concerned are spiritual programmes (.) programmes basically that get at our hearts as well as our minds (.)
38. and (.) and I find (.) quite frankly that what I would urge maybe (.) is some serious thought as to how we can "co-operate with these more" (.)
39. because as I said (.) after I got sober (.) year after year that more stuff starts coming up (.)
40. like you know you feel the onionskin or you see the iceberg and you see more and more that has to be worked on and one of my big problems is co-dependency (.) which alanon and coda addresses (.)
41. >it's addressed directly and indirectly in AA (.) /don't get me wrong< (.) wor worrying about what other people think and feel about us and so forth (.)
42. but what I find is that I get enrichment from all the programmes (.)
43. diversity is a fact of life (.) the more diverse we get (.) the more varied we get (.) the better I think (.) so I use these programmes to supplement my AA thing (.)
44. but I I (.) it's always focus on the 12 steps (.) and so (.) if I I could leave you with any particular point (.) it's the idea that maybe (.) just maybe we have to look at each programme as an individual programme (.)
45. I mean (.) the way you handle AA (.) the way you work your AA programme is your programme (.) based on your personality (.) your genes (.) your experience (.) the whole ball of wax (.) it still is an AA programme (.) it's still the 12 steps (.) but there's a \diversity (.) a \variety and \individuality here (.)

46. and one of the principles of AA is live and let live and when when we are not (.) shall we say /compatible when we are not (.) shall we say /friendly toward our sister and brother programmes (.) then I don't think we're following through with *live and let live* (.)
47. I don't think we're recognising individuality and diversity (.) which I think is a very crucial part (..) of AA (.) because one thing that I find is that too often in my life (.) I've been closed minded (.) I've been dogmatic (.) >I still am to a degree< ((laughs))
48. [laughter]
49. but the whole point is for growth (.) for growth's sake (.) I think we have to recognise this *live and let live* with these programmes (.) so with that I'd like to (.) uhh (.) throw it open (.) thank you.
-

Norman

1. 3N15: Hi my name is Norman (.) I'm an alcoholic
2. Aud: Hi Norman
3. 3N15: this is the first time I've shared since I've been here (.) but you hit a few buttons there Dave (.)
4. so I thought I need to say something
5. [laughter]
6. >number one (.) we're not affiliated with any other groups< (.) we're AA as a whole(.) I'm a grateful member of alanon (.) and I'm a grateful member of co-dependency but if I take a dri:nk you can forge:t about co-dependency and you can forget about alanon and forget about coda (.) because I am an alcoholic you can forget about /jobs (.) you can forget about /marriage (.) you can forget everything that we're (unclear) (.)
7. thi:s is my programme and we're not affiliated with any other programme (.) we don't have to support anybody (.) nobody supports us (.)
8. I love alcoholics anonymous and I don't care (.)
9. if alanon is there it's beautiful for people that have it (.) I love it myself but I don't take a drink one day at a time with alcoholics anonymous and I'm not-(...)
10. this programme has taught me to say w what I feel (.) Dave is one of my best friends and I love him very dearly (.) I just don't agree with him

11. [prolonged laughter turning to clapping and cheering]

Min

1. 4M15 My name is Min (.) I'm an alcoholic (not native English speaker)
2. Aud: Hi Min
3. 4M15: I'm in Chiang Mai now and thank you for teaching me how to love
(.) how to solidate (.) have an open mind and have an open heart thank you
very much
4. Aud: thank you

Jim

1. 5J15: I'm Jim I'm an alcoholic
2. Aud: Hi Jim
3. Chair: could you stand up when you speak?
4. 5J15: no
5. Chair: okay (.) don't stand up (.) what the hell!
6. [laughter]
7. 5J15: no (.) these principles (.) they're a guide to progress (.) so (.)
when I came to this programme um (.) you know (.) I didn't wake up with an
education (.) a /job (.) a /family (.) a /driver's license (.) /freedom (.) /anything (.)
you know (.) I was /fucked (.)
8. I didn't know what the hell was going on (.) you know but the judge told me to
go to AA two nights er a week and in my hometown at that time we were all in
trouble and uh (.) the hand that AA reached out to me (.) in the form of a plucky
little Russian guy that emigrated up from Southern California with his Southern
California twist on AA (.) wo:w
9. [laughter]
10. he had this beautiful wife and I couldn't figure out how he could get this
beautiful wife
11. [laughter]
12. and what the hell's he doing in Montana coming from California (.) what the
hell's his problem (.)

13. he showed up on my door and started taking me to meetings (.) I didn't have my driver's license (.) I didn't have any money (.) and he bought me lunch (.) /that was the (.) \key (.)
14. you know I didn't know him (.) shit why are you doing /this (.) all of a sudden you've taken me all around the county to different meetings here and there (.)
15. I mean I just (.) he had a courier business and he drove (.) I don't know (.) like 500 miles a day (.) no (.) not even (.) 400 (.)
16. but anyway I hopped in the back (.) >because I didn't have anything else to do< (.) you know I had nothing going for me (.) he just drove me around for a month and I (.) uh I hated that son of a bitch and the reason I hated him was because of the way he treated his wife (.) the way he yelled at her (.) the way they argued (.) the way he treated his dogs (.) the way he took care of his house (.)
17. you know (.) why the fuck was I taking /that I don't know (.) but he kept taking me to ahhh these /meetings and huh (.)
18. but it just it came to me years later that even during that I was being taught *principles before personality* because even though I didn't like him (.)
19. I I didn't agree with anything he said (.) I didn't even like the way he looked (.)
20. you know it's crazy (.) but I ended up doing- (.) learning the principles of the 12 steps from that man and er (.) even though he was weird (.) you know (.)
21. but now (.) today I love him dearly (.) I can see now he's saving my life (.)
22. it's just because the *hand AA reached out* was the principles to me and I didn't have a a guide to life at that point (.) and the personalities almost killed me (.)
23. it almost stopped me (.) the *hand that AA-* (.) but someone was always there when I was ready to bail out (.) somebody was always there for some reason (.) it's just the way AA is (.)
24. he taught me that's what I have to do (.) you /know and I don't have to pay him back (.) he's never been paid back for keeping me sober and to this day I still love him (.) it's just *principles before personality* (.)
25. it gets me a lot and I got to remember that it almost killed me (while) getting into (.) this programme (.) and if I let my personality or other personalities get in this programme inevitably if I hated someone in the way of this programme they'd end up saving my ass (.) a week later (.) it's just the way it's happening

and through the years I've learnt that (.) you know (.) you can save my ass at one time or another (.)

26. but so that's what it means to me and I try to *carry the message to others* (...) thanks

27. Aud thank you

Appendix D - Transcription conventions

The conventions used here are similar to those used in conversation analysis research developed by Gail Jefferson, but simplified.

- (.) pause in the talk - the more .'s the longer the pause.
- .h speaker in breath - . the more .h's longer the in breath.
- h speaker out breath – the more h's longer the out breath.
- [] between adjacent lines of concurrent speech or listener response (e.g. laughter)
- (()) encloses description of non/verbal activity or the transcribers comments on contextual features.
- a sharp cut off of prior word or sound.
- : stretch of preceding sound or letter – the more :::’s greater the extent of the stretching.
- ! animated or emphatic tone.
- () empty parentheses indicate an unclear fragment of the tape.
- (guess) words within the single bracket indicate transcribers best guess at unclear segment.
- . A full stop indicates a fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
- , A comma indicates a continuing intonation.
- ? A question mark indicates a rising intonation, not necessarily a question.
- / Forward slash indicate a marked raising intonation. They are placed immediately before the onset of the shift.
- \ Forward slash indicate a marked falling intonation. They are placed immediately before the onset of the shift.
- Under Underlining fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
- CAPS Words noticeably louder than surrounding words
- ° ° Words encompassed by degree signs noticeably quieter than surrounding talk.
- > < Words encompassed by ‘more than’ and ‘less than’ signs noticeably quicker than surrounding talk.
- Thaght Word noticeably guttural.