Graduate School of Business

Complex Adaptive Systems and Conversation Analysis:
A New Perspective for Consumer Behaviour Research?

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This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration of the Curtin University of Technology

March 2002

Abstract

The research question for this study is "Can concepts from complex adaptive systems and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour?" This is, primarily, a theoretical question. After a wide-ranging literature search no scholarly publications linking the qualitative aspects of complex-adaptive-systems theory to marketing or consumer research were located. In addition, there appear to be few papers on consumer research which use conversation analysis.

A theory for the research methodology was developed. It was argued that the production of a research theory and methodology to test the relevance and appropriateness of two very different theories — complex adaptive systems and conversation analysis — was the major undertaking of this thesis. The problem of combining an essentially scientific perspective (complex adaptive systems) with an essentially qualitative one (ethnomethodology and conversation analysis) was resolved as part of the research process. A bridging theory was developed through the common ground offered by the sociology of scientific knowledge on the one hand and social-constructionist theory on the other.

This methodology was successful in supporting the choice of conversation analysis as the data-collection method and provided the rationale for observing five characteristics of a complex adaptive system. The methodology was tested empirically and, in keeping with exploratory work, iteratively. It is not intended that this type of research will have predictive value.

The complex adaptive system studied was consumers in a small group. There were two research locations with six data-collection sessions in each. The first location collected data from organisational groups. The second collected data from groups of consumers convened in a meeting room. Data were transcribed and analysed for all sessions according to the conventions of conversation analysis. In the meeting-room sessions, data were also collected by electronic-group-support-systems technology and subjected to a modified form of content analysis.

The broad findings showed the following. The assumption that there was no evidence of interest in complex adaptive systems among consumer behaviour researchers was confirmed. Apart from one paper calling for the use of conversation analysis in consumer behaviour research, there appeared to have been no subsequent reports of its adoption. The potential for conversation analysis in consumer research has probably not been understood because it was seen as a data-collection method only within an ethnomethodological perspective. The discursive theoretical perspective, which gives a prime position to conversation analysis in the construction of factual accounts, was found to be an innovative way to study consumer behaviour. A discursive theoretical research perspective could have provided a more robust theoretical justification for the fieldwork carried out in this study than the theory of the methodology that was first developed for this study. Conversation analysis did meet the five criteria proposed for surfacing a complex adaptive system in a small group but in an unexpected way. It met these criteria through the research process. In other words, by setting up an appropriate research environment and using conversation analysis, it was shown that a complex adaptive system was in operation.

An outcome of employing complex-adaptive-systems theory and conversation analysis is a new way of seeing groups of consumers as a self-organised, nonlinear, interactive entity. Conversation analysis has proven to be a method of empirically observing this entity, whilst preserving the consumer groups' complex adaptiveness.

There were three conclusions. The first is that the discursive paradigm appears to be an alternative paradigm for consumer behaviour research that is appropriate for certain applications. For example, marketing communications and word-of-mouth communication.

The second conclusion is that when small-group talk-in-interaction is recorded and analysed using conversation analysis, the characteristics of a complex adaptive system theorised in this study seem evident.

The third is that complex adaptive systems appear to be capable of being researched in the field, but more work is needed on defining the characteristics to be researched.

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes a great debt to many people. First, and most importantly, the group members whose conversations I eavesdropped. Their talk was my data. The invitation to record at Forestville was a unique opportunity. Thank you, David Napoli, for your support and for building the trust that allowed me to do my work.

The successful data collection at the City location relied not only on group members but on the team who created the appropriate environment. Elliot Wood and Alma Whiteley acted as conductors. Mauro Marcello provided the electronic-group-systems support. Your expertise and responsiveness made it happen. Thank you.

Dr. Nexhmi Rexha, my supervisor, and Dr. Simone Pettigrew, my associate supervisor, challenged the development of this thesis in detail and at every stage. Consequently, many changes were made, and my argument has been sharpened and expressed more clearly. I learnt the value, from my supervisors, of perspectives that were very often different from mine. Your painstaking reading of the drafts is greatly appreciated.

From the day of my enrolment in the DBA, the Director and staff of the Graduate School of Business at Curtin University of Technology have offered continuing moral and material support. This is particularly true of the staff in the Information Centre, who cheerfully supplied me with countless books and articles. Thank you all.

Finally, I would like to thank the DBA Director who encouraged me to turn the cynicism of a former market researcher into a positive search for an alternative way of doing things. Over a sustained period your interest and support was what kept me going. Thank you, Alma.

I certify that the research and the writing of this Thesis have been undertaken soley by the author.

Signed…………………………………………….Jervis Whiteley

Date………………………………….

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The complete set of evidence and supporting documents are available in electronic form.

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Chapter 1. Introduction and background

This research is an exploration into some of the ways that emerging theory and new research perspectives can be used to develop insights into the way in which consumers construct factual accounts from talk-in-interaction. In particular, the study penetrates the social construction of reality as it is being developed by a group of consumers discussing an intangible product. Conversation analysis (CA) is used to document the ways in which conversations are constructed and to evaluate to what extent groups exhibit the characteristics of a complex adaptive system (CAS).

This thesis applies the sociological perspective to the traditions of consumer behaviour research. It follows leaders in qualitative research methodology such as Ragin (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (2000a) and Silverman (2000b,1997). Conventionally, the perspectives adopted in this thesis are not characteristics of traditional consumer behaviour research. The thesis is fundamentally theoretical and has the goal of expanding existing consumer behaviour research methodologies. This is done in two ways.

First, the pioneering research approach of CAS is presented for its ability to enrich contemporary consumer behaviour research epistemologies. Second, a cross-disciplinary search is made for perspectives that allow alternative ways for research to be conducted and data analysed.

The empirical fieldwork in this study represents a test bed to see whether there is any substance in the innovations presented. The fact that they can (or cannot) exhibit the characteristics theorised will stand as evidence, not of replicability, but of potential promise.

After declaring the operational definitions used in this study, the thinking that led to the topic are introduced. This is followed by a description of the analytic frame for the research that links ideas and social theories to the process of collecting data in the field. The research perspective of ethnomethodology and the research tradition of conversation analysis are both described briefly. The chapter concludes with the

research question and objectives that emerged from the development of the analytic frame.

This chapter is presented in four parts:

1. Operational definitions
2. Background to the study
3. The research question
4. The research process

1.1 Operational definitions

Because of the multi-disciplinary nature of the study, there are terms and definitions that can have more than one meaning. There has been a need to select from the many possible definitions, those that will serve as operational definitions. This is not a value judgement on the best definition that could be found. Instead, it is one that fits the study's requirements, whilst remaining in harmony with the theory or models from which the definitions are taken. It is in this spirit that the operational definitions immediately following this introduction, are presented. The *Glossary of Terms used in Conversation Analysis* is in Appendix B in this volume. Only the most frequently used terms appear in the following definitions. The role of operational definitions is to ensure unity and consistency of terms. The terms themselves do not present any unifying theme. The terms selected are those which, it is judged, are open to a range of interpretations which may result in ambiguity.

Certain abbreviations are frequently used throughout this thesis to avoid cumbersome repetition. Complex adaptive systems is abbreviated as CAS. Conversation analysis is abbreviated as CA. Electronic group support systems is abbreviated as EGSS

Advertising

Advertising refers to communication through traditional media (e.g. press, TV, radio and posters) that is paid for and in which the advertiser is transparent.

Analytic frame

Analytic frames are systematic, detailed sketches of ideas or theories that a researcher develops in order to define the examination of phenomena in a way that is intelligible to other researchers. In this thesis, an analytic frame is presented as a way of seeing, a lens through which social phenomena are classified by case characteristic and key features of the case. An analytic frame may be fluid, developing during the early stages of the research, and there may be multiple frames (Ragin, 1994).

Author's italics

When there are italics in the original quotation, this is affirmed by the following: *(author's italics)*. When italics are added by the researcher for emphasis, this is stated as follows: *(italics added)*.

Autopoiesis

Autopoiesis is a theory on the nature of life, developed by the Chilean scientists Maturana and Varela (1980), that has been adopted for this thesis. They theorise that a living organism is a circular, autocatalytic-like process that has its own survival as its main goal. Self-organisation, which is central to CAS theory is also seen by some writers as an autopoietic phenomena (Goldstein, 1999a).

Agency

Agency is used here in two ways. When complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory is under discussion, an agent is the component part of the complex adaptive system that determines strategies of stimulus and response (Holland, 1995:6). Thus, in this study, each member of the group is an agent.

When conversation analysis (CA) is under discussion the definition is less mechanistic. "Human agency comprises the actions and inactions of social actors who are *always* and *at every moment* confronted with specific conditions and choices" according to (Boden, 1994:14).

Chaos theory

In this thesis, chaos theory is considered to be a subset of complexity theory. Chaos implies completely erratic behaviour, yet it is theorised that there is hidden order in chaos.

Complexity theory

This is an umbrella term used to include both a broad movement in science since the 1970s away from universalism and the focus of complexity science itself. In the context of complexity science, complexity is defined as the study of complex phenomena that appear in systems that are "characterised by nonlinear interactive components, emergent phenomena, continuous and discontinuous change, and unpredictable outcomes" (Goldstein, 1999b).

Complexity science or the 'new science' (described by Wheatley, 1992)

Complexity science is a new way of thinking about the collective behaviour of basic interacting units that may be atoms, neurons or even people. These interactions lead to coherent, collective phenomena with emergent properties that can be described only at a higher level than the individual units (Coveney & Highfield, 1995).

Complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory

This is a theory within complexity science that focuses on the nonlinear, adaptive and emergent characteristics of physical and human systems. Examples of CAS are the immune system in biology, markets in marketing, and a group of consumers in this study. All CAS are said to share the same process that is described in this thesis (Gell-Mann, 1995).

Cognitive perspective or approach

Cognitive perspective is used here to define research perspectives that start with mental models, representations and ideas. It takes a linear, iterative approach to research. This includes both the cognitive perspective in consumer research and in cognitive psychology.

Cognitivism

A perspective that reduces all of psychological life, which includes discourse and social interaction, to the workings of cognitive or even computational mental processes.

Concept

A general idea that can be applied to many specific instances. For example 'consumer research' is a broad concept that includes all research carried out with the goal of contributing to our understanding of consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour, consumer buying behaviour, consumer decision making

These terms are not used interchangeably. They may be thought of as a hierarchy:

- Consumer behaviour is the most general, indicating any behaviour related to consumption.
- Consumer buying behaviour is concerned with all activities or processes involved with acquiring goods, services and ideas.
- Consumer decision making is concerned with the way in which consumers make choices with regard to goods, services and ideas..

Consumer culture

Consumer culture is the way in which people convert material things for their own purposes. Seen through the lens of consumer culture, consumption is an interlinking cycle of production and re-appropriation. This movement of goods is a system of symbolic exchange as well as physical exchange.

Consumer research, consumer behaviour research

Consumer research is used here to embrace all research on consumers: quantitative, qualitative, academic and commercial market research. Consumer behaviour research is used to refer to specifically to *behaviour*, which is researched using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In using this term in this thesis, however, there are the implications that *understanding behaviour* precedes prediction of consumer behaviour.

Consumer researchers

This term covers two groups of consumer researchers. *Academic consumer researchers* are defined as those who consider consumer research to be a discipline separate from marketing and who are concerned with expanding the boundaries of what is known about consumer behaviour rather than practical applications. *Consumer research practitioners* are defined as market researchers in business, government and independent research organisations whose main focus is to address applied problems using consumer research techniques.

Consumer society

The definition by Goodwin (1997:2) has been adopted as an operational definition: "A consumer society is one in which the possession and use of an increasing number and variety of goods and services is the principal cultural aspiration and the surest perceived route to personal happiness, social status, and national success".

Construction of factual accounts

The construction of factual accounts is the process by which individuals make descriptions seem literal and factual. The idea that facts are the outcome of simple observation by the individual, the empiricist belief which dominated until the mid-twentieth century, is rejected in the light of the body of research carried out in the field of the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) since then.

Construction of knowledge (the process of factual accounts)

Two definitions are used in this thesis. On the 'outward journey' (from theory to fieldwork described in Chapters 3 and 4), the definition by Berger and Luckmann (1966:36) was adopted as an operational definition: "The construction of knowledge is concerned with the life world of individuals — how a person's experience takes the form of solid and enduring entities and structures". This definition reflects a cognitive perspective.

On the 'journey back' (recounted in Chapters 6 and 7) the perspective shifted to the analysis of talk-in-interaction and the definition by Potter (1996:102) was adopted as an operational definition: "Conversation analysis treats reality construction as

something that has to be *achieved* using some devices or techniques". Thus all social action, including the work of scientists, is constructed.

Constructivist theory

As used in this thesis, constructivist theory holds that knowledge and truth are interpreted, not discovered. The existence of a "real world" that pre-exists and is independent of human mental activity is rejected (Schwandt, 1994), but a mental world is theorised in relation to an external world (Gergen, 1994:68).

Conversation analysis (CA)

Conversation analysis is the analysis of discourse with the explicit purpose of finding the machinery, the rules and the structures that produce the orderliness of talk-in-interaction.

Conversation analysis: pure versus applied

Pure CA is a term used to denote research carried out in and for itself to advance understanding of the analysis of the machinery of talk-in-interaction. This is contrasted with *applied CA*, which involves CA procedures carried out for the purpose of applied research. In this thesis, the term CA is used in its applied sense.

Discourse analytic perspective

A belief and point of view that highlights discourse as the characteristic feature of human life. The discourse analytic perspective is grounded in our understanding of the general features of the construction of factual accounts, which starts with the belief that an event and peoples' perceptions of it are available in discourse. This is the perspective of discursive psychology, which seeks to research the construction of reality and mind from the analysis of practical discourse. (Edwards, 1997:16)

Discursive psychology

Psychology has been defined as the "study of the mental and behavioural characteristics of an individual or a group" (Longman, 1984:1192)**.** Discursive psychology rests on a model of action. It seeks to discover how cognitive skills are developed and used by studying the discourse of individuals themselves, such as communication, interaction and argument. This contrasts with conventional cognitive

psychology and social cognition, which rest on theorised models and categories which are then tested "scientifically" (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Emergence

The definition of Goldstein (1999b) has been adopted as the operational definition. "Emergence refers to the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems". Emergent phenomena are conceptualised as whole systems and not just the components and processes that make them up.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is an approach to sociology in which social order is built from the socially contingent, practical reasoning of ordinary members of society. Ethnomethodology is also a research perspective derived from phenomenology and concerned with everyday social practices. Research based on ethnomethodology seeks to "discover the 'methods' that persons use in their everyday life in society in constructing social reality and also to discover the nature of the realities they have constructed" (Psathas, 1995b:215).

Fact construction

Potter (1996) refers to the construction of factual accounts. He expresses it as everyday procedures that are drawn on to make any particular version of events appear credible and difficult to undermine.

Group

A group is two or more people interacting with one another. A group may be dyadic, a small group, a large group or even a whole organisation.

Electronic group support systems (EGSS)

The definition by Jessup (1993:5) has been adopted as an operational definition. EGSS are "computer-based information systems used to support intellectual collaborative work" that takes place in "an environment in which technology is used to aid goal-directed group work". EGSS programmes operate on a template that determines the structure of the meeting.

Integrated marketing communications (IMC)

Integrated marketing communications is the belief that virtually all marketing techniques and approaches used by business are some form of communication. "Marketing in the 1990s is communication and communication is marketing. The two are inseparable" (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997:46).

Lens

A metaphor, widely used in management writing, to indicate a specific point of view, with the implication that there are also other points of view that may be appreciated with a change of lens.

Macro consumer behaviour research

An emerging branch of consumer behaviour research that concerns itself with the consumption meanings that are created as people use products and services. Two important research initiatives merge in macro consumer behaviour research: post-modern consumer behaviour research and research on material culture, which is also know as consumer culture.

Marketing

The definition by Kotler et al. (1998:885) has been adopted as an operational definition. Marketing is "a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others". Activities within marketing that are relevant to this study are consumer research and marketing communications.

Marketing concept

The marketing concept is said to be a "philosophy of marketing management". It holds that organisational goals can only be achieved by determining the needs and wants of customers (consumers) and meeting these needs and wants more effectively than competitors.

Marketing communications

Literally, this refers to any communication activities carried out by an organisation in support of its marketing strategies. Traditionally, marketing communications includes

advertising, selling, sales promotion, public relations, sponsorship, exhibitions and the management of image and corporate communications. Today, opportunities for communication (such as the Internet) are presenting themselves in ways that either straddle these formal categories or lie outside them.

Marketing orientation

When an organisation adopts the marketing concept, it is said to be marketing oriented. One would expect to find an awareness of customer wants; the integration and co-ordination of all activities around this customer orientation; and profit, rather than sales volume or productivity performance, used as a measure of the success of the marketing activities.

Member

In this thesis, the term *member* is used in preference to participant, interviewee, respondent or subject — all of which denote a relationship with the researcher that does not exist in conversation analysis. The term member is also used in ethnomethodology to describe a member of a group who has mastered the natural language of that group and does not have to think about what he or she is doing to know the routines of everyday social practice. In this usage, member does not suggest a social category. (Coulon, 1995:26).

Modernism

A way of thinking, a mindset, that originated in the Enlightenment: a cultural and philosophical movement in Europe starting in the eighteenth century (R. Smith, 1997). The modernist mindset is conventional, positivist and characterised by a belief in a "real" reality "out there" that can be approached through scientific method, which prevents human contamination of results (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:176.)

Mundane conversation

This is a technical term that describes a particular speech-exchange system in which turn, form, content and length are free to vary. In other words, members decide how they say anything, what they say and how long each turn is. Also known as *everyday conversation* it is the base line for pure CA studies.

Mundane reasoning

The description of mundane reasoning by Potter (1996:53) was adopted as an operational definition: "When we are discussing features of our world with others – what went on, who did what and so on – we make a fundamental assumption. We assume that we all have at least potential access to the same underlying reality. Any neutral, competent observer, placed in the same position, will see the same thing. This is one of the basic assumptions of empiricism".

Organisational conversation analysis

Organisational CA, also known as institutional CA, is the study of the way in which members of an organisation use talk-in-interaction to create, manipulate and transform organisational reality. Organisational CA has three features that make it distinctly different from the mundane conversation that is the focus of 'pure' CA. These are:

1. Participants are goal-oriented.
2. There are special constraints on interaction.
3. It takes place within an inferential framework and procedures.

Post-ist

A term coined by Lynch (1993) to include antifoundational movements, debate and research in all disciplines. Post-ist includes postmodernists, poststructuralists, and postconvenionalists.

Positivism, positivist thinking

Positivism is both a mindset associated with modernism and a research-enquiry paradigm. Positivism as a mindset is deeply committed to the view that the facts of the world are essentially there to be studied. They exist independently of us as observers, and if we are rational, we will come to know the facts as they are (Schwandt, 1994). Positivist thinking provides the epistemological justification for modernism and the "scientific method". In consumer research, positivism manifests itself in laboratory experiments.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a way of looking at the world that is a reaction to the modernist mindset defined above. Table 1.1 shows a comparison of attributes of postmodernism compared with modernism.

Table 1.1:   A comparison of modernism and postmodernism

Modernism Favours	Postmodernism Favours
Scientism	Plurality of interpretive research methods
Structural functionalism	Local construction of knowledge
Reason	Unreason
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Control	Emancipation
Certainty	Ambiguity, paradox
Simplification	Complexity
Order	Disorder, instability
Individuality	Plurality
Homogeneity	Heterogeneity
Conformity	Dissent
Similarity	Difference
'Either-Or'	Neither or 'Both-And'

Source: Based on Brown (1995:166)

Postpositivism

Postpositivism is a set of basic beliefs and a research-enquiry paradigm that recognises that realism is problematic, understands that there is a meaning underlying facts, and yet its allegiance is to the use of "scientific method". In this respect it is similar to positivism. The majority of market and consumer researchers who use quantitative techniques assume a postpositivist perspective, even though they may not explicitly recognise this.

Product

The definition by Kotler et al. (1998:887) has been adopted as an operational definition. "A product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or a need. It includes physical objects, services, persons, places organizations and ideas".

Scepticism

The definition by Grayling (1996:46) has been adopted as the operational definition. Scepticism is "the request for the justification of knowledge claims, together with a reason motivating that request".

Scientism

The uncritical acceptance that science is both highly distinct from and superior to common sense. Scientism claims that the methods of the natural sciences (e.g. using deductive reasoning and empirical testing) can, by reason alone, establish objective knowledge of ourselves and the world around us.

Social constructionism

Social constructionism, also known as constructionism, holds that the sources of human action lie in relationships with others. Social process is believed to shape the human mind and what is believed to be knowledge. Social constructionism is a research perspective within the constructivist paradigm (Gergen, 1994:68).

Social theory

Social theory is used in this thesis in two ways. First to identify a specialised part of philosophy. Second, in the context of the thesis methodology, social theory is the attempt by writers, usually academic, to specify as clearly as possible a set of ideas that pertain to a particular phenomenon or phenomena.

Sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK)

This term refers to a loosely connected array of constructivist, relativist and discourse-analytic academic researchers whose work has displaced the former structural functionalist sociology of science. SSK writers and researchers share a common belief in the "local and *ad hoc* nature of scientific work along with the importance of negotiating the meaning of observations, methods, replications, policy implications and virtually everything else *in situ*, in laboratories, and on the work benches" (Potter, 1996:40).

Soft systems methodology

A systems-based methodology for tackling real-world problems in which the objective to be achieved cannot be taken as given. The theoretical stance for a soft systems methodology is phenomenological (Checkland, 1984/1999:318).

Speech-exchange system

This term is used to identify the implicit overall "rules" that are in place when people gather in groups to talk. Speech-exchange systems are said to lie on a continuum from mundane conversation —the most natural everyday conversation — to speeches and lectures, the most one sided. There are many gradations in between. The difference between speech-exchange systems lies in the extent to which members have equal rights or not to participate in talk.

Standard orthography (SO)

Orthography is the skill of writing words with the "proper" spelling and letters to represent language sounds. The term *standard orthography*, also known as *conventional orthography*, can best be illustrated in the writing of this thesis, apart from those sections showing transcripts using the conventions of CA.

Taboo words

These words are so closely associated with scientism and the hypothetico–deductive method that they are avoided in those chapters describing the methodology of this thesis. Taboo words are *scientific method*, *hypothesis*, *variables*, *sample*, *error*, *validity*, and *reliability*. Statistical terms such as *frequency*, *correlation* and *regression* are also taboo.

Talk-in-interaction

Talk-in-interaction is the preferred term for the study of phenomena (i.e. verbal interaction between people) using conversation analysis.

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in CA is the *conversational episode*, which is always supported by a *data excerpt*. Units of analysis are never aggregated as in quantitative research. In

CA, the recurring discovery of similarities between conversational episodes is always a local phenomenon.

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communications

Word of mouth is verbal communication between individuals. It is a subject of great importance to marketing, for some WOM communication can be controlled, such as by sales persons, and some can be influenced through public relations activities, for example. At the same time, a great deal of WOM, such as everyday conversation about products, is beyond both the control and the cognisance of marketing companies.

Zing

Zing is a specific computer programme designed originally for use in small group meetings. It has portable hardware (12 keyboards), software allowing data input from participants with immediate feedback, and archiving allowing the retention of written records. Thus it is generally associated with EGSS technology; however, the Zing software allows researcher to specify their own templates. In this thesis, references to Zing refer to the hardware and imply the use of the software with a template that was customised for this research.

1.2 Background to the research approach

1.2.1 The choice of consumer behaviour as a subject

Having been interested in complexity theory for several years and exposed to its adoption by academics in the field of management, it seemed natural to ask two important questions. The first was "Why are marketing and consumer behaviour researchers so committed to the methodological procedures and standards of the natural sciences?" The second question was "As complexity theory offers the opportunity for an 'alternative framework of enquiry', can it be implemented in consumer behaviour research?"

This line of thought led to the title and the initial research question: "Can concepts from complex-adaptive-systems theory be used to research consumer behaviour?"

An initial review of published consumer behaviour research studies revealed that they fell into two methodological categories or paradigms. The traditional approach to consumer behaviour research includes the cognitive, behavioural and trait perspectives, all of which assume a positivist or postpositivist paradigm. These paradigms are both the background against which all other perspectives are judged and the "web of belief" (Potter, 1996:23) of the mainstream consumer behaviour research community, which is expressed in debate and periodical publications. From the early 1980s, however, "new" perspectives on consumer behaviour appeared that were interpretivist and postmodern, thus falling fall broadly into a constructivist paradigm.

In the early stages this study was influenced by the ideas of Marsden and Littler (1998). They pointed out that "basic assumptions shape the research process in terms of the type of questions asked, preferred methods of inquiry, interpretation and evaluation". They added that "the different ways in which marketers construct ideas about the role and requirements of consumers constitute the assumptions on which marketing strategies are organised" and "probing the basic assumptions can be a useful strategy for generating alternative frameworks of inquiry". In other words, by probing some of the assumptions underlying consumer behaviour research, other methods of research enquiry might be stimulated.

The question was also asked "What practical use will the research be?" which prompted the response "To whom?" Initially, it seemed there were several constituencies for whom the research could have practical uses. Managers responsible for marketing and advertising agencies immediately sprang to mind. Recent literature abounds with analysis of the limitations of relying solely on aggregate statistics. There appears an increasing awareness that rapid market change is leading suppliers away from mass marketing towards mass customisation: the "segment of one" (Foreman, 1998). Consumer behaviour research has a tendency to regard consumers as a static resource; while advertisers, who are becoming increasingly successful at creating "opportunities to see" are still committed to one-way communication. The prime constituency, however, must be academics who are interested in alternative ways of both looking at and researching consumer behaviour.

One assumption underpinning this research is that consumers are dynamic, unpredictable and spontaneous. Furthermore, it is apparent from the study of the development of the consumer society over the last forty years, that participation in every sense, but particularly in the marketing process, is one of the most significant social factors in the market place. It is proposed here that consumers are no longer passive. They do not sit at home waiting to be advertised at. They actively go out and find, evaluate and choose consumption opportunities. Among other things, the Internet is all about facilitating, if not demanding, consumer participation. Already the Singaporean corporate state has recognised this with its plan to have every citizen on Internet by the year 2003 (The Australian, 14.8.2000).

Finally, there is the very considerable body of knowledge and concern that has emerged during the last two decades under the banner of "consumption and the consumer society" (Bourdieu, 1984; Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; McCracken, 1988a; Miller, 1987, 1995). Academic writers in this field record and generally deplore the effect consumption is having on society, but they offer only controls and restrictions to halt this trend. Many of these controls are not acceptable to a Western World committed to the rights of individuals. It appears, however, that hitherto, limited attention has been devoted to really understanding what drives consumption at the interpersonal level.

This thinking led naturally to an exploration of how the research was to be carried out in practical terms. The theoretical argument of Garfinkel (1996) for an alternative approach to the traditional sociology, which portrays societal change in terms of its own pre-formed generalisations, led to an intensive study of CA. CA is committed to the analysis of talk-in-interaction, focusing entirely on the process by which sense is constructed in conversations. This is very different to the analysis and interpretation of meaning, which is the staple of most consumer behaviour research studies.

The underlying goal of this research was to redefine the consumer as a living system. The systems approach of Harvey Sacks and his colleagues (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) had an immediate appeal, for here was a technique of collecting real-time data, captured on audio tape and that could be studied in detail to provide a microanalysis of the ways in which a small group co-created a response to a situation.

For this research, the situation for discussion by the group was created by the introduction of a topic. The question for the researcher was "Will the group members interact like a complex adaptive system?" In other words, will the consumer group act as a self-organising, nonlinear, interactive entity?

The link between consumer behaviour research and conversation analysis lies in the nature of the topic that sets the scene for the conversation. In the fieldwork, the topic introduced was financial services, which is a market for the selling of specific intangible products. In Australia, at present, the financial services industry is a growth industry. Federal government policy is to discourage reliance on a government pension, and encourage self-funded retirement plans starting early in the individual's working life. Legislation is complex; investment carries risk, and these provide a growing and challenging product market for financial advisers.

So on the one hand there are consumers — most of the Australian working population — who are being forced to respond to government policy, which is communicated to them by advertising and enabling, usually fiscal, legislation. On the other hand, there are marketing companies, usually large assurance companies, offering a range of financial products.

The primary purpose of the field work was to determine whether small groups in conversation behaved like a CAS and whether CA was successful as a method of observing theorised characteristics of a CAS. If they were, was the result a new way to conceptualise the consumer group? The choice of a marketing topic in the main (City) study was made to give relevance to this process-oriented research by showing how consumers construct factual accounts of a product. There was no intention to produce findings directly applicable to the marketing of financial products.

1.2.2 Formative ideas

Consumer behaviour researchers are exploring new and imaginative interpretative approaches to understanding consumers (Gilly, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1997; Murray & Ozanne, 1997; Sherry, 1991; Stern, 1996). Many theorists of organisational behaviour have embraced complexity theory, of which CAS is a part, albeit by

metaphor (Kelly & Allison, 1999; Lissack, 1999b; Wheatley, 1992). There are reservations among some organisational scientists about whether complexity theory can be researched empirically. For example, Mathews, White and Long (1999a) write that:

> … efforts to demonstrate the effects of complex phenomena are in their infancy because the tools are not well-developed nor are the tools that are available accessible or familiar to most organizational researchers. Moreover, we suggest that these perspectives need to be better integrated at a theoretical level before engaging in an empirical research programme.

A formative idea going into the study was that CA might be a well developed and accessible tool for demonstrating complex phenomena such as the talk-in-interaction taking place in a group of consumers.

Apart from an interest in the quantitative application of chaos theory to marketing (Diamond, 1993; Hibbert & Wilkinson, 1994; McQuitty, 1992), consumer behaviour researchers do not appear to have examined the use of complexity theory or CAS at all.

This study started with a broad idea: can complexity theory be used to research consumer behaviour? In the course of extensive reading, the researcher came to a personal judgment to narrow down the scope of the investigation to CAS theory on the one hand and the way in which individuals construct their factual accounts about products on the other (ethnomethodology and conversation analysis). It was apparent from the literature that writers on both sides were using very similar words, and often the same words and concepts to express their ideas or theory. The common denominator was the theorised behaviour of individuals interacting in groups.

This can be illustrated by the following comparison in which the underlying assumptions of CAS are compared with the underlying assumptions of the phenomenology of Schutz, which Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology and CA build on.

Self-organisation in human systems (CAS**)**

"Life is a phenomenon to be expected and a potential to be unfolded by experience, the emphasis is on self-organisation, complex systems have individual agents who predict as they interact and the order that emerges from agent interaction is a potential which is co-created by agents". (Kauffman, 1995)

Phenomenology

"From the outset, we, the actors in the social scene, experience the world we live in as a world both of nature and culture, not as a private but as an intersubjective one, that is, as a world common to all of us, either actually given or potentially accessible to everyone; and this involves inter-communication and language" (Schutz, 1962:57)

The methodological challenge in this study is to provide a bridge between two theoretical perspectives. These are CAS, which is essentially a positivist (scientific) approach to research, and CA which is — not unproblematically — a constructivist (phenomenological) method of data collection, transcription and analysis.

Generalisation

Complexity Theory   Consumer Behaviour

Representation

Complex Adaptive Systems (*CAS*)   Perceptions of a Product

Investigation

CA

Four people in a Group Interacting   Construction of Factual Accounts of a Product through talk-in-interaction

Understanding

•Marketing Communications
•Word-of-Mouth
•Consumer Culture
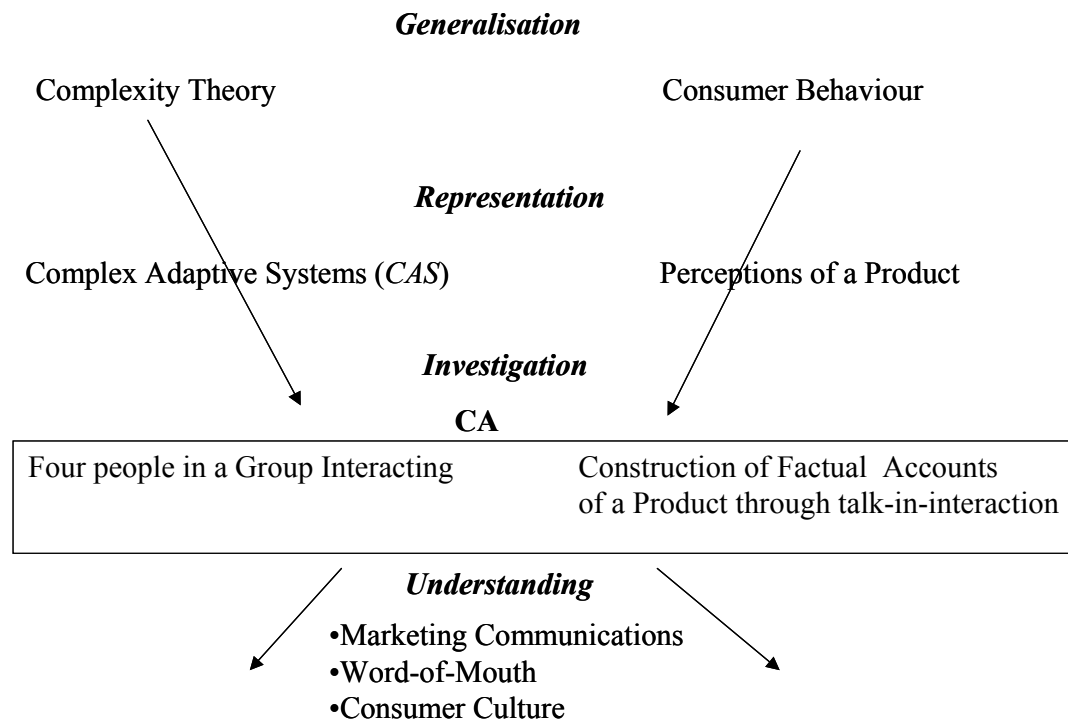
Figure 1.1: A conceptual model of the investigation

s

The relationship between complexity theory, theories of consumer behaviour and the investigation (CA) are modelled in Figure 1.1.

1.2.3 The analytic frame

The primary research goal was to determine whether CAS theory could be used to explain how individuals interact in groups to construct factual accounts about products. Analytic frames are derived from theory, and constitute "the body of knowledge [that] summarizes accumulated evidence-based knowledge about social life" (Ragin, 1994:72). The relevant theories for this study are ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. These are introduced briefly here.

In the mid-1950s, Garfinkel coined the term *ethnomethodology* to describe the study of "the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves" (Heritage,1984a:4). Garfinkel's work was clearly built on constructivist theory over the last half century, and especially the epistemological claims of Schutz (1974) who argued that knowledge does not discover a pre-existing real world outside the mind of the knower, but the construction of meaning can only be related to our own constructing processes (Schwandt, 1994:131). More recently, the development of social constructionist theory suggests a "social epistemology where the locus of knowledge is not the individual, but patterns of social relatedness" (Gergen, 1994:129).

Conversation analysis (CA) regards language as a medium of social action rather than a code for representing thoughts and ideas (Edwards, 1997:84). This promises the possibility of analysing recorded tapes as 'talk-in-interaction'. CA seeks to "discover the ways in which various social actions are organised and describe and analyze these features" (Psathas, 1995a:1). It also claims to use rigorous transcription methods, so reproducible results may be obtained by others examining the same phenomenon. Since Sacks, a student of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, and colleagues developed CA techniques in the 1970s, not only has CA become widely accepted and practised,

but the characteristics of interaction, such as turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974) have been confirmed by further studies (Silverman, 1993).

The research approach of CA is classified by textbooks as constructivist; however, Sacks believed that with sufficient diligence and focus on structure, not meaning, the mechanics of everyday conversation could be revealed in the manner of a "primitive natural science" (Lynch & Bogen, 1994:65). While this study departs from the practice of pure CA, which attempts to analyse only naturalistic conversations (Have, 1999), it does meet the criteria for rigour used by researchers of applied CA (Boden, 1994).

The analytic frame both classifies and characterises the social phenomenon under study (Ragin, 1994:63). Thus the initial analytic frame for this study suggests that those conversations being studied as talk-in-interaction are instances of a broader assertion, namely a complex adaptive system. The analytic frame was minimal and fluid at the start of this study, however, to limit the influence of pre-existing ideas, which is in keeping with the tenets of conversation analysis.

1.3   The research question

The research question was:

> Can concepts from complex adaptive systems and conversation analysis be
> used to research consumer behaviour?

The objectives were:

1. Analyse the literature on consumer research to establish the existing consumer behaviour research perspectives.

2. Analyse the literature on CAS theory to isolate characteristics for field research.

3. See whether concepts from CA can be operationalised for data collection (a) in a 'meeting room' environment and (b) using an electronic group support systems technology to enable the natural conversation necessary to demonstrate the operation of a complex adaptive system.

4. Explore whether the outcome of the fieldwork, using conversation analysis, indicates CAS and CA to be useful tools for further consumer behaviour research.

Underpinning the research question and objectives are deeply conceptual and theoretical issues that have been briefly described in this chapter. The metaphor of a journey has been utilised in this study to illustrate progress towards an understanding of these theoretical issues.

1.4   The research process

Figure 1.2 models the research process, which is seen as an "outward journey". The process moves from theory and ideas generated by the literature (Chapter 2), through the description and justification of the methodology (Chapters 3 and 4) to the findings (Chapter 5). The "journey back", stimulated by the data emerging from the findings that prompted a second review of literature (Chapter 6), leads to a reappraisal of the journey itself, which is reported in the discussion and conclusions (Chapter 7).

The research process, described below, indicates the need to conduct a comprehensive literature survey, spanning several theoretical disciplines and research paradigms**.**

Research Question:

"Can concepts from complex adaptive systems and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour ?"

Chapter 1

• Formative Ideas
• Theoretical Perspective
• Analytic Frame
• Research Question

Chapters 2 & 3

•Literature Review
•The Theory of the Methodology
• Strategy for Inquiry
   paradigm
   ontology
   epistemology
   methodology

Chapters 4 & 5

• Research Methods
•Fieldwork
   Preliminary Studies
   Forestville Studies
   City Studies
•Findings

Chapter 6

Second Literature Review

Emerging Issues

Discussion & Conclusions
Chapter 7

Figure 1.2:   The research process

Chapter 2. Literature review one: the journey out

This chapter covers the literature reviewed in preparation for the theoretical argument in Chapter 3 and the research methods described in Chapter 4. As Vidich and Lyman (2000:62) observe, "to be meaningful to others, the uniqueness of our own research experience gains significance when it is related to the theories of predecessors and the research of our contemporaries".

The literature review is presented in six parts, each with a theme central to this study:

1. *The historical background* provides an overview of this study and places it in historical context.

2. *Philosophy and theory* introduces the theoretical ideas and issues confronting this attempt to advance a new research perspective.

3. *Complex-adaptive-systems theory* provides a synthesis of this vast field and clarifies the position on complex adaptive systems (CAS) adopted for this study.

4. *Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis* is a brief introduction to the canonical texts as the theory and practice are expounded in some detail in subsequent chapters.

5. *Marketing and consumer research* sceptically reviews the literature supporting the contention of a "crisis in representation" in marketing and the acceptance of interpretative research perspectives by the consumer research community.

6. *Consumer behaviour research: a diversity of perspectives* critically reviews scholarly publications on consumer behaviour research in areas related to this study to surface assumptions on methodology.

2.1   The historical background

Historical sensitivity — looking critically at the assumptions upon which the research topic is based — is essential to understand the multiple foundations upon which this study draws. Phenomena that are historically significant to marketing, of which consumer research is a subset, are briefly reviewed. It will be argued that the overall marketing rationale has laid the foundations for legitimate and respectable

methodologies that are often equated with what Lynch (1997) calls scientism. These methodologies underpin marketing research and much consumer research today.

The chapter will highlight some of the concerns that will be further explored, regarding the development of marketing epistemology and methodologies. The role of antifoundational and post-ist movements (Lynch, 1997:xii) are described for their liberating effect on thinking and not as a central theme. In particular, the effects of these movements on academic consumer behaviour research will be noted. Complexity theory will be outlined in its historical context and CAS theory introduced

2.1.1 Marketing

The development of a discipline

Modern marketing developed from the convergence of a number of trends in Western societies. The industrial revolution in England, France, Germany and the United States was followed by the development of mass retailing before the end of the nineteenth century. Two world wars inhibited the development of marketing in Europe, but the United States offered near perfect conditions for marketing to revolutionise both the economy and, some would say, society (Laird, 1998). Among these conditions in the first half of the twentieth century were mass production, a market economy offering unlimited opportunity for innovation, a growing population, an emphasis on education, and rising disposable incomes (Laird, 1998; Lears, 1995).

The origins of marketing thought lie in the practical contributions of those concerned with solving the problems of the market place (Bartels, 1988). Academic subjects now known under the umbrella term of marketing — such as distribution, selling and advertising — were often taught as a part of applied commerce. Both practitioners and teachers (sometimes the same people) viewed training through a "how to do it" lens. Textbooks were practical and often influenced by the management principles of the time. For example, Converse (1927) in *Selling Policies* was clearly influenced by F.W. Taylor's principles of scientific management (Scully, 1996). Consumer research as an academic discipline also owes its origins to Taylor's scientific management in which industrial managers seek to maximise production, and management scholars seek to facilitate their work (Murray & Ozanne, 1997:66).

As an academic discipline, marketing is comparatively new, coming into its own only in the last fifty years. The growth of marketing as an academic discipline within the business-studies and management sectors of higher education in Western countries has been rapid and dramatic. The United States led the way, spurred on by the Gordon and Howell Report in the late 1950s, which recommended the incorporation of concepts from mathematics and the social and behavioural sciences into the business school curriculum (Pierson, 1959). This recommendation was reinforced by the results of studies carried out by the Ford and Carnegie Foundations that also found that marketing teaching was descriptive, dull, repetitive, had very little theory and made few demands on the intellect of students (Bartels, 1988).

To remedy this situation, the Ford Foundation sponsored a one year program at Harvard University designed to train professors in higher mathematics for subsequent careers in business education. Many of those attending this program turned to marketing. Their thoughts, their publications and their teaching redefined and reconceptualised marketing as a discipline firmly based on two approaches: those of scientific method and quantitative research. Both of these approaches contributed towards a new interpretation of management known as marketing orientation (Bartels, 1988:254/257).

Philip Kotler (1967) is a good example of the generation of marketing scholars who emerged during the 1960s to challenge the traditional approach to marketing and create a new orthodoxy that prevails today. Trained as an economist, fresh out of the Ford Foundation mathematical program at Harvard, he joined Northwestern University, where several established marketing professors were systemising the fields of marketing research, marketing management, channel management and consumer behaviour.

Kotler (1987) writes: "In examining the existing marketing textbooks, I felt that they lacked the tight analytical quality of economics textbooks. They contained many lists … and hardly any theory. Little was reported in the way of research findings and methodologies from the social, economic and quantitative sciences. As a result, I decided around 1964 to write my own marketing textbook". *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning and Control* (Kotler, 1997) is probably the most successful

marketing textbook ever written. It has influenced marketing educators and students over four decades and provided the model of what is and should be taught in marketing. It continues today to provide the framework for university textbooks such as Assael (1995), Kotler (1998) and Pride (1998). In this way, the conventional wisdom of academic marketing became established.

In 1970s the United Kingdom, followed by Australia, established many new business schools in universities and institutions destined to achieve university status. Marketing academics looked to the United States for their theory and their textbooks. To establish credibility for marketing among the already established university disciplines, quantification and "scientific" research became the orthodoxy. By the late 1980s, however, it became apparent that quantitative skills alone and functional specialism, which marketing academics continued to advocate, were considered to be too narrow as a preparation for working in business by those studying for a Bachelor of Business Administration or an Master of Business Administration (Porter & McKibbin, 1988:322).

Marketing and business

Business adopted the marketing revolution with enthusiasm. As early as the mid-1950s, Peter Drucker, an influential writer on management, was advocating marketing orientation as the key to success in business (Drucker, 1954). Subsequently, Levitt's (1960) *Marketing Myopia,* published in the *Harvard Business Review,* attributed the failure of leading companies in the United States to their lack of marketing orientation. Spelling out that modern marketing started with analysing consumer needs and wants followed by coordinating company activities to meet these needs and wants, Levitt encapsulated the essence of modern marketing. This set an agenda for marketing academics and practitioners which "over thirty years later, has lost little of its resonance and rhetorical power" (Brown, 1995:32). Successive surveys of business executives (1971, 1985, 1990, 1993) show a familiarity with what had become the orthodox marketing theory that was being taught on marketing courses and a belief that marketing is the key to commercial success regardless of organisational size, sector or location. (Brown, 1995:34).

Until the 1950s selling was the main thrust of marketing (Lears, 1995). Advertising was seen largely as showmanship with public relations and sales promotion as secondary support. Martineau (1957) drew attention to the potential for using psychology in the development of advertising, and Packard (1957) scared many people in the United States and Britain with his assertion that that advertising could penetrate the subconscious and thus manipulate consumers. As a consequence, "motivation" advertising was banned, while the advertising fraternity on both sides of the Atlantic divided into two camps. The "scientific" advertising agencies believed, in accordance with the doctrine of the Ted Bates agency, that through research a *unique selling proposition* could be developed to establish product benefits in the consumer's mind. In contrast, the adherents of "image" advertising led by David Ogilvy (Ogilvy, 1964) believed in the "soft sell", as it was known at the time. Among academics, Crane (1965) followed by DeLozier (1976) and others called for a total communications approach. In parallel, Howard (1969) published the first theory of buyer behaviour, and consumer research became established as a scientific discipline in American universities.

For advertising and marketing practitioners, however, the environment changed. The gradual imposition of bans on tobacco advertising led to these big advertisers searching for alternative mass media. Traditionally, public relations and sponsorship were considered suspect as the persuasive effect on consumers could not be measured. In the 1980s, however, the search for new exposure opportunities and new media tapped the potential for merchandising and sponsorship company by company and media by media with rapid success (Twitchell, 1996).

The history of the sponsorship of the Olympic Games is a case in point, starting from a small beginning, when sponsorship was introduced into the 1984 Olympics at Los Angeles to help the budget deficit. The Olympic name and the interlocking rings are trademark possessions of the International Olympic Committee, but everything else is a vast business for organisers and marketing companies. "For the sixteen days of the Olympics we are treated to a maelstrom of mercenary merchandising" (Twitchell, 1996:139). It is advertising, sponsorship, public relations, sales promotion, and merchandising rolled into one total mass communications circus. No longer is advertising sent to consumers. Instead, millions of consumers play a proactive role in

the creation of their own consumption through participation. The complexity of this co-creation defies measurement other than in terms of image. Most companies remain committed to the search for better ways of measuring and controlling marketing while at the same time large budgets are allocated to mass communications with no more promise of reward than an increase in their comparative position in the findings of an opinion poll, image or attitude survey.

Despite all the time and money devoted to advertising, companies still do not know how advertising works according to one practitioner (Biel, 1996). Some academics think they know (Bogart, 1995), but others assert that "much advertising expenditure [is] wasted in ineffective campaigns, and advertising [research] should be concerned with how advertising affects customers, how it works …" (Ambler, 1998). It is plausible to assume that advertising agencies work on assumptions that are seldom examined. These unexamined assumptions have considerable relevance to this study. They are discussed in Chapter 2 and in the conclusions in Chapter 7.

The crisis of representation in academic marketing
The sustained intellectual effort to establish marketing as a science since the 1950s produced a community of academics in which scientific beliefs were expressed in debate and inscribed in scientific writing (Potter, 1996:23). The perspective of the marketing academic community was static and monolithic. The conventional model of how marketing worked was enshrined in courses and textbooks regardless of what was actually happening in the market place and "acceptable" academic research was evaluated against the criteria of scientific method. Since the late 1980s, however, discussion and debate has been taking place. Scholarly papers in conferences and journals have challenged the very foundations of the traditional marketing discipline itself (Brown, 1995). Brown (1998: 23) identified this complex self-questioning among marketing academics as "a 'genuine' crisis of representation … a loss of conceptual self-esteem [which] is a direct reflection of unprecedented upheaval and turmoil in the marketplace itself".

What is the nature of this crisis of representation? In brief, the *theory* of marketing fails to take account of the *practice* of marketing. For example, fragmentation of markets, smaller segments, the proliferation of products, flexible manufacturing and

— in particular — new organisational forms such as alliances cannot be accounted for. Every one of the theories upon which marketing relied, such as the product life cycle and strategic matrices (e.g. the Boston Grid) fails, despite decades of research, to establish its validity, reliability, universality and predictive power according to Brown (1995:47). Finally, the philosophy of science in marketing appears to be in turmoil. From the late 1980s, interpretative, constructionist and humanist marketing researchers have "espoused a methodology … epistemology … ontology … and axiology that are markedly different from the marketing research mainstream" (Brown, 1995:48). As this study is firmly positioned within academic consumer research, this development is discussed below.

It should be noted, however, that the "crisis of representation" is by no means confined to marketing. In many social sciences, academics have been expressing uncertainty about their certitudes. Since Thomas Kuhn (1962) attacked some of the bastions of research assumptions, compelling arguments have been advanced for the dissolution of the tenets of scientism and positivism (Gergen, 1994:44).
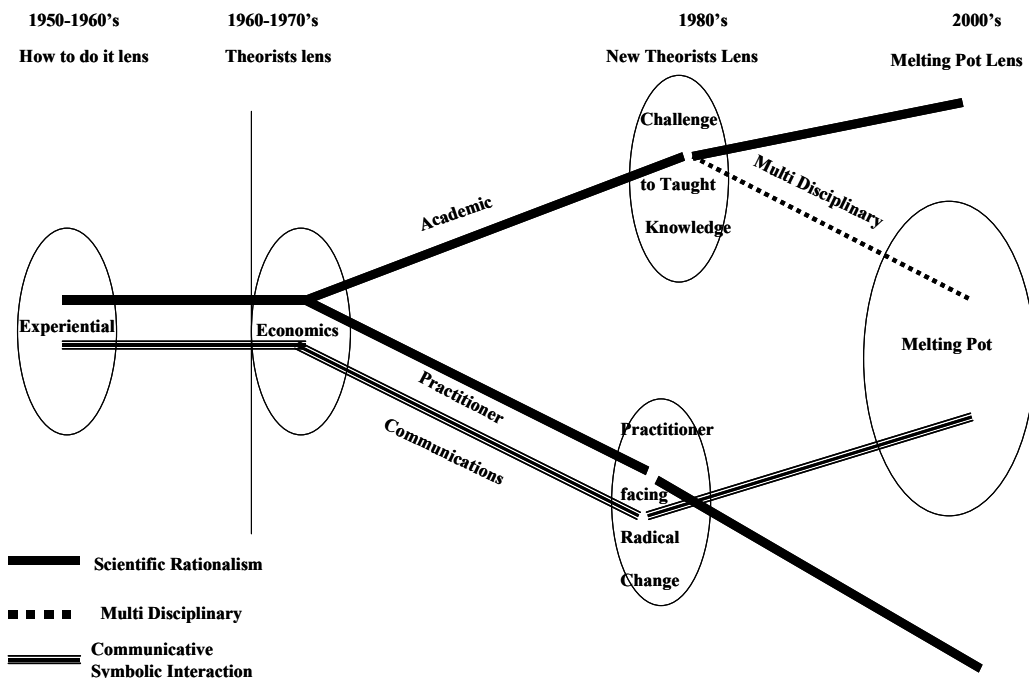
Figure 2.1: The development of marketing 1950–2000

The melting pot and beyond

Figure 2.1 depicts the development of marketing since the 1950s among practitioners and academics in the Euro-American countries. Starting from the how-to-do-it lens — with its emphasis on knowledge based on experience — mainstream academic marketers and practitioners diverged, though both were, and still are, committed to a positivist approach to their work and allegiance to research conducted according to scientific method.

It is proposed that the period we are entering, can only really be understood through the metaphor of a "melting pot" lens as shown in Figure 2.1. The presence of scientific rationalism among practitioners and some academics is conspicuous by its absence in the melting pot.

At one extreme, conventional academic research based on the hypothetico-deductive method (Malhotra, Hall, Shaw, & Crisp, 1996; Sekaran, 1992) dominates taught marketing research, undergraduate research, and mainstream academic conferences and publications. This is represented by the thick line in Figure 2.1. This conventional wisdom enshrined in textbooks remains the staple content of marketing courses even though comparatively recent developments, such as relationship marketing and Internet marketing, generate dedicated studies but are only tacked on to standard texts in the form of a summary.

In the 1980s, faced with a rapidly changing marketing environment, some academic marketers recognised the crisis of representation and sought a variety of alternative, multidisciplinary qualitative approaches to consumer research (Brown, 1995). This challenge to the academic establishment is depicted as the multidisciplinary trend and is represented by the dotted line in Figure 2.1.

At the other extreme, marketing practitioners continue to rely heavily on quantitative measurements for strategic and tactical business decisions. This commitment to positivist and postpositivist research is illustrated by practitioner marketing research: the solid black line in Figure 2.1. Examples from consumer research are Underhill's *Why We Buy: the Science of Shopping* (1999) and Kosslyn and Zaltman's *Mind of the Market Laboratory* at the Harvard Business School (Shenker, 1999).

There are also two camps among marketing practitioners. In one are those who manage marketing through research-performance monitors and strategists totally committed to following quantitative indicators. These are represented by the thick black line in Figure 2.1. In the other camp there are the creative innovators: the entrepreneurs who restlessly develop new advertising, new promotions, new media combinations in order to retain the hold of their brands on consumer perceptions, memories, beliefs and so on in the name of "image". These are the marketing communicators represented by the triple line in Figure 2.1.

Many multinational companies today believe that marketing communications, popularly depicted as establishing and maintaining brand image, is the core activity for international success (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997). It has, they say, precedence over formal marketing management, which is planned and carried out locally (Pilger, 2001). For these multinational companies, the "manufacture" or manipulation of consent has replaced marketing (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). KMPG, the management consultancy, wrote that while marketing remains a sound philosophy of business, marketing as a discrete management function is already redundant (Hood & Knight, 1997).

In summary, both conventional academic marketing and many marketing decision makers were ruled by and relied on quantitative measures of consumer behaviour. Since the 1980s, alternative and qualitative approaches to marking research have been thrown into the melting pot. At the same time, marketing practitioners in large organisations are increasingly recognising the difficulties and critical role of marketing communications. Contrary to expectations, marketing, conventional academic research and practitioner conventional wisdom do not appear to be part of the flux of change. Some academic consumer research has gone into the melting pot. Some remains outside and this situation is discussed in the next section.

2.1.2 Academic consumer research

The foundational base

Research and writing on consumer behaviour made significant contributions to the development of marketing thought from the 1950s to the late 1980s. Statisticians,

mathematicians and psychologists applied their disciplines to marketing and "new" conceptions of the consumer were invented. Research was pursued on various psychological concepts including motivation, perception, memory, recall, cognitive accounts of individual knowledge, and explorations of consumer personality (Bartels, 1988:259 & 189). These became the foundational base for consumer research.

The emphasis was on laboratory studies, and the endeavour to develop theory was downplayed. Sociological concepts were neglected. Marketing was regarded as "the means by which *business* supplies the needs of society, rather than as a means that *society* has sanctioned for meeting its own needs" (Bartels, 1988:191) (author's italics). Consequently, consumer research devoted itself to understanding how individual and social behaviour could be moulded by marketing, thus subordinating social values to economic and commercial values

The assumptions upon which "traditional" consumer research is based include a world view of phenomena that is objectified, apprehendable, observable and explicable in the sense of generalisation within specified populations. For many marketing activities this method still provides businesses with excellent information upon which to base marketing decisions. For others, the scientific method may be less effective (Lynch, 1991). For example, the deeply penetrating questions about *why consumers think* about products as they do; *how they respond* to talk about products, and *how they utilise* their individual capabilities for constructing "facts" about products are needed to complement the more macro, "objective" bases.

This research proposes that both the scientific approach and new research approaches (such as CAS theory) are necessary for consumer behaviour research to progress and evolve.

Post-ist thinking: The antifoundational base
In support of the approach adopted for this study, an argument about the developing antifoundational base in consumer behaviour research is presented.

The last two decades have seen a fundamental shift in disciplinary perspectives on consumer behaviour research. The constructivist paradigm is acceptable alongside the positivist paradigm, which had previously dominated research on consumer behaviour (Sherry, 1991; Gilly et al., 1997, Marsden and Littler, 1998). A similar shift in perspective has taken place in the broader context of marketing (Firat and Venkatesh, 1994; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Applbaum et al., 1998). Sherry (1991:551) has proposed that the term *postmodern alternatives* be adopted as opposed to *post-positivism*. It links consumer behaviour research with parallel developments in related disciplines, and characterises perspectives and methods that are being used in consumer behaviour research from disciplines that have been previously underrepresented.

In the consumer behaviour research field it seems that a watershed occurred in 1986 after five years of social drama. "The protagonist has been variously construed as 'positivism', 'traditional' or conventional' research; the antagonist has been billed as 'interpretivism', humanism', 'naturalistic inquiry' or 'alternative' research" (Sherry, 1991:552). It was not rebellion against excessive disciplinary compliance. It was an approach meant to produce a more satisfying and holistic research culture.

It is important to note here that given the emphasis on the "alternative research" approach, that the value of positivist or traditional consumer research is not contested. Its value in certain spheres and activities is acknowledged, and the theoretical approach taken in this study is seen as an alternative, rather than a replacing concept.

Under the cross-disciplinary banner of postmodernism the concept of consumer behaviour research was broadened to embrace the cultural perspectives of anthropology, sociology and history with particular emphasis on communication and consumption. The adoption of this alternative approach, termed "paradigmatic pluralism" by Sherry (1991:572), has engendered many new directions for future research. The research perspective has been broadened to include a wide range of interpretive alternatives to scientific realism and postmodern methodologies (e.g. Sherry, 1991:568; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995:256, Firat et al., 1995:46, Murray and Ozanne, 1997:66 seq.). Postmodern writings have played an important part in releasing the researcher from latent assumptions and conceptual changes provided by

the traditional consumer research perspectives described above. Indeed, postmodernism melts boundaries and automatically produces the melting-pot thinking depicted in Figure 2.1.

2.1.3   Complex-adaptive-systems theory

Often aligned to the idea of melting boundaries and melting-pot thinking is the idea of nonlinear, adaptive, emergent thinking incorporated within the concept of CAS thinking. Indeed, complexity itself has been described as:

> … an umbrella term for "complex phenomena demonstrated in systems characterized by nonlinear interactive components, emergent phenomena, continuous and discontinuous change, and unpredictable outcomes" (Goldstein, 1999a).

The "qualitative science" movement (1984/,1999) began when scholars became aware, from the 1960s, of the inability of the Newtonian paradigm to explain complex phenomena within the natural science field. The result was the origin of chaos theory (Gleick, 1997; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984) and complexity theory (Waldrop, 1992; Wheatley, 1992. Byrne (1998:7) writes that complexity theory has "ontological and epistemological implications which make it a part of the realist programme of scientific understanding and enquiry", yet which accepts the "impossibility of a full quantitative understanding of complex phenomena and the consequent requirement to turn to qualitative approaches". In other words, as Checkland (1984/1999) suggests, scientists are faced with the paradox of a qualitative science. This key phrase is further explored in Chapter 3, where the methodological choices need to take the paradox into account. The branch of complexity theory used in this study is complex adaptive systems, and both are mentioned briefly here and then in more detail in Chapter 3.

Some social sciences were quick to adopt complexity theory (political science, economics); others (management, sociology, psychology) became interested from the early 1990s (Kiel and Elliott, 1997; Butz, 1997). Marketers, however, seem puzzled by complexity theory (McQuitty, 1992; Diamond, 1993). In 1994, Hibbert and Wilkinson, referring to mathematical applications of complexity theory to marketing

systems, wrote that chaos theory (an alternative term for complexity theory at that time) was neither understood or appreciated in marketing.

In contrast, management academics Griffin, Shaw and Stacey (1998) describe a complexity perspective on organisational life based on the work of Holland (1995), Kauffman (1995) and Goodwin (1994). They argue (Griffin et al., 1995:315) that insights from these scientific complexity researchers "allow us to speak of the nature of self-organisation in human systems in a way that emphasises inter-subjectivity, emergence and de-centred agency". The human capabilities for self-organising and co-creation proposed by Kauffman (1995) raises an important question for marketing and a challenge for consumer behaviour research. Do consumers interactively and adaptively talk their opinions into existence, thus exhibiting all the characteristics of a complex adaptive system?

This question raises a paradox. On the one hand, CAS theory liberates by challenging the straight jacket of scientific method, but on the other hand, uses quantification and computer power to search for patterns of behaviour (Holland, 1995). Complexity theorists are not constrained by the polarisation of positivism and constructivism. Gell-Mann (1995:89) a leading complexity theorist writes "Pattern recognition comes naturally to us humans: we are, after all, complex adaptive systems ourselves. It is in our nature, by biological inheritance and also through the transmission of culture to see patterns, to identify regularities, to construct a schemata in our minds. However, these schemata are often promoted or demoted, accepted or rejected, in response to selection pressures that are far different from those operating in the sciences, where agreement with observation is critical".

2.2   Philosophy and theory

This section introduces the literature on the philosophy and theory that lie behind the argument for the theory of methodology presented in Chapter 3.

2.2.1 The philosophical background

Until the latter half of the twentieth century, philosophy provided the arena for beliefs and debates on the philosophy of the social sciences and the ontology and epistemology of qualitative research in particular (Hamilton, 1994).

Traditionally, there have been two philosophical approaches to epistemology: the questions of "What is knowledge?" and "How do we obtain it, and how do we defend our position against sceptical challenge?" (Grayling, 1996). One approach sought explanation, the other understanding.

Table 2.1 illustrates the relationship between the two approaches. The rows of this model raise the question of *analytical priority*. Should the social world (as distinct from the physical world) be analysed holistically (that is, in terms of structures) or individually, taking into account individual agents and their actions. The columns distinguish the two activities, seen as alternatives, of explaining and understanding social action.

Table 2.1:   The four keys to analysing social action

	Explanation	**Understanding**
Holism	Systems	Cultures
Individualism	Rational Choices	Subjective meanings

Hollis (1996:359)

This debate on analytical priorities — explanation versus understanding — remains unsettled today and lurks as a spectre behind any serious discussion on methodology. Inevitably philosophers and what they stand for emerge during the debate. As discussion often reaches back to the Enlightenment, it can be important to appreciate the major players and the position each one held. Table 2.2 illustrates this.

Table 2.2:   Major philosophers

	Explanation	**Understanding**
Holism	Systems *Descartes, Newton, Marx*	Cultures *Wittgenstein*
Individualism	Rational Choices *Hobbes, Hume, Mill*	Subjective meanings *Dilthey, Weber*

Based on Hollis (1996)

The Enlightenment was a broad intellectual movement in eighteenth century Europe, characterized by a rejection of superstition and mystery and an optimism concerning the power of human reasoning and scientific endeavour (Bunnin & Tsui-James, 1996).

Descartes (1596-1650) and Newton (1642-1727), the leading philosophers of the scientific revolution, are termed rationalist, regarding the world as a "perfect watch", a mechanical universe where "whatever happens must happen, given the previous state and the laws of nature, and science advances by demonstrating these necessities" (Hollis, 1996:361). The belief that explanation was the key to understanding applied equally to the material and the social world. Hobbes (1588-1679) epitomises the determinism of the individual and Marx (1818-1883) the determinism of society (holism).

Hobbes, Hume (1711-1776) and Mill (1806-1873) (in Hollis, 1996) believed that people were individuals, each acting rationally. To understand the whole of society one merely aggregated the individual parts. In the words of Mill, "Human beings in society have no properties but those that are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of nature of individual man" (quoted by Hollis, 1996:363). These three philosophers were known as empiricists. Hume, active nearly a century after Descartes, set out to lay the foundations for a complete system of the sciences founded on experience and observation which was to include human behaviour.

Throughout the modern period, that is from the eighteenth century to the present day, epistemology has occupied centre stage in philosophy. "The paradigm for knowledge for rationalists is mathematics and logic, where necessary truths are arrived at by

intuition and rational inference ... the empiricist's paradigm is natural science, where observation and experiment are crucial to the inquiry". (Grayling, 1996:39).

The word *positivism*, coined by the nineteenth century philosopher and sociologist, Auguste Comte (1879-1857), is widely used today to as an umbrella term, embracing empiricism, for the belief that "all true thought is empirical; anything straying beyond the use of scientific method also strays beyond the boundaries of meaning" (Blackburn, 1994:69). Positivism as a research paradigm is discussed in more depth below.

Despite the hegemony of rationalist and empiricist philosophy since the eighteenth century, scepticism was a problem for both schools of thought. Rationalist and empiricist attempts to replace God with science ran into metaphysical difficulties. "When mind is sharply distinguished from matter, as it became in this [scientific] world view, the uncomfortable and apparently impassable gulf between them is most naturally closed either by making the mind material, or by making the material mental" (Blackburn, 1996:68). Kant (1724-1804) and Hegel (1770-1831)are not depicted on Table 2.1; however, their contribution was to keep idealism alive and attempt to marry "an almost religious belief in progress [with] with a genuinely religious emphasis on the nature of the spirit" (Blackburn, 1996:68).

Dilthey (1833-1911), a historian and philosopher during the second part of the nineteenth century, came to the conclusion that "Life does not mean anything other than itself. It does not mean anything other than the meaning beyond it" (Hollis, 1996:368), which subsequently shifted the ontological focus away from a higher being, such as God, to questions of reality. Thus Dilthey was the first to express the "dominant contemporary spirit ... which privileges the facts about the physical and seeks to understand statements about mind and consciousness in its own terms" (Blackburn, 1996:68). Dilthey distinguished between two types of knowledge: understanding (in German *Verstehen*) and explanation. He proposed that there were, therefore, two types of sciences: cultural or social sciences and natural science. Thus interpretative understanding developed as an alternative to positivist explanation and meaning became central to the epistemology of the philosophical debate and the contemporary constructivist paradigm.

The epistemological debate raised the question of "How does one person or group of persons know what is in the mind of another?" This problem, known in philosophy as "the problem of other minds", is crucial to the credibility of consumer behaviour research being conducted today.

The personal knowledge each of us has of the world, which includes observations of other people's behaviour, is known as a single hermeneutic, the word *hermeneutic* being Greek for interpreter. When we interpret other people's minds on the basis of their actions, though, a double interpretation is taking place: the first interpretation is the identification of the behaviour; the second is the ascription of meaning resulting from the action (Hollis, 1996:369).

The problem of how we as humans (researchers) try to understand the behaviour of other humans (consumers) is sometimes termed "the double hermeneutic", and the research process "the hermeneutic circle" because it involves going back and forth between the informant, the context and the understanding of the researcher. It plays a central role in the discussion on the theory of the methodology in Chapter 3 of this study, particularly in the writings of Gergen (1994) and Shotter (1993b).

Weber (1864-1921) along with Durkheim (1858-1917), is considered to be a "father of sociology" (Bell, 1992:806). His methodological writings were influential and, like Dilthey, he accepted the distinction between the natural and the human sciences (Bohman, 1995:849).

> Weber's methodological essays have been important in creating a style of sociology that is distinct from utilitarianism or positivism on the one side, or historicism and idealism on the other … Weber insisted that meanings individuals attach to their activities are essential to the understanding of those actions and that these meanings are embodied in the norms governing social structures (Bell, 1992:807).

Weber's analysis starts from an individualist–understanding analysis of meaning; i.e. what an agent means by action. It is this analysis that places him in the lower-right quadrant of Table 2.2.

Wittgenstein falls into the quadrant depicting the holistic–understanding analysis of meaning. The following brief commentary of his later writings shows not only why he belongs in that quadrant but also signals fundamental philosophical ideas that are invoked by theorists of ethnomethodology and CA of which language is a central component.

> In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein repeatedly draws attention to the fact that language must be learnt. ... In learning a language the child is initiated in a form of life…
>
> [In *On Certainty*] he insisted that every belief is always a part of a system of beliefs that together constitute a world view ... For all this he was not advocating a relativism, but a *naturalism* that assumes that the world ultimately determines which language games can be played.
>
> But *On Certainty* also argues that it is impossible to refute scepticism by pointing to propositions that are absolutely certain, as Descartes did when he declared "I think, therefore I am" ... The fact that such propositions are considered certain, Wittgenstein argued, indicates only that they play an indispensable, normative role in our language game, they are the riverbed through which the thought of our language game flows (Sluga, 1995:858).

As the twentieth century progressed, the debate widened. "Analytical philosophy [which is] is based on the work of Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Bertrand Russell (1892-1970) and G.E. Moore (1873-1958) … is the dominant mode of philosophising ... throughout the entire English speaking world today ... and those not in the analytical tradition — such as phenomenology, classical pragmatism, existentialism, or Marxism — feel it necessary to define their position in relation to analytical philosophy" (Searle, 1996:1-2). The central phase was logical positivism, which reached its peak of achievement between 1939 and 1945. Analytical

philosophy has never been fixed or stable, because it is intrinsically self-critical, and its practitioners are always challenging their own conclusions, but Searle (1996) writes, "given its constant demand for rationality, intelligence, clarity, rigour and self-criticism it is unlikely that it can succeed indefinitely …".

From the mid-twentieth century a range of alternative approaches arose for interpreting the philosophical issues of the "key to the analysis of knowledge". We may start by asserting that there are two poles at the leading edge of epistemological and philosophical enquiry today. Quantum theory, complexity theory and chaos theory are research driven: a return to fundamentals in the sciences with implications for studies of society. It would be comfortable to consider these first because they are natural, though spectacular, developments of the philosophy of science. To discount the power of scientific method would be foolish for the very methods of scientism are taking us to the brink of the mapping of all 10 billion or more neurons of our brain, with visions of creating artificial intelligences that think and experience consciousness in ways that are indistinguishable from a human brain (Isaacson, 1999) When this happens, will philosophy be relevant in the form we take for granted today?

2.2.2   The role of the philosophical background

The philosophical background has left us with an unresolved debate on the most appropriate approach to be adopted for the analysis of social action. Is it to be explanation or understanding? A caveat must accompany this account of the philosophical debate. It is that this review is reductionist in the extreme, selecting only theories that appear relevant to the theoretical background of this study and presenting these discretely.

To comprehend the philosophy of the social sciences one starts with explanation, which — until recently — was the sole approach of the natural sciences. Exploring understanding as the key to knowledge in the *social* sciences opens up a debate with a staggering variety of perspectives today. This background seeks only to sketch the historical foundation upon which these perspectives rest, but the theories of our forebears clearly foreshadow the concepts underlying the contemporary debate and justifications for employing constructivist or interpretivist research today. As

Schwandt (2000:206) observes, the issue (explanation versus understanding) is mainly of concern today to those defending interpretivism in the social sciences against logical empiricism and positivism This research progresses Schwandt's comment to the state where both interpretivism and positivism can be employed within a complexity framework.

2.2.3   The philosophical case against scientism

The case against scientism was made by philosophers from the late nineteenth century. This case is summarised below under several related and sometimes disparate themes.

1. Phenomenology: Advocates of phenomenology claim that human existence is, first and foremost, intentional or semantic, in that our fundamental relationship to the world we experience and engage in is through structures or meaning. This critique of scientific culture is best known through the writings of Heidegger (1889-1976) who argued that science offers secondary derivative accounts of the world (Heidegger, 1978).

2. Existentialism: This loosely knit movement combined the primary conviction of phenomenology, concerning the intentional character of existence, with the insistence on individual authenticity and resoluteness of choice inherited from the nineteenth century Danish thinker Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Sartre (1905-1980), a leading existentialist philosopher, held that "human behaviour cannot be explained like that of an artefact in terms of some set function, nor like that of an animal or stone, in terms of a fixed constitution of nature ..." (Cooper, 1996:711). In other words, a persons' character, personality, attitudes and so on are not a constant force causing a person's action, but rather patterns resulting from an individual's original choice.

3. Hermeneutics: This was a term introduced by Dilthey, a critic of scientism, to describe the study of "methods of interpretation" (Cooper, 1996:712). Gadamer, a leading proponent of hermeneutics, was not "concerned to replace scientific ... methods in human studies by something more suitable, but to attack the very possibility of neutrality and objectivity in methodological enquiry ... the use of statistics, for instance, rests on selecting some 'possibilities for questioning' to the exclusion of others, and only certain features of our relation to the world are worth

examining. Enquiry, therefore relies on 'pre-understanding' and 'pre-judices', biases of our openness to the world ... conditions whereby we experience something" (Gadamer 1976, quoted by Cooper 1996).

4. Methodological individualism: This term is attributed to Mill (Wilson, 1995) and Comte (Weinrich, 1995) who are often held responsible for the positivist, atomistic approach of the social scientists who mimic the natural sciences. For example, Althusser, a Marxist, believes that "individual subjects do not play a fundamental role in explaining social processes, they are in some sense 'invented' by such processes ..." (Althusser 1977, quoted by Cooper 1996). Similarly, Levi-Strauss argued that "the autonomous sources of meanings are not human beings either individually or in groups, but the structured 'codes' — like those governing the production of myths — through which alone the particular utterances or actions of people have the significance they do" (Cooper, 1996:716).

5. The postmodern philosophers: These are exemplified by Lyotard (1984). He points out that scientific knowledge legitimates itself by appealing to a metanarrative which is the "dream of modernism", but this does not reflect the way in which the world works. "The proliferation of discourse and meaning described in postmodern theory is not created by wilful and disruptive theorists, but it is an inescapable effect of the complexities of our linguistic and social spaces. The proliferation of information as well as the way in which the media collapse international public space into local private space prevent us from coming up with unifying, coherent, descriptions of the world" (Cilliers, 1998:113). This argument is popularly dubbed as an "incredulity towards metanarratives". It is not scientific knowledge *per se* to which Lyotard is reacting. It is the particular understanding of scientific knowledge represented by scientism.

The challenge to positivism

The philosophical case against scientism is paralleled by the emergence of challenges to the dominant positivistic methodology in the social sciences that started in the 1960s. It can be no coincidence that the schools of symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, philosophical hermeneutics and ethnomethodology "questioned most theoretical points of positivism, especially its methodology and its perception of social reality" (Sarantakos, 1993). These emerging theoretical perspectives were

providing the substance of the intellectual attack on scientism and the hypothetico-deductive method through a return to foundations, using epistemology to justify their knowledge and its sources.

Simultaneously, from the 1960s, there was a revolution in scientific and academic thinking that had its seeds in the first half of that century, but gathered momentum with the development and accessibility of computer power. It is fitting that "most critics of science happen to be scientists ... [who are] far better placed to do that critical job than historians, sociologists or philosophers" (Shapin, 1998).

Since Newton it was believed that a complete theoretical understanding of any mechanical process could be achieved by using sufficient ingenuity to analytically solve the equations describing the process. The revolution in scientific thinking was said to be heralded by Poincaré who proved in 1889 that our supplies of ingenuity were severely limited. In 1935 Von Neumann and Turing laid the mathematical foundations for the computer, which was used by Lorenz in 1961 to model weather patterns (Coveney and Highfield 1995). This was a turning point. Lorenz made the accidental discovery of sensitive dependence on initial conditions (the "butterfly effect") and laid the foundation for the study of nonlinear systems. "Complexity was infinite but always within certain bounds. It signalled a new kind of order" (Gleick, 1997:30).

At the same time as Lorenz's discoveries were being made, Kuhn (1962), a historian of science, published his views on how scientists work. "In Kuhn's scheme, normal science consists largely of mopping up operations. Experimentalists carry out modified versions of experiments that have been carried out many times before ... [It could hardly be otherwise — normal science is solving problems according to methods defined in textbooks and this] accepted style of achievement carries most scientists through graduate school, through their thesis work, and through the writing of journal articles that makes up the body of academic careers" (Gleick, 1997:37). Kuhn's main concern was to question the logical empiricists' view of change in scientific theory as "an ongoing, smooth and cumulative process in which empirical facts, discovered through observation ... forced revisions in our theories and thus added to our ever increasing knowledge of the world." (Audi, 1995:557)

Ethnographic studies in the sociology of science over the last twenty years (Knorr-Cetina, 1981, 1999; Latour & Woolgar, 1979) have proved Kuhn right. Science is not a unitary enterprise. Indeed, contemporary science is fragmented, displaying "different architectures of empirical approaches, specific constructions of the referent, particular ontologies of the instruments, and different social machines" (Knorr-Cetina, 1999:3).

Contemporary philosophers and social theory

Contemporary philosophers are frequently cited to support ontological and epistemological positions espoused by academics in the social sciences in their publications. Writers on research methodology, complexity theory, marketing and management are a part of this debate, and some of their views will be discussed below.

The philosopher Richard Rorty (1991) is often cited for his position on relativism. "Objective truth is no more and no less than the best idea we currently have about how to explain what is going on" (Audi, 1995:690). Furthermore, Rorty argued that there was no line between philosophy and other disciplines — divisions are institutional and pedagogical — "human beings do much the same sort of problem solving across the whole spectrum of their activities" (Rorty, 1991:76). The plurality of research methods available today requires the researcher to justify the methods selected in terms of a theoretical perspective grounded in philosophy.

Traditional social sciences have been slow to come to terms with complexity theory. One reason according to Harvey and Read (1997:295) is that "the cultural revolution of the sixties identified science with the repressive and dehumanising tendencies of modernism … many social scientists rejected quantification with a vengeance and opted for hermeneutic method in their research". The problem is that both parties to the debate assumed there was only one social science and only one scientific method. Harvey and Read (1997:296) argue that there are a plurality of methods, and each researcher must chose the one which fits the ontological contours of the problem being studied. In what circumstances can the complexity paradigm be employed in the human sciences? Claiming to steer a middle course between positivists and postmodernists, Harvey and Read (1997) invoked the work of the contemporary philosopher Roy Bhaskar.

Philosophy's complacency about science was shattered, writes Bhaskar (1986), with the publication of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and Feyerabend's *Against Method* (1975, 1988). "No longer can thought be conceived as a mechanical function of given things, as in empiricism; nor can the activity of creative subjects continue to be seen as constituting a world of [mental] objects, as in idealism; nor is some combination of these possible …" The answer for Bhaskar lies in the theory of "scientific realism" which maintains that "objects of scientific enquiry exist and act, for the most part, quite independently of scientists and their activity … the question of whether or not natural science is 'realist' can only be settled empirically, viz. by determining whether or not scientists believe or behave as if, the theoretical terms they employ possess real referents independently of their theorising" (Bhaskar, 1986).

Finally, there is the literature of social constructionism that draws extensively on the literature of contemporary philosophy. For example, Gergen (1994) singles out the philosophical writings of Quine (1953), Kuhn, (1962) and Rorty (1991) as philosophical references; however, the move away from philosophy towards a more independent social theory, which led to the sociology of knowledge, must surely start with Berger and Luckmann (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality* argued that the world we live in is not just there to be taken for granted. Natural objective phenomena do not just simply exist. People, individually and in society, construct reality, which is the totality of the conscious world we live in. "The reality of everyday life is organized around the 'here' of my body and the 'now' of my present" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:36). This book opened up for study the issues which, subsequently, became central to social constructionism.

This brief review of philosophy so far takes us to the final quarter of the twentieth century, when philosophy and social theory merged in the consideration of common issues. Although social theory involves the analysis of issues that spill over into philosophy, it has not been primarily a philosophical enterprise. The task of social theory is to provide "conceptions of the nature of human social activity and of the human agent which can be placed in the service of empirical work" (Giddens, 1984).

The development of qualitative research

An appreciation of the historical development of qualitative research provides considerable insight into this study that seeks to expand existing consumer research methodologies. There appears, however, to be only one comprehensive narrative account available in the literature to date. This brief review thus relies on Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who provide the framework for the "five phases of qualitative research". Before discussing these phases, it should be noted that:

- The phases are defined by literature and publications.

- The dates are indicative of the start of each phase.

- Each phase continues to have adherents operating in the present.

Bearing these caveats in mind, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identify five recognisable 'historical moments' of qualitative research.

1. c.1900 – c. 1950   The traditional period
2. c.1950 – c. 1970   The modernist phase
3. c.1970 – 1986   Blurred genres
4. c. 1986 …   The crisis of representation and legitimation
5. c. 1994 …   The present.

The traditional period was dominated by ethnography when researchers wrote "objective" accounts of their field experiences; for example Mead (1935). It was assumed that subjects — those human beings studied — could be observed in the same way as science observes physical matter.

During the modernist phase researchers attempted to formalise qualitative methods, making their studies rigorous in the same way as quantitative research. New interpretations emerged including phenomenology (Schutz, 1962), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967/1999). This phase produced a literature of many texts that are recognised as canonical today.

An important differentiating phase from the 1970s to 1980s has been described as 'blurred genres' by Denzin and Lincoln (2000:15). Not only was the boundary

between the humanities and the social sciences blurred, but a wide range of paradigms, methods and strategies became available for qualitative researchers. The qualitative impact began to be recognised, although perhaps not as clearly and unproblematically as the quantitative genre. Two books defined this period: Geertz (1973) and Geertz (1983).

> Geertz (1973) argued that the old functionalist, positivist, behavioural, totalizing approaches to the human disciplines were giving away to a more pluralistic, interpretative, open-ended perspective. This new perspective took cultural representations and their meanings as its point of departure … [Furthermore], the boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities had become blurred" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b:9).

During this period, postpositivist and constructivist paradigms came to the fore, and postmodern philosophy influenced some qualitative researchers, although not unproblematically. Postmodern argument drew attention to difficulties, unrecognised by quantitative researchers, of asserting through research activities "true" representations of the reality of others.

The crisis of representation was reported among qualitative researchers from the mid-1980s as earlier models of truth and meaning were challenged. Central to this debate was a contemporary rendition of the philosophical "problem of other minds". The questions asked were: "Who is the Other? Do we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other? and if not, how do we create a social science that includes the Other?" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994:577). In other words, the problem of representing the reality of the respondents in the texts that qualitative researchers write, demanded to be addressed.

Since the mid-1990s, qualitative research has faced a triple crisis and may be said to be in the melting pot. This is a crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis confronting qualitative researchers in the human disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000c:17). Two key assumptions of qualitative researchers are now open to question:

- Qualitative researchers can no longer assume that they can capture the directly lived experience of another person. This is the crisis of representation.

- The traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research (validity, generalisability and reliability) are problematic. This is the legitimation crisis.

These crises intersect and blur into each other. The fifth historical moment is the postmodern period of ethnographic writing. Included in this historical moment are epistemologies from groups previously silenced. Examples of these in consumer research are discussed below.

> The concept of the aloof observer has been abandoned … The search for grand narratives is being replaced by more local, small scale theories fitted to specific problems and particular situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000c:17).

This study clearly lies in the present historical moment having the characteristics described in the above quotation from Denzin and Lincoln (2000). These are manifested in the research methodology described in Chapter 4.

A more general description of the melting pot in qualitative research is provided by (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000:1048).

> Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field. It cross-cuts the humanities, the social sciences and the physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multiparadigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach … Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On the one hand it is drawn to a broad, interpretative, post experimental, postmodern, feminist and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is shaped to more narrowly defined positivist, postpositivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis.

This statement is particularly useful in locating the present study, which seeks to combine the theory of CAS with ethnomethodology. It also raises an important issue. The issue is one of polemic extremes, the poles producing a duality of thinking about research perspectives.

> The discovery that "incompatible" elements can coexist [in current theory] calls such theories into question, and may force researchers to theorize about how such logically incompatible things can coexist (Ragin, 1994:46).

While consumer research over the last two decades has been divided between the two approaches, with the majority favouring the postpositivist perspective and the "new" researchers exploring the interpretive and postmodern perspectives, this study raises the question of whether it is possible for the two "tensions" to coexist. Complexity theory has challenged the theoretical category of positivism, even though the majority of researchers use quantitative methods. Complexity theory is certainly not interpretative, but the theoretical ideas from CAS do seem to lend themselves to investigation by qualitative methods.

These issues are central to the research question: *Can concepts from complex-adaptive-systems theory and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour?* This raises another question: Can the theorised characteristics of a CAS be observed in practice? This issue will be taken up in Chapter 3 (Theory of the methodology), Chapter 6 (the post-findings literature review) and again in Chapter 7 (Conclusions and implications).

2.3   Complexity theory and complex adaptive systems

The purpose of this section is to provide continuity between CAS theory introduced in section 2.1 and the deeper discussion of CAS which is necessary to establish the theory of the methodology in Chapter 3.

The nature of complexity theory is central to this study. For this reason it will be discussed comprehensively and with particular attention to those qualities that relate to CAS theory. Earlier in this literature review it was pointed out that complexity theory

has challenged the theoretical category of positivism, notwithstanding that the majority of researchers use quantitative methods. At the same time, complexity theory cannot be classified as constructivist leading to an interpretative method of investigation. It is argued here that complexity theory both challenges the theory of scientific method, yet uses mathematics and computer power to simulate its theories. The rationale for complexity theory is derived from postmodern theory, which challenges the scientific method of modernism, and simultaneously challenges the ethnographic methodology of qualitative research, which remained unchallenged until the 1990s. Complexity theory is postmodern. It reconciles paradox. It implies that both methodological perspectives are tenable simultaneously — an investigation of the parts and an investigation of the patterns of the whole.

2.3.1   The nature of complexity theory

Complexity theory is comparatively recent. It is said to have started with Lorenz's discovery of the butterfly effect in 1961, and by the middle of the 1980s, complexity scientists were influential in university bureaucracies, research institutes and centres established to specialise in nonlinear dynamics and complex systems (Gleick, 1997:38).

According to Horgan (1995), all definitions of complexity theory have their drawbacks; however, it is useful to draw a distinction between definitions emanating from science and those from the social sciences, which reflect the adaptation of concepts to management or marketing thinking. Scientists often start with a very broad definition. For example:

> Complexity refers to the condition of the universe which is integrated and yet too rich and varied for us to understand in simple, mechanistic, or linear ways. We can understand many parts of the universe in these ways but the larger and more intricately related phenomena can only be understood by principles and patterns — not in detail. Complexity deals with the nature of emergence, innovation, learning and adaptation. (Lissack, 1999a, quoting Howard Sherman from the Santa Fe Center)

This notion of principles and patterns resonated strongly with the use of conversation analysis in the proposed field research. Consumer conversations as talk-in-interaction are "intricately related phenomena" impossible to understand in a linear way, but with the potential of exhibiting observable patterns.

Other scientists recognise that a narrowing down is required. Gell-Mann (1994:33), author of *The Quark and the Jaguar*, which is a canonical text for Chapter 3, maintains that "any definition of complexity is necessarily context-dependent [and] even subjective ... in actuality, then, we are discussing definitions of complexity that depend on a description of one system by another, presumably a complex adaptive system, which could be a human observer".

The computer modelling and mathematical approaches of scientists naturally have a strong appeal to those in the social sciences and marketing who already take their methodological lead from the natural sciences. Thus, for example, Hibbert and Wilkinson's (1994:218) application of chaos theory to marketing models was solely quantitative and may be termed Newtonian. The same may be said for the work of Oliva (1992), who proposed a catastrophe model intended to provide greater insight into the complexity and dynamics of customer behaviour as linked to customer service

It appears that no writer on consumer behaviour to date has considered the qualitative relevance or implications of complexity theory or CAS. For this reason, it is left to management writers, rather than marketing writers, to tell the complexity story.

Many writers on management have been enthusiastic about the "new science" of complexity for the last decade. Inspired by the conceptual revolution suggested by complexity theory, Wheatley (1992:7) writes, "the new physics cogently explains that there is no objective reality out there waiting to reveal its secrets. There are no recipes, or formulae, no checklists or advice that describe 'reality'. There is only what we create through our engagement with others and events". Morgan (1997:348) sees the complexity sciences as sources of metaphor for understanding organisations and management. Finally, there are those writers on management who believe that the "central notion [of complexity science] is that of change, evolution, adaptive and emergent behaviors", which offers more promise than "the 'traditional' reductionist

methodologies as employed in much of the management literature which is particularly ill-suited to explain these types of behaviors" (Mathews et al., 1999b:440).

2.3.2 The diffusion and adoption of chaos and complexity theory

Over the last 30 years complexity theory has been one of the contributors to the melting-pot thinking described in section 0. While consumer behaviour researchers appear impervious to the theoretical potential promised by complexity theory, it is instructive to note the wide and rapid diffusion of complexity theory within the natural sciences, and the relatively slower adoption of these concepts by the social sciences. Weingart (1997:472) suggests that the adoption of the concept of chaos was strongest where it had diffused in a mathematical, positivist form as in the sciences, economics and psychology.

Concepts from complexity theory have gained public currency through diffusion in the media. For example, *Scientific American* reports on developments in complexity theory and chaos (Kauffman, 1991; Horgan, 1995). Peak and Frame (1994:vii) have taught chaos theory to college students from 1988, and their textbook is the outcome. Management books based on complexity concepts and the resultant mental models have proliferated since 1992; e.g. Wheatley (1992), Youngblood (1997), and Kelly (1999). Chaos and complexity texts at undergraduate level in psychology appeared from 1995 (Abraham & Gilgen, 1995; Butz, 1997), and in sociology from 1997 (Byrne, 1998; Kiel & Elliott, 1997). In 1996, the Gulbenkian Committee on the restructuring of the social sciences in the United States suggested that it is "desirable ... for universities to consider the mounting of a common core course [on complexity theory] for all doctoral students in sciences of all kinds ..." (Byrne, 1998:160).

2.3.3 Complexity theory and the paradigm debate

The research question for this study is "Can concepts from complex-adaptive-systems theory and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour?" This question itself challenges paradigmatic orthodoxy because it presents a paradox. Both the challenge and the paradox emerged from deep reading, some examples of which have been selected for this section.

As explained earlier, the positivist paradigm produced assumptions that "knowledge consists of verified hypotheses that can be accepted as facts or laws and knowledge accumulates by a process of accretion, with each fact serving as a kind of building block that, when placed in its proper niche, adds to the growing 'edifice of knowledge'" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:112-114).

Complexity theories cast fundamental doubt on the logic of these assumptions. Scientists found themselves propelled into a paradigm that was clearly constructivist, and the academic community was divided between those who continued to research and publish within the positivist mindset and those who recognised the liberating effect of the change in paradigm. This was happening when Thomas Kuhn (1962) was shattering the prevailing patterns of thought in the philosophy of science and deflating the view of science as an orderly process of asking questions and finding their answers (Gleick, 1997:36). For Kuhn, "a new science arises out of one that has reached a dead end" (Brown, 1995:90). Complexity theory seemed to be one such science.

Both management and marketing are disciplines that have been dominated during the better part of this century by modernism and the metaphor of the organisation as a machine (Morgan, 1997). Concerning marketing, however, although postmodern marketing bears the hallmarks of such a new science (Brown, 1995, 1998), taught marketing continues to reflect modernism.

Lest there be any doubt about the domination of modernism, in management and marketing, and the relevance of complexity theory consider the following paraphrase of a quotation from Wheatley's (1992:6):

> Every marketing manager lives in a world designed from Newtonian images of the universe. The marketing manager organises the team efforts into parts (sales, distribution, advertising and so on) which are believed to form a whole known as the marketing department. The marketing manager engages in complex planning for a world that is expected to be predicable, and the marketing research manager searches continually for better methods of objectively perceiving the world through consumer research.

Intentionally or not, the marketing manager's world view has been derived from the natural sciences.

The point is that the single most important implication of complexity theory is an ontological one.

Reality changes shape and meaning because of our activity. And it is constantly new. We are required to be there as active participants. It can't happen without us and nobody can do it for us (Wheatley, 1992:151).

Accept this constructivist world view and the concepts of complexity will provide a rich source of theory and metaphor for the academic researcher and practitioner in both management and marketing.

The fascination with the unfolding reaction of the academic community to the fundamental challenge to ontology made by complexity theory lies in the jockeying for position posed by the dialectic. In 1979, it seemed quite clear that the assumptions behind the two paradigms (positivist and constructivist) reflected "quite separate and distinct views of social reality" and "the approaches cannot be integrated and, furthermore, such a synthesis should not be attempted" (Mathews et al., 1999b:3). At face value, the complexity theory would appear to fall within the constructivist paradigm, and yet the research methodology remains positivist. (Similarly, ethnomethodology is constructivist, yet its research methods of data collection – CA – are empirical.)

One of the most recent and thoughtful discussions of this paradox is provided by Mathews et al. (1999) whose conclusions may equally apply to the disciplines of marketing and consumer behaviour.

Complexity sciences offer a perspective developed from the objectivist/positivist/nomothetic paradigm. In addition, the pragmatic conclusions reached by this perspective are similar to those of the pragmatic aims of researchers espousing a subjectivist/anti-positivist/ideographic position. In this sense the complexity sciences may

render the issues of paradigm incommensurability moot as a practical issue for researchers in the organizational and social sciences ....

The complexity sciences do not point to an either/or view of disparate paradigms; but rather they point to a both/and perspective. Thus, the complexity sciences may offer an answer to the question of whether organizational studies can begin to break out of the normal science straight jacket (Mathews et al., 1999b:29).

2.4.4   Complex adaptive systems

There is no overarching theory of complexity that allow us to ignore the contingent aspects of complex systems. If something is really complex, it cannot be described by means of a simple theory. Engaging with complexity entails engaging with specific complex systems (Cilliers, 1998:2).

The coalescence of theories on the nature of complexity shows considerable diversity arising from the fact that they emerged across a number of scientific disciplines, each seeking fresh perspectives on the central problems of their specific discipline. A broad consensus is emerging as to grouping and labelling for the purpose of applying to management issues (Mathews et al., 1999a). As there is no equivalent literature for the behavioural aspects of marketing or consumer research, the management consensus is noted in lieu. Under the umbrella of CAS, the literature is grouped into four main theoretical themes, which currently guide the study of the human systems that are the concern of organisational analysis in management. These themes are:

1. the concepts of nonlinearity and interdependence;

2. the concept of chaos;

3. self-organisation theory; and

4. the theory of autopoiesis.

These themes are described briefly and in general terms here as a background to the theory of the methodology in Chapter 3, where specific aspects of CAS theory are

identified and isolated to become the characteristics of the CAS that were observed in the field work.

The concepts of nonlinearity and interdependence

The concepts of nonlinearity and interdependence are seen as a characteristic of emergence in a CAS (Goldstein, 1999a:55). This is central to the research question. In the field research for this study, consumers' talk-in-interaction in a group is recorded. It is proposed that these consumers are in a nonlinear, interdependent system (the group), where it is impossible, owing to the complexity, to isolate variables for the prediction of the group behaviour. The concepts of nonlinearity and interdependence are described below.

The Newtonian world was a linear world (Briggs and Peat, 1989; Zohar and Marshall, 1994; Peak and Frame, 1994).

> The search for linearly-founded laws is a search for predictive ability. If we can establish the relationships so that our formalised linear mathematical models are isomorphic with the real world, and our ideal method for doing this is thought to be the controlled experiment, then we can predict what will happen in a given set of circumstances, provided we have accurate measures of the initial state of the system (Byrne, 1998:15).

The "new science" and computer power has opened and begun to explore another world that was hidden from us before. We realise now that virtually everything is nonlinear, and the behaviours we study are different from our linear expectations. The concept of nonlinear interdependency lies behind the theories of chaos, self organisation and evolution that follow.

The concept of nonlinearity is simple:

- A nonlinear system is any system in which input is not proportional to output . It is everything whose graph is not a straight line.

- Nonlinearity, from a linear perspective is paradoxical. Humankind's first-position thinking is linear ... but the world is much more subtle than that ... The rise of

nonlinear models means the rise of a more subtle and, consequently, a more realistic vision of the world.

- It is virtually impossible to pin it [nonlinearity] down as a whole to any one type of effect ... Nonlinearity can produce either positive (amplifying) or negative (dampening) feedback. It can produce stability or instability ... opposing tendencies are built into a single system, unlike the linear world.

(Goerner, 1995:19)

Interdependence is a concept that must be understood alongside nonlinearity, but they are not related:

- Nonlinearity has to do with proportionality.

- Interdependence has to do with whether or not two things mutually affect each other.

- In the real world there are no truly linear systems and there are no truly independent systems ... the nonlinear revolution is about exploring the nature of nonlinear interdependency, which, in the final analysis, is what all real world systems are.

(Goerner, 1996:20)

The concept of chaos

Chaos is a concept with theorised qualities that provide a metaphor resonating with the behaviour of talk-in-interaction, which is the focus of the fieldwork of this study. Randomness is a part of what Coveney (1995) call "exquisite order". Conversations can meander in a seemingly random fashion, yet conversation-analytic theorists suggest that there is a discernible order within the talk-in-interaction of a conversation (Sacks et al., 1974). This section describes the more physical aspects of the phenomenon of chaos from which its metaphoric use emerges.

Chaos is the name given to unstable yet bounded behavior. It may be defined as a pattern of behavior over time that is generated by a deterministic equation but which is extremely sensitive to the starting conditions such that no matter how close two starting conditions are they

will diverge exponentially over time ... A consequence of this behavior is the impossibility of long-term prediction, which has important implications for forecasting and planning behavior (Hibbert & Wilkinson, 1994:218).

Chaos theory shows, however, that when a system is studied long enough, with the perspective of time it always demonstrates its inherent orderliness. Furthermore "the most chaotic system never goes beyond certain boundaries — it remains within the shape we call the system's strange attractor". These characteristics are often expressed as "order exists within disorder, and disorder within order." (Wheatley, 1992:21). It is also suggested that "order is hidden in chaos" (Goerner, 1995:23) and "order comes out of chaos" (Hayles, 1991:12).

To fully appreciate the paragraph above we examine the key observations that emerged from the scientific study of chaotic systems. The *strange attractor*, which is part of the "order is hidden in chaos" idea, provides a new way of thinking about order. The strange attractor received its name to distinguish it "from its simple cousins such as point attractors and limit-cycles", all of which describe the pattern of points on a computer screen". (Coveney & Highfield, 1995:170). The strange attractor is described here not so much for its usefulness to the research question, as for its contribution to melting-pot thinking introduced in section 0 and its adoption by writers on management.

A computer "tracks the evolution of a system, recording a moment in the system's state as a point of light on the screen. Soon we observe millions of moments in the systems history never showing up in the same spot twice as we watch the lines weave their strands into a pattern and order emerges from this disorder. The pattern on the screen is the strange attractor". Chaos, when it erupts, will never exceed the bounds of its strange attractor which is "not the shape of chaos — but the shape of wholeness" (Wheatley 1992:122).

Strange attractors have "two distinct ingredients" that "produce complex behaviour. First ... it displays an immense sensitivity to the starting or initial conditions. The long

term behaviour of a system trapped in a strange attractor depends on the minutest details of how it was launched. ... Second, it is a fractal object." (Coveney and Highfield, 1995:172).

Fractal describes "the peculiar geometry of irregular shapes that look the same on all scales of length. In the same way, regardless of how much a fractal object is magnified, it contains essentially the entire structure of the object. This property of endlessly manifesting a motif within a motif is known as 'self similarity'... A fractal's form is the same no matter what length scale we use to view it." (Coveney and Highfield, 1995:172).

The concept of fractals suggests that a study of the behaviour's smallest parts, which Sacks advocates as a starting point for conversation analysis, can provide remarkable insight into the behaviour of the whole organism. In terms of consumer behaviour research, it is emerging patterns that are important as these indicate the shape of the whole.

To summarise the implications of the scientific perspective on chaos theory:

- Order is hidden in chaos: strange attractors are patterns arising from what appears to be completely erratic behaviour.

- Chaos is sensitive to initial conditions, but as these cannot be measured accurately, the outcome is unpredictable.

- Fractals cannot be measured quantitatively. It is the coherent pattern, the shape (or patterns) that is significant, not the parts.

- Complex adaptability creates a "hidden global ordering" as the parts relate to the whole and the whole to the parts (Goerner, 1995:23, Murray, 1998:279)

Self-organisation theory

The link between chaos theory and self-organisation is proposed as follows:

> Whereas chaos provides a completely mechanical understanding of the dynamic processes which take place in complex adaptive systems, self organization theory adds the dimension of energy flow, usually expressed in distance from the equilibrium (Goerner, 1995:24).

Self-organisation theory in the cognitive sciences has led to the development of artificial intelligence (AI), and neural-network theory has led to the work of Holland (1995) and cellular automata (Waldrop, 1992). Neural nets are today being applied to an impressive range of problems from pattern recognition to predicting demand for airline seats (Coveney and Highfield, 1995:147). It has been pointed out, though, that "while admittedly a far cry from describing anything like human intelligence, these experiments present a minimal example of how autonomous systems can draw significance from a random background which may not be totally unlike the way humans draw significance from an after all neutral universe" (Geyer, 1994:11).

Self-organisation theory, emerging from the study of living cells, should have a natural appeal to consumer researchers as a foundation theory for understanding the behaviour of consumers in groups. Prigogine in chemistry (Briggs & Peat, 1989) and Kauffman (1991, 1993, 1995) in biology are both pre-eminent researchers in their field.

Prigogine coined the term "dissipative structures" for his theory. "Dissipative structures, according to Prigogine, are self-organizing ... arise spontaneously and may spontaneously evolve toward greater complexity" (Corning, 1995:95). Indeed, "Prigogine and his colleagues see self-organising structures emerging everywhere: in biology...in the growth of cities, in political movements ... [and] he calls instances of disequilibrium and self-organization 'dissipative structures'" (Briggs and Peat,1989:138). This quotation could be describing the dynamics of conversations studied as talk-in-interaction within the small groups of self-organising members convened for the fieldwork in this study.

The name dissipative structures "derives from the fact that in order to evolve and maintain their shapes, these structures use up energy and matter. They are open systems, taking energy from outside [the system] and producing entropy (waste, randomised energy) which they dissipate into the surrounding environment. One systems' entropy is another systems food" (Briggs and Peat, 1989:139)

This process is described by Wheatley (1992:19) as follows:

> Dissipation describes a loss, a process by which energy gradually ebbs away. Yet Prigogine discovered that such dissipative activity could play a constructive role in the creation of new structures. Dissipation didn't lead to a demise of the system. It was part of the process by which the system let go of its present form so that it could re-emerge in a form better suited to the demands of the present environment ... Dissipative structures demonstrate that disorder can be a source of order, and that growth is found in disequilibrium, not in balance.

Dissipative structures are of interest in this study for their reminder that natural conversation, which is spontaneous and disorderly, can through the machinery of talk-in-interaction, reveal its own orderly world.

Bifurcation is a concept suggesting a turning point in the life of a system when it makes a "choice" between fragmentation or taking off in a new direction. Thus, "bifurcation points are milestones in the system's evolution; they crystallize the system's history" (Briggs and Peat, 1989:144). The conditions for bifurcation, which are wide and varied, will not be described here, though it should be noted that the concept of bifurcation has far-reaching implications for the theoretical dynamics of human groups and organisations. For example, is the melting pot in the history of marketing and consumer research, described in section 2.1 of this literature review, a bifurcation point? Is not the "interpretive turn" in consumer research (Sherry, 1991) a response to the manifestation of postmodernism in markets? Are not new structures emerging in markets producing novel ideas in consumers that need to be researched in a way — such as conversation analysis of talk-in-interaction — that will surface consumer adaptation to changing market conditions?

Another facet of self-organisation theory is Prigogine's "time irreversible" theory (Briggs & Peat, 1989:134-139). There is a time-honoured habit of applying formulae so that events happen in the past, present or future. (For example, the formula: Time = Distance ÷ Speed.) Prigogine produces an alternative argument. Each event, or moment in time, is newly constructed and requires renewed interpretation. This interpretation cannot stretch over time and space but emerges from interaction. The relevance to consumer research academics is clear. Involvement and the study of interaction must replace the application of formula and the assumption of passive consumer reaction to marketing activities.

Prigogine's time-irreversible theory has profound implications for the interface between science and metaphysics and for the theory of natural selection. Clearly some traditional scientists feel threatened by his theories (Briggs and Peat, 1989:146-152). Corning (1995) reviews complexity scientists following Prigogine and gives special attention Kauffman's *The Origins of Order: Self-organization and Selection in Evolution* (1993).

> The proposition [of Kauffman's book is] that autonomous, autocatalytic processes are the primary sources of order in nature, and that natural selection merely fine tunes the results, represents a radical reformulation of evolutionary theory (Corning, 1995:97).

There are similarities between chaos theory and self-organisation theory. These are described below; however, the concepts of self-organisation, rather than chaos, have greater potential for questioning whether CAS can be used in consumer research.

The self-organising approach [in biology] is, in many senses, the complement or mirror image of chaos theory ... While chaos theory is an approach to the study of spatially simple systems, governed by deterministic rules, that produce complex and complicated temporal behaviors, the self-organising approach concerns the study of how systems which are spatially complex and have the potential for chaotic behavior, generate organized and patterned temporal behavior." (Mathews et al., 1999a:447)

The broad messages of self-organisation theory are summed up by Goerner (1995:25):

- Self-organizing, self-maintaining dynamic organizations occur spontaneously far from equilibrium — they do not occur at, or near, equilibrium. Energy flows play a fundamental role in the creation of such order in the real world ...

- Self-organization found in non-living systems provides both a metaphor and a conceptual model for living systems and supra-living systems (e.g. cities) ...

- New forms of organization emerge through the process of order through fluctuation. Self-organization is usually the result of "a small fluctuation being amplified into a new form ..."

The relevance of self-organisation theory to the study of consumer behaviour is suggested by Mathews et al. (1999a:447):

> Self-organization is viewed as the capaCity of open and living systems, such as we live in and we ourselves are, to generate their own new forms from inner guidelines rather than the imposition of form from outside.

Here we see the shift from thinking that consumers will be governed by external forces, such as advertising and promotion, to thinking that consumers will interact with externally produced stimuli, imposing their own locally produced meanings.

The Theory of Autopoiesis

In section 2.1 of this literature review, traditional consumer research was portrayed as having been autopoietic in nature – self-renewing, autonomous and aimed at maintaining the status quo. This section elaborates the concept of autopoiesis

Autopoiesis is a theory on the nature of life, developed by the Chilean scientists Maturana and Varela (1980). They theorise that a living organism is a circular, autocatalytic-like process that has perpetuation of its own survival as its main goal (Goldstein, 1999a). Reflecting on this definition, it can be argued that modernist thinking and the establishment in any academic discipline, such as consumer behaviour research, are autopoietic. At the same time it can be argued that the

transitory groups of consumers selected for the fieldwork for this study is also autopoietic.

Autopoietic structures are highly sophisticated "open systems" and "remarkable creatures of *paradox*" according to Briggs and Peat (1989:154) (italics added). On the one hand, "because autopoietic structures are self-renewing, they are highly autonomous, each one having a separate identity, which it continually maintains". On the other hand "like other open systems autopoietic structures are also inextricably embedded and inextricably merged with their environment — which is necessarily a far-from-equilibrium environment of high energy flows involving food, sunlight, available chemicals, and heat" (Briggs & Peat, 1989:154). In another sense, should it be actively sought, the autopoietic structure can allow constant energising and recreation.

Such would be the case for consumer behaviour research to draw on the complexities of consumer interactions in the marketplace. At the very least the concept of autopoiesis requires consumer behaviour to take a new look at consumers interacting in groups.

Understanding the concept of autopoiesis is one thing, justifying it both ontologically and epistemologically is another. Scheper (1996:9) applied positivist criteria to demonstrate that the "so called theory of autopoietic systems ... cannot be empirically tested and therefore has no explanatory power". While this may well be the case from the perspective of a traditional positivist, the theory of autopoiesis has been transferred from biology to the social sciences by two significant writers whose work is described below.

The first of these is the proposal by Luhmann (1988) that while social systems are self-organising and self-reproducing systems they do not consist of individuals or roles or even acts as commonly conceptualised, but of communications. The argument is set out below:

> The biology based theory of autopoiesis should be expanded into a more
>   general theory of self-referential autopoietic systems ... While

communications rather than actions are thus viewed as the elementary unit of social systems, the concept of action admittedly remains necessary to ascribe certain communications to certain actors. The chain of communications can thus be viewed as a chain of actions — which enables social systems to communicate about their own communications and to choose their new communications i.e. to be active in an autopoietic way (Geyer, 1994:15).

As this argument stands, it provides a justification, arising in complexity theory and transferred to a theory of social systems, for the theoretical concepts of ethnomethodology (Coulon, 1995: 15-27). Such an argument has been used by Schneider (2000) whose work is discussed in section 2.4; however, Luhmann's theory (1998) differs in one important respect from CA, which is one practical activity arising out of and embedded in the concepts of ethnomethodology. For Luhmann, meaning is a fundamental category of social-systems analysis (Checkland, 1984/1999:282). For conversation analysis meaning is not a category at all, for CA seeks to study the machinery, rules and structures that produce orderliness in talk-in-interaction.

Geyer (1994) draws attention to wider issues raised by the consideration of the theory of autopoiesis for the social sciences.

Such a general theory has important consequences for the epistemology of the social sciences: it draws a clear distinction between autopoiesis and observation, but also acknowledges that observing systems are themselves autopoietic systems subject to the same conditions of autopoietic self-reproduction as the systems they are studying.

Classical epistemology searches for the conditions under which external observers arrive at the same results, and does not deal with self-observation. Consequently, societies cannot be viewed, in this perspective, as either observing or observable. Within a society, all observations are by definition, self-observations.

(Geyer, 1994:15)

The second influential writer on the use of autopoiesis as a concept is Morgan (1997) who maintains that the theory is an key metaphor that challenges the traditional approaches to organization theory. The traditional view of organisations as open systems may be likened to the traditional view of marketing as a system. Both are believed, mythically in Morgan's view (1997:353) to interact with the environment, "transforming inputs into outputs as a means of creating conditions necessary for survival" (Morgan 1997:253). In support of Morgan's challenge,

> Maturana and Varela argue that all living systems are organizationally closed, autonomous, systems of interaction that make reference only to themselves … a system's interaction with its 'environment' is really a reflection and part of its own organization. It interacts with its environment in a way that facilitates its own self-production; its environment is really a part of itself. (Morgan 1997:253–4).

This interpretation of autopoiesis has an especial relevance for the discipline of consumer research. A deep and penetrating question for academic consumer researchers is whether the discipline, founded on clear and almost inviolable constructs has, especially when espousing change and progress, been self-referentially preserving its status quo and working towards maintaining its orthodox identity.

2.5.5   Summary

This part of the literature review has focussed on those publications that interpret and discuss complexity theory with special reference to its application to the social sciences, management, marketing and consumer research by extension. Two main themes have been explored: the paradigm debate and interpretations of CAS theory. Both are of particular relevance to this study.

2.4   Conversation analysis

2.4.1   Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis

Ethnomethodology is the theoretical perspective adopted for this study, and conversation analysis is both a theoretical perspective that is closely aligned to ethnomethodology and a method of data collection. The ideas behind these theoretical

perspectives contribute substantially to the theory of the methodology and are discussed in Chapter 3. This part of the literature review is confined to noting the canonical texts for ethnomethodology and CA.

Ethnomethodology is represented in this literature review by its originator, Garfinkel (1967/1999). His collection of essays, written over the period 1955–67 was designed to "treat practical activities, practical circumstances, and practical sociological reasoning as topics of empirical study" (Garfinkel, 1967/1999:1). Ethnomethodology, for Garfinkel, was an alternative to traditional Parsonian sociology known as *structural functionalism* (Garfinkel, 1996). Whilst the formal analysis of structural functionalism is a procedure for one construction of reality, ethnomethodology is the procedure for an alternate construction of reality. Thus formal analysis and ethnomethodology are "incommensurably different *and* unavoidably related". (Garfinkel, 1996:9) (author's italics).

Heritage (1984a) has become the canonical text for placing ethnomethodology in the context of the development of social theory. He provided an authoritative account of ethnomethodology in relation to its philosophical antecedents — e.g. (Schutz, 1962; Schutz & Luckman, 1974) — and Parsonian social theory. Garfinkel was the original thinker, establishing ethnomethodology alongside phenomenology (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) in the 1960s. Heritage (1984a) was the expositor, the populariser of ethnomethodology. Of particular interest to this study is Garfinkel's recommended agenda for the conduct of field research, which follows from his theoretical position. Salient and relevant points are as follows:

- Any setting in which conversation takes place can be analysed so as to uncover the ways in which the member's actions affect their choices. This analysis can only be done within the setting.

- Members create or produce the rules for their conversation in its setting, so it is unsatisfactory to describe or interpret a setting by reference to rules or standards that are external or independent of the setting.

- Ethnomethodology should view any social setting as self-organising in that members are accountable and organise their activities to be intelligible to themselves.

- Members of a setting are, at all times, engaged in producing, interpreting and making sense of the setting, which is a serious practical task.

The primary source for CA is Sacks (1992/2000a and 1992/2000b) who founded the field in collaboration with Schegloff and Jefferson. Sacks' lectures, given from 1964 to 1972, were circulated as unpublished manuscripts among the pioneer researchers of this new field. They published the results of their research in academic journals. For example, Sacks (1974) is widely quoted as having established that turn-taking occurs in all conversations and cultures. Sacks' aim, in his lectures, was to implement in the field Garfinkel's belief that a method of analysis was required that would capture the concrete details of social interaction as primary data. While Sacks' lectures are "still a major resource for contemporary researchers" (Heritage, 1984a:233), the proliferation of publications and findings on CA has been substantial over the last two decades.

There are several canonical texts on the practice and theory of conversation analysis. Silverman (1998:180) points out that researchers should not try to follow Sacks' projects literally because within CA there should be a "continuous re-energising of inquiry" and its possibilities as exemplified by Sacks himself. This demands knowledge and awareness by the researcher of contemporary debates and practices. Psathas (1995a) describes the practice of CA against its conceptual framework. Hutchby (1998) and Have (1999) both focus more on the practice of CA, while Have (2000) strongly argues the methodological issues.

2.4.2 Conversation analysis and systems theory

The literature search revealed only one paper where the researcher was using CA theory and practice in a way similar to this study. The paper is reviewed here and comparisons made as the author concluded that "conversation analysis could lend its conceptual and methodological instruments to systems theory to bridge the gap between abstract heuristic assumptions and empirical analysis" (Schneider, 2000:139). Schneider's argument is important. For this reason it is summarised as follows:

Mainstream sociology analyses action as intentional behaviour. The basic units of social process are considered to be *mentally* constituted actions. Actors become

socialised through exposure to the expectations of others through communication; however, communication itself is only possible where actors understand the meanings of others. Thus, communication and social action refer to each other.

This leads to two positions for sociological theorising:

1. "Communication can be interpreted as a specific form of action"; for example, the information processing models of consumer research.

2. "Actions can be analysed as products of a communication process. In this view the meaning of a single utterance is seen as the result of a meaning attributional process sequentially and retrospectively realized by the utterance(s) following the next to a preceding one". This assumption is found in the work of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, symbolic interactionism and Luhmann's phenomenologically grounded version of systems theory (Luhmann, 1990).

Both positions summarised above conceptualise communication as an autonomous level whose structural properties can be analysed without speculation on the psychic processes. (Schneider, 2000: 123–4).

Schneider's argument so far could have been the argument for this study if it had been placed in the context of sociology; however, one of the specific objectives of Schneider's paper is to show that cooperation between conversation analysis and systems theory is possible. This objective parallels the general objective of this study, which may be said to make plausible the use of CAS theory in consumer research; however, the approach to achieving the objectives are very different.

Schneider (2000) combines the symbolic interactionist perspective of Mead (1934/1964) with the systems theory of Luhmann (1990). The outcome is the following propositions:

1. Communication is conceptualised as the basic operative unit of social systems.

2. Communication is considered an autopoietic system.

3. Social acts (Mead) are artefacts of communication.

The combining, and indeed dovetailing, of these two theories provided the opportunity for the analysis of conversational excerpts already published by other scholars as examples of conversation analysis. Schneider's (2000:129) analysis indicated "possible points of connection between conversation analysis and systems theory"

The parallels between Schneider and this study are set out for comparison in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3:   A comparison of Schneider (2000) and this study

Schneider (2000)	This study
Perspectives	**Perspectives**
Symbolic interactionism	Ethnomethodology
Luhmann's systems theory	Complex-adaptive-systems theory
Empirical observation of:	**Empirical observation of:**
'Rules' in system	Characteristics of CAS
Data	**Data**
Excerpts from other scholar's articles originally collected in the field	Data collected in the field
Analytic method	**Analytic method**
Conversation analysis	Conversation analysis
Conclusion	**Conclusion**
Conversation analysis may be able to bridge the gap between heuristic assumptions and empirical analysis.	Conversation analysis may be able to bridge the gap between heuristic assumptions and empirical analysis. Specifically, see Chapter 7.

2.5   Marketing and consumer research

In section 2.1 the "crisis of representation" in marketing, which began in the early 1980s, was described; and it was pointed out that many of the other social sciences were also undergoing self-doubt and questioning of their previous certitudes. Furthermore, it was argued that this was all a part of a wider movement in Western society that falls under the very broad umbrella of the term postmodernism. This part of the literature review starts with an account of the conventional wisdom enshrined in marketing and consumer research texts. This is followed by an account of the

interpretive turn in consumer research, new approaches and a critique of recent reports on consumer behaviour research that are of interest to this study.

This interest in the crisis of representation and the responses of consumer behaviour researchers to it lies at the heart of this study for it will be argued that many consumer researchers continue to rely on mental models that are remote representations of actual consumer behaviour.

2.5.1 The conventional wisdom in marketing and consumer research

This section expands the literature of the foundational base of marketing and consumer research introduced in section 2.1.

From the 1960s marketing and consumer research academics were committed to the empiricist paradigm described in *Business Research Methods* by Emory (1980:21) as follows:

> Science is a body of systematized information that includes principles, theories and laws [that] define our present body of knowledge ... a scientist adds blocks of knowledge to the scientific stockpile. [However], the theories and principles would soon become dogma if not subjected to constant investigation and development. In this dynamic view, science is a body of generally accepted rules by which one deals with knowledge, that is, it is the scientific method ... Clearly our objective [as researchers] is to test and expand our knowledge of reality"

This conventional wisdom continues to be most apparent in standard textbooks. Over the years a variety of formats have been adopted, but all adopt the same "scientific" paradigmatic approach (Brown, 1995). For this study Kotler (1998) was the benchmark. The first American edition of this text book (Kotler, 1967) was based upon economics. Successive editions, with each chapter well annotated with published academic-journal scientific research findings and case histories, introduced the behavioural sciences, non-profit marketing, international marketing and so on. A good example is *Marketing* (Kotler, Armstrong, Brown, & Adam, 1998) a recommended textbook for many MBA marketing courses in Australian universities. It exhibits the

standard format starting with the marketing "philosophy", which is unambiguously a realist philosophy. This is followed by how to analyse marketing opportunities, select target markets, develop a marketing mix, create a competitive strategy and finally extend "marketing science" to the global marketplace. All these are tangible activities based upon observable phenomena. When one turns to an alternative text, such as Assael (1995), which is also widely prescribed for undergraduate courses in Australia, there is a change in presentation, style and emphasis; but the paradigm remains unchanged.

Marketing research textbooks also enshrine the conventional wisdom of scientific method. Cox (1979) is particularly strong on "marketing research and the scientific method" though naturally dated on research techniques. Sekaran (1992) is particularly good on 'science in research' and the 'hypothetico-deductive method'. Malhotra et al. (1996) offer an excellent account of the theory and practice of marketing research. All three texts are committed to 'scientific method' regarding qualitative research as no more than an exploratory activity meriting few pages.

Consumer behaviour textbooks follow the same pattern, reinforcing the conventional wisdom. For example, Schiffman, Watson, Bednall and Kanuck (1997:xi) is a recent textbook that sets out to "explain the relevant concepts upon which the discipline of consumer behavior is based" for practitioners, students and teachers. The relevant concepts are derived largely from journal publications over the last twenty years. Thus it is a repository of the received wisdom. Findings from psychology are invoked to explain popular concepts such as motivation, perception, learning, attitudes and communication. Sociology contributes theories on groups, family, social class and culture. These are brought together in theoretical models based on flow charts to *explain* consumer decision making, rather than to *interpret* the process.

These concepts and models are so fundamental to orthodox consumer research that Schiffman et al.'s appendix describes six current comprehensive models of consumer behaviour that "provide a starting point for new consumer research studies" (Schiffman et al., 1997:630) and "40 consumer research priorities for the 1990s" in the field of social policy in the United States (Schiffman et al., 1997:611). Their new

research studies and research priorities suggested appear to be a continuation of existing research using "scientific methods" as described above by Emory (1980).

These textbooks give the impression that contemporary consumer behaviour research is based on the assumption that the models of buyer behaviour are in a one-to-one correspondence with objects in the real world. In this way, a self-referencing academic field is created that discourages enquiry outside of the accepted boundaries and assumptions of the realist paradigm. Hawkins, Best and Coney (1992) represents an older text in wide use thatcovers similar ground to Schiffman et al. (1997) but is focussed more on strategy.

Not surprisingly, there is no mention in the consumer behaviour textbooks of the possibility of applying complexity theory to contemporary studies. Should complexity theory be considered, it would cause a dilemma, for — while using quantitative methods — it embraces a qualitative perspective in a both–and relationship.

Among the texts devoted to consumer behaviour, O'Shaughnessy (1992) is exceptional for his aim of "providing the fundamentals needed to feel comfortable in evaluating findings on buyer behaviour and to feel confident in discussing the strengths/weaknesses and applicability to marketing of explanatory systems and methodologies employed in the behavioral sciences". These fundamentals are set out in the first ten chapters, which mainly focus on quantitative methodology; i.e. "scientific" explanation. The last three chapters are of particular interest for their discussion of the philosophical foundations on which buyer behaviour research is based. Thus, positivism is explained along with alternatives to its methodological monism; i.e. claims to be the only method for both natural and human sciences. Among these alternatives are symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, ethnomethodology, anthropology and what O'Shaughnessy terms "antipositivism. These alternatives are not treated with the same standing as the "real" foundations of scientific explanation.

In summary, O'Shaughnessy (1992) provides a sound and comprehensive review of the practice and theory of orthodox buyer behaviour research. His emphasis is on underpinning the received wisdom reflected in the textbooks. Clearly scientific method

is the methodology favoured for buyer behaviour research, a benchmark for judging other methods. For example "when methodology proves inadequate, researchers typically resort to conventionalism, as reflected in statistical approaches to hypothesis testing" (O'Shaughnessy, 1992:268). However, "conventionalism", (meaning that the "truth of any statement is determined not by empirical facts but by social agreement or usage") is the orientation of Kuhn (1962), Feyerabend (1988) and the physicists who developed quantum theory (O'Shaughnessy, 1992:247).

The academic consumer researcher is not without criticism either. "A common criticism is that professional journals in marketing are more interested in articles based on the latest quantitative techniques than in the usefulness of findings — that trivial findings using the latest tools are preferred to the testing of creative hypotheses …" (O'Shaughnessy 1992:321). Finally, the author does advocate a plurality of methods, but still interpretivist methods "involve low level categorization" while "high level constructs" provided by scientific methods are needed "in the interests of parsimony of explanation … and because we need hypothetical constructs that are rich in sense meaning to produce a rich vein of hypotheses" (O'Shaughnessy, 1992:312).

If the research in this thesis has been conducted ten years ago, O'Shaughnessy (1992) would provide an excellent starting point for locating the research in relation to traditions of enquiry. These traditions change slowly, but postmodern consumer research and the new science of complexity have developed rapidly during the last decade.

2.5.2   The postmodern turn in marketing and the interpretative turn in consumer research

This section reviews the literature of the anti-foundational base that emerged in consumer research and was introduced in section 2.1.

In marketing, the paradigm debate surfaced initially in the scholarly journals and led to a wide variety of new, unconventional approaches to marketing and consumer research. The chronicler of the crisis and its implications for the discipline was Brown (1995). *Postmodern Marketing* builds on journal literature to provide an account of the

debate and thought in marketing over the last two decades that has led in the direction of postmodern marketing. The draft manuscript of Brown's book received the imprimatur of leading consumer researchers including Russell Belk, Morris Holbrook and Gordon Foxall. Brown's second volume, while equally well referenced, was dedicated to advancing the theme that "marketing has much to learn from aesthetics in general and the world of literature and literary criticism in particular" (Brown, 1998:34). Clearly the direction in which Brown sees postmodern marketing heading is very different from the theoretical positioning of the research in this study.

In consumer research the paradigm debate was played out within a much smaller academic research community than marketing, with fewer scholarly journals and opportunities to publish. From 1975 criticism of positivist consumer research methodologies and, in particular, the editorial policy of the leading academic journals, grew as they declined submissions with interpretivist research. These criticisms spilled over into conferences and meetings to determine what should be published in the prestigious *Journal of Consumer Research* (Gilly et al., 1997:194; Sherry, 1991:555). This "reaction to excessive disciplinary compliance" by the "postmodern movement" was subsequently portrayed as a paradigm shift and a revitalisation of the discipline of consumer research (Sherry, 1991:548).

The domination of consumer research by the positivist paradigm until the early 1990s is well documented (Murray & Ozanne, 1997:76). O'Shaughnessy (1992), for example, clearly gives primacy to scientific method in his review of research methodologies. Journals, reflecting editorial policy, mirrored establishment views on research methodology. For example, content analysis of articles published in the three leading consumer research academic journals between 1976–90 (Gilly et al., 1997) showed survey research accounted for 64%, laboratory and archive studies 15%, and the remainder "other methods". The most common approach was for researchers to elicit consumers' past remembered behaviour (50%). More than one-third measured actual behaviour, and 12.5 % of the sample used measures of typical reported behaviour or hypothetical or future behaviour. This survey collected data only until 1990; however, it appears that the foundational base of modernism continues to thrive. Joseph Alba, giving the presidential address to the American Academy of Consumer Research in 1999 called on consumer researchers to alter their focus from

behaviourism to cognitivism (Alba, 1999:12). It is implicit in his address and his references that the positivist mindset dominates.

The new consumer behaviour research emerged rapidly, however. Belk (1995) provides a comprehensive review of the new consumer literature for this period 1985–95. He notes that one of the driving forces behind the "new consumer behaviour research" was the recruitment of a number of anthropologists, sociologists and literary critics into marketing departments at American universities. Research agendas were broadening. "The 'discovery' of non-positivist research methods in consumer research opened up a Pandora's box of 'new' substantive questions to be investigated" (Belk, 1995:64).

It appears from the literature that academic consumer researchers to date have not considered the application of CAS theory to consumer research. This is despite the call for consumer researchers to "consciously seek to broaden the boundaries of their thinking, systematically looking to apply different approaches to mitigate the shortcomings that inhere in one approach" (Gilly et al., 1997:126).

This loss of opportunity could be important as portentous changes are happening both to traditional theories and practices of mass marketing that rely on prediction and control. For example, Holbrook (1999:67) cites several recent publications to support his belief that mass customisation, in which production and consumption will exist simultaneously, spells the end of target marketing and segmentation. Internet marketing, which is diffusing rapidly, accelerates this trend (Quelch & Klein, 1996:66). CAS and CA, a potent combination as a research methodology, have the potential to focus on the Achilles heal of consumer behaviour research: the inability to understand how consumers construct their factual accounts of the consumer world in which they live.

2.6   Consumer behaviour research: a diversity of perspectives

Direct comparisons with this study and published research is difficult because there is no evidence that other academics are combining CAS theory with consumer behaviour research. To add to this difficulty, this study — which is concerned with how

consumers construct the factual accounts that influence their consumption decisions — adopts, as a starting point, the theoretical perspectives of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (CA). The case for using CA in consumer behaviour research was made by Parker (1988), but it appears that it has not been followed up. The argument in favour of using CA for consumer behaviour research (Parker, 1988) is discussed in detail in the post-findings review of literature in Chapter 6.

The interdisciplinary approach to consumer behaviour research is not particularly novel. In 1991 Sherry wrote that "the exploration of 'new' methods and 'alternative' ontologies is one of the hallmarks of postmodern inquiry in consumer research" (Sherry, 1991:556). And Belk (1995) goes further:

> Neighbouring disciplines harbor concepts, data and problem-solving strategies that [can] expand horizons, heighten creativity, and increase validity in consumer research. Participating in these disciplines — learning their models and their methods and enlisting them as partners — consumer researchers can bring new power to their work (Belk, 1995).

This difficulty of comparison is exacerbated by special pleading, which seems to be *de rigueur*, for more research in depth in each of the new fields of research interest. For example, Sherry (1995a) would like to see more ethnographic studies as anthropology becomes a subdiscipline of consumer research; Costa (1995:238) would like research to focus on social organisation, particularly the influence of groups that "remain relatively under-researched"; and Belk, Dholakia and colleagues (1996a:5) point out that "consumption has become a major focus of social enquiry" while "macro consumer behavior research is especially interested in the consumption meanings that are created as people use products and services".

There is a further consideration. As Belk (1995:64) puts it: "The 'discovery' of non-positivist research methods in consumer research has opened a Pandora's box full of 'new' substantive questions to be investigated". It has also led to explorations of the 'new' methods in philosophical and methodological depth. Some of these are discussed below.

This study does not belong to any existing unifying theme in consumer behaviour research such as those identified above. Nether does it wholly conform to any of the methodologies currently advocated or employed. For these reasons direct comparisons with existing research are not possible, but this study does belong to the new perspective listed by Belk (1995:61) as *emergent theory*.

What follows is an attempt to carry out a qualitative analysis to surface the conscious and unconscious assumptions of scholarly works related to the present study either by subject area or by research perspective or methodology. These assumptions force the definition of problems and findings (McCracken, 1988b:31)

2.6.1   Consumer behaviour research: publications by subject area

How consumers consume

An innovative research stream, devoted to describing and understanding how people consume, has recently emerged according to Holt (1995). His research, a two-year observational case study, is interpreted in the context of three distinct metaphors for consuming reported in previous literature.

The broad subject matter of Holt's article draws on foundation concepts that are also provide a starting point for this thesis investigation. The constructionist and interactionist perspectives play a central role in the thesis. Holt continues by saying that consuming is viewed as a type of social action in which people make use of consumption objects. Berger and Luckmann (1966) are briefly cited for their views on 'shared reality' (Holt, 1995:1). The claim is advanced that consumers make sense of experience by accounting, evaluating and appreciating. And "all acts of consuming are rife with interpersonal interaction (even private acts of consuming involve self communication …) but this is particularly true of consuming that occurs in groups …" (Holt, 1995:15).

Holt's work, in terms of depth and rigour can do no more than set the scene by drawing attention to the concepts of social constructionism and interactionism. He does model the "consumption object" proposition, but this work cannot be claimed

(and indeed is not claimed) as the deep theoretical thinking that this thesis aims to produce.

Holt (1995) shares the same perspective as this study, but the focal length is very different. Holt attempts to provide a working picture of the whole field of how consumers consume. This study seeks to examine one very small part of the field. In sociological terms, one might say that Holt (1995) was researching structure, while this study is researching agency. Complexity theory would argue that pushing the boundaries at the micro level tells us as much about the organism as pushing the macro boundary. This relates to the concept of fractals discussed in section 2.3. These boundaries are, in this study, viewed with equal importance — both contributing valuable perspectives without which theory building would not be as comprehensive. In other words, the two views represent two sides of the same coin (Briggs & Peat, 1989:202).

Relationship theory in consumer research
It would appear at first sight that previous studies in relationship theory — the metaphor which dominates contemporary marketing thought and practice, according to Fournier (1998) — has very little to do with this study. Indeed, Fournier's comprehensive review of previous studies would reinforce that impression; however, the report of Fournier's own research encourages a different view.

Fournier's research relied upon the "modified life-history case studies" (Smith, 1994:295 seq.) of three respondents and "thick descriptions" obtained through phenomenological interviewing (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). These interviews were transcribed and "yielded insights not only into theories of symbolic consumption but into those of brand loyalty and brand personality as well" (Fournier, 1998:345). In her "discussion" Fournier (1998:367) argues that her study makes a strong case for understanding the broader context of people's life experiences that can then be used as a basis for anticipating how people are likely to develop a relationship with a cluster of brands. Fournier does not amplify the notion of "broader context", but common sense suggests that an additional activity — that of her respondents producing talk-in-interaction by talking with others about brands — would be one of these factors. The study being reported in this thesis contributes towards that idea. She

also states that "Meaningful relationships are qualified not along symbolic and functional product category lines … but by the perceived ego-significance of the chosen brand" (Fournier, 1998:367). This reinforces the point made above, as a developing theme in this thesis holds that people create their reality through talk-in-interaction.

Fournier's paper also draws attention to our knowledge about the consumer that is foundational.

> Brands cohere into systems that consumers create not only to aid in living but also to give meaning to their lives. [The] reality is that consumers' experiences with brands are often phenomenologically distinct from those assumed by managers who tend them. [This] commands a different conception of brand at the level of lived experience (Fournier, 1998:368).

This perceptive statement from Fournier (1998) presages the subject of this research. The thesis argues that talk-in-interaction creates the construction of factual accounts of products and brands. The subject matter discussed earlier as the way that people create reality through products is therefore central to the construction of their "lived experience". The thesis also goes on to examine, in some detail, the difference between consumers' lived experience and manager's assumptions of this experience.

Marketing communications

The concept of marketing communications — the idea that all communication activities between an organisation and its multiple publics should be integrated to achieve optimum impact and budget economy — is not new. For example, from the late 1970s textbooks on marketing communications were in use on undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom (Coulson-Thomas, 1983; Crane, 1965; DeLozier, 1976).

Marketing communications is defined by DeLozier (1976) as the process of presenting an integrated set of stimuli to a market target with the intent of evoking a desired set of responses within the target market. This process developed the basic Schramm

communication model that is illustrated in Figure 2.2 below. It is worth noting the mundane reasoning on which the model is based.

SENDER ⟶ MESSAGE ⟶ CHANNEL ⟶ RECEIVER

Who   What   How   To Whom
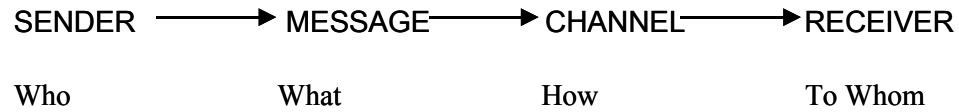
(Schramm, 1960, in DeLozier, 1976)

Figure 2.2: The Schramm model of the communication process

DeLozier (1976) built this model into a complex representation of the marketing communications process. A range of inputs impinging onto the perceptual fields of both sender and receiver were added and a similar range of psychological responses taking place within these perceptual fields. Both were linked with a feedback loop representing communications research. DeLozier (1976) himself recognised that his model was an abstraction from reality and calls it a descriptive model of the marketing communications process without predictive value but serving as a representation. He expected it to be tested by empirical research (DeLozier, 1976).

By and large, it appears that little or no research has been undertaken to test the DeLozier model as an integrated theoretical model until the 1990s. This development is introduced below; however, the model has served as a template in two respects.

First, the DeLozier (1976) model has become enshrined as the conventional wisdom for undergraduate textbooks. For example, a simplified version of the DeLozier model of the marketing communications process has become a part of the conventional textbook wisdom presented now as fact, without citation, by Kotler et al. (1998:472). More specifically, Pickton (2001) takes the Schramm model as the "foundation of our understanding of marketing communications", which provide a basic structure for their textbook (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:13). Around this structure they assemble extensive bodies of research that inform and contribute towards our understanding of marketing communications. These bodies of research are modelled in Figure 2.3 as they affect our understanding of the receiver (R) in the basic DeLozier model.

Communications Theory
Shared meaning through
Encode –Decode –
Noise- Feedback

Buyer Behaviour Theory
Cognitive Paradigm
Behavioural Paradigm

Media
Word-of-Mouth
Communication

R
Receiver

Decision Making
Pre-purchase
Purchase
Post-purchase Evaluation
Product Disposal

Marketing Communications
Theory
Hierarchy of Effects Models

Individual Psychology -
Information Processing:
e.g. attention, learning,
attitude

Source: modelled from text by Pickton and Broderick (2001:13)

Figure 2.3: Theories and research on the receiver of marketing communications

The following assumptions are of particular interest in this account of the theory affecting marketing communications:

- Communications theory holds that when the receiver of a message decodes it appropriately then shared meaning is achieved.

- Buyer behaviour theory rests on either the cognitive or the behavioural paradigm, which underlines the claim of Marsden (1998:5) that "despite calls for a more pluralistic and interdisciplinary culture in consumer research ... most of the alternative perspectives of consumer behavior that have been proposed ... suffer from ... theoretical myopia".

- Both paradigms of buyer behaviour agree that decision making goes through four stages (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:248). Positive word-of-mouth (WOM) communication takes place when consumer feel their expectations are met.

- The way in which the individual processes messages is based on the representations of psychology, such as attention, learning and attitude.

- "Much of marketing communications theory is focused on increasing awareness and influencing behaviour as in the classical AIDA model" (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:48). This is one of several hierarchy-of-effects models used by managers and based on mundane reasoning.

- WOM is a recognised form of media embracing salespeople, other employees, customers and consumers, media members, trades people and other members of the public; however, WOM represents a very powerful medium but one which is very difficult to control. It is perhaps not considered a marketing communications medium in any conventional sense, yet it should be because of its sheer force and impact (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:205).

The purpose of reviewing Pickton & Broderick (2001) is to bring to the fore an overview of the theories in consumer research that cluster around marketing communications theory, which itself is a mental model and is a representation of how the consumer deals with communications. The literature review continues by looking at the more recent development of integrated marketing communications, the theories of advertising and WOM.

There was renewed interest when integrated marketing communications (IMC) was launched first as a "worldwide investigation of the emergent concept and field" (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997:7) and then as a book in which IMC was defined as a concept of planning that "recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines" (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993). It is also stated by Schultz and Kitchen (1997:8) that "most of the history of IMC thinking and discussion is generally less than seven years old [and] while there has been considerable debate and discussion on the subject … the formal presentation of research and theory development has been slow in coming".

One of the earlier books on IMC was Schultz (1993). His Chapter 2 entitled "How Marketing Communications Works: Or at Least, How We Think It Works" is an unreferenced summary of how communications have changed since the 1980s as a result of technology and the effect these changes have had on the consumer. Marketers

must pay more attention to perception, rather than facts as that is the key to understanding individual information processing (Schultz et al., 1993:22). To support the argument Schultz (1993:27) relies on the Schramm model (Schramm & Roberts, 1971). Clearly there is nothing new here. Curiously, however, in Chapter 7 Schultz (1993:107) returns to the measurement of IMC through a "behavioral approach" relying on a database that is "the heart of IMC". He justifies his measurement concepts by comparing them with the "traditional functional communications approach". This will not be described here as a discussion of it more properly belongs in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Finally, we turn to advertising which, in marketing theory, is only one of the many media possibilities (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:200). In practice, it is well known that advertising holds a special place not only in marketing practitioner thinking, but in academic research. Indeed, part of the rationale for the IMC research is to broaden the field. Nevertheless, it is often difficult to discern a substantial difference — particularly in the mundane reasoning of marketing managers, about the theory of how advertising works and the theory of how marketing communications in general work. Indeed, it is probable that the investment in researching advertising has numbed the sensitivity of researchers to alternative approaches.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the studies of Vakratsas & Ambler (1999) and Ambler (1998). "Advertising research, especially in the US, is dominated by the persuasive hierarchy-of-effects models, of which the first was AIDA" (attention, interest, desire, action). The problem is that these models ignore consumer experience and assume that the brain works through logical persuasion (cognition) rather than feeling (behavioural) (Ambler, 1998:501).

A study of 250 journal articles and books designed to establish "what is and should be known about how advertising affects the consumer" produced a model that is shown in Figure 2.4.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Advertising Input          │
│      Message, Media, Etc.       │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│          Filters:               │
│     Motivation, Involvement     │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Individual Consumer               │
├─────────────────┬──────────────┬─────────────┤
│   Cognition     │    Affect    │ Experience  │◄───┐
└─────────────────┴──────────────┴─────────────┘    │
                        │                            │
                        ▼                            │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐     │
│            Consumer Behavior:               │     │
│  Choice, consumption, loyalty, habit, and so forth │─────┘
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
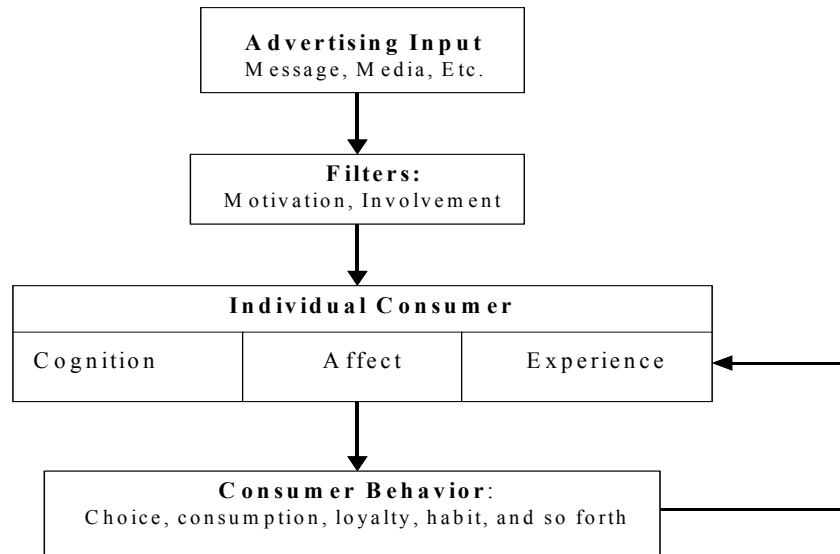
Source: Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999:26

Figure 2.4: A framework for studying how advertising works

In summary, the literature shows that marketing communications and advertising research rely on two mundane models: the Schramm and the AIDA model. Both are mental models and representations of reality. These are assumed to be universal stretching over time and place. They have become the action rules for consumer behaviour researchers. They represent the status quo to be perpetuated by future researchers.

It appears that a large number of marketing practitioners plan their advertising on hierarchy-of-effects models that have no more justification than the comfort supplied by their own well argued mundane reasoning. At the same time, marketing academics theorise about how advertising works by assuming individual psychological concepts as mediators between the stimulus of the advertising and the various possible responses. Both approaches focus on what advertising may be doing *to* the individual. Neither approach considers what the individual may be doing *with* the advertising. These issues are pursued further in the discussion in Chapter 7.

Word of mouth

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been defined as the informal communication about the characteristics of a product that takes place among consumers (Christiansen & Tax,

2000). Awareness of WOM and its importance to marketing practitioners is shown by the fact that:

> Over 40% of Americans seek the advice of family and friends when shopping for doctors, lawyers, or auto mechanics. Word of mouth is also crucial to restaurants, entertainment, banking, and personal services (Walker, 1995, quoting reports from Media Market Research Inc of New York City and Maritz Marketing Research of Fenton, Miss.)

Academic consumer researchers are certainly aware that WOM is considered by the popular managerial literature to be one of the most important forces in the market place but "there is surprisingly little empirical research which examines the 'procedural' aspects" (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:166). Furthermore, very little research has been done on how to measure WOM (Christiansen & Tax, 2000:185). What is even more surprising — though apparently none of the writers on WOM are aware of this — is that in contrast to marketing communications, the question of "how it works" seems never to have been addressed.

There is a distinct literature on WOM, reviewed in Gelb (1995), and over the last ten years six doctoral dissertations have been lodged with *Dissertation Abstracts*; however, article publications and theses invariably conduct their research within three constraints. First there is the ubiquitous assumption that the orthodox communication model (represented as 'Sender $\rightarrow$ Message $\rightarrow$ Receiver') is what actually happens, thus directing research focus towards the psychological states of the sender and receiver. Second, both sender and receiver are assumed to be individuals with the result that communication is examined mainly as it affects individuals. Finally, research methods are those of cognitive psychology, with its assumption that consumers are mainly rational, and their behaviour is able to be understood by positivist quantitative studies.

Examples of this are as follows:

- Christiansen and Tax (2000) developed three hypotheses ("based on information processing and related theories") on sender–receiver behaviour

and then surveyed groups of each to compare statistically reported instances of influence.

- Ryu (1998) set out to "explore the process of WOM, especially what and how information is transmitted to consumers". The thesis goes on to investigate three [theorised] primary factors that affect consumer information transmission behaviour which are rated by subjects. These are: valence (i.e. positive vs. negative message), social relationship (i.e. strong vs. weak) and presentation format. Hypotheses are developed and experiments carried out.

- Duham et al. (1997) locate their research with the key words: decision making, models and statistical analysis.

One recent article of particular interest abandons the traditional sender–receiver approach. Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger and Yale (1998:83) write that "although interpersonal word-of-mouth communication, by definition, takes place between two people, rarely has the phenomenon of word-of-mouth been studied using both members of the dyad". They go on to assert that WOM communication is bi-directional, interactive and "the reality of the situation is that the WOM channel is constructed by two parties" (Gilly et al., 1998:84). This statement — which is not followed up in their research — expresses the very core of this thesis and stands out in sharp contrast to the theories of marketing communications and advertising reviewed above.

Gilly et al. (1998) are not concerned with everyday conversation that they characterise as "passive, informal exchanges". This is a point of view that this researcher would strongly dispute. They are interested in opinion leaders and their influence. The Gilly et al. (1998) study modelled active information search, developed hypotheses and used questionnaires in two studies to collect data. Having drawn their conclusions on interpersonal information search from a quantitative approach Gilly et al. (1998:98) add, somewhat oddly:

The preponderance and importance of WOM behavior in influencing consumer purchase requires that researchers in this area to continue to broaden their methodologies beyond exclusive reliance on reports of past remembered behavior, the use of single focal products, and Seeker-only data.

This thesis offers a new methodology (CA) appropriate for researching the ways in which consumers construct factual accounts of their own consumption and products. This has the potential for understanding one aspect of how WOM influences consumer purchases

Recent marketing practitioner literature has labelled WOM as "viral marketing", a new approach to customers and their relations with friends. The imagery is clearly derived from the concept of a computer virus "spreading messages exponentially, fanning across community webs" (Fattah, 2000:88). The Internet, a channel that allows strangers to chat globally, is the technological development that appears to practitioners to offer opportunities for exploiting WOM. Viral marketing is even seen as "a 'sideways' flow of communication between customers [which is] becoming as — or more — powerful than the 'top down' communication channels controlled by marketers" (Mitchell, 2000:44).

There are two points of interest from this practitioner discussion. The first is the use of the word *virus* drawn from science and capable of instant, but complex imagery. Perhaps some marketers feel the threat of change and an inability to control the virus. Perhaps "analysis, planning and control", a phrase made popular by Kotler as the subtitle of his classic text on *Marketing Management*, which went to nine editions between 1967 and 1997 (Kotler, 1997), has been too successful in persuading generations of marketers that it is possible to control a complex system of millions of consumers. But a virus also suggests some link in theory with the vision of Goodwin (1997) who sees a complex adaptive system as a biological system.

Second, inter-person communication on the Internet is different from the inter-personal communication studied for this thesis. The difference is that written text provides the data for communication between people on the Internet, while talk-in-

interaction, that is live talk tape-recorded, provides the data for this study. Nevertheless, if the complexity theorists have got it right "although the physical attributes [of CAS] differ widely, they resemble one another in the way they handle information" (Gell-Mann, 1995:21). In other words, the way the small groups as a CAS handle information in this study should resemble the way any group interacting on the Internet handle information, although this is an area for future research.

McCracken and the movement of meaning

Of all the theorists on consumer behaviour McCracken (1988a) comes closest to providing a foundation for this study to build on. For McCracken, culture takes centre stage. All phenomena are seen through the lens of culture, and culture supplies the world with meaning. This treatment of culture differs substantially from previous consumer behaviour research that treats culture as values (McCracken, 1988a:143)

At the centre of McCracken's work is his theory of "meaning manufacture" or the "machinery of meaning". This contrasts with CA, which is based on the theory of the machinery of talk-in-interaction. McCracken's theory is modelled in Figure 2.5.

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │       Culturally Constituted World      │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                         │                          │
              Advertising/Fashion System        Fashion System
                         │                          │
                         ▼                          ▼
        ┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │                   Consumer Goods                        │
        └────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
             │              │               │             │
        Possession      Exchange        Grooming      Divestment
          Ritual         Ritual          Ritual         Ritual
             │              │               │             │
             ▼              ▼               ▼             ▼
        ┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │                 Individual Consumer                     │
        └────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Key: Location of Meaning   [   ]

           Instrument of Meaning Transfer   ──────►
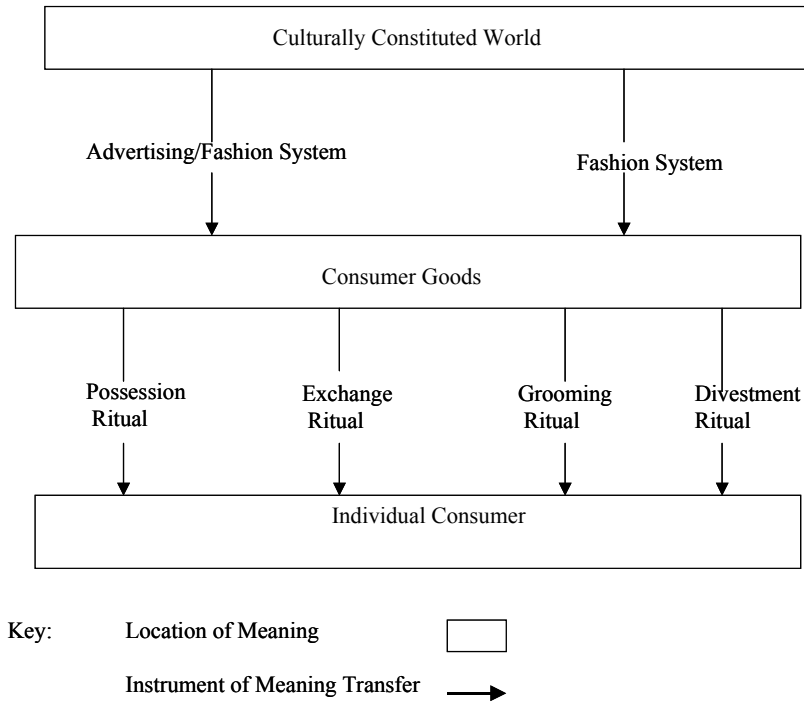
(Source: McCracken, 1988:72)

Figure 2.5: The movement of meaning

The movement of meaning is a system with constant flows of meaning to and from its recognised locations in the social world. Four locations make up the culturally constituted world: advertisers, fashion designers, producers of consumer goods and consumers themselves. Meaning is transferred to consumer goods by advertising and the fashion system; it is transferred to individual consumers through an array of rituals (McCracken, 1988a).

McCracken's work has potential. The theorised system of meaning could be researched as a CAS, but it has not been approached that way. The communication of meaning through goods relies on the code–decode assumptions of linguistics (McCracken, 1988a:62-67). CA is not considered; however, a very strong school of consumer behaviour researchers have developed McCracken's central ideas. Individual research papers will not be discussed here. In Chapter 7 it is argued that there is a promising direction for future research in analysing McCracken's system as a CAS and in carrying out complementary studies using CA.

2.6.2 Consumer behaviour research: publications by research perspectives or methods

Although qualitative research has a long and distinguished history in the humanities and some of the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000c:1), its growing acceptance by the community of consumer researchers has only taken place since the 1980s as described in section 2.1. Consequently, an increasing number of published academic articles have appeared, particularly during the last decade, in which theory and assumptions are examined, research perspectives are stated and methodologies are spelt out.

One of the common characteristics of the interpretative turn in consumer research is the way in which questions are asked and the recognition that questions need to be studied in context. The choice of research methods tends to follow this concern with the research question, and academic articles are beginning to show a wide range of research perspectives being adopted. Often these share common epistemological assumptions, but sometimes seem to challenge the notion of positivist and constructivist paradigms as discrete world views (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Thompson et al., 1989). Increasingly multiple methods and triangulation are employed to secure a depth of understanding

The following publications are reviewed for the purpose of drawing attention to the relationship of the research perspective adopted in the published research with the research perspective adopted in this study. Thus attention will be drawn to assumptions held in common, alternative assumptions or assumptions not stated.

Hermeneutics and consumer research

Hermeneutical philosophy and its relevance to textual interpretation in consumer research is the theme of *Hermeneutics and Consumer Research* (Arnold & Fischer, 1994) Philosophical hermeneutics (Heidegger, 1978) shares the same theoretical origin as the phenomenology of Schutz (Moran, 2000), whose philosophy led to ethnomethodology, which is the research perspective of this study. They are both nineteenth century critiques of positivism in the social sciences and they both seek to interpret the concept of *Verstehen* — "understanding" or the meaning of social phenomena (Schwandt, 1994:121). For Schutz, and for this study, *Verstehen* is the

process (or , in the case of CA, the machinery) by which we make sense of the world. In contrast, hermeneutic philosophy "holds that understanding has an ontological status. It emphasizes that all understanding is linguistic" (Arnold & Fischer, 1994:55). This in effect denies the problem of subjectivity and objectivity in research.

Today one of the basic differences between those consumer researchers justifying their methodology through hermeneutics and this study is that all hermeneutics is concerned with the researcher understanding the *individual* person researched. This understanding is achieved through the analysis of transcribed text from an interview of a single person's talk to elicit *meaning*, which is assumed to reflect individual experience. In contrast, this study, which uses conversation analysis (derived from ethnomethodology) is concerned with people researched in *groups*; that is, two or more people interacting through talk. The purpose is to understand the way in which people are *structuring* their talk, which it is believed, allows the factual construction of their reality.

Some of the tenets of philosophical hermeneutics are shared by ethnomethodology. For example, "pre-understanding", the recognition that we belong to a cultural world; the "ideal of the dialogic community", the belief that collective understanding is socially constructed; and the concept of the "hermeneutic circle", the idea that there is a constant interplay between the whole and the parts, between language and context (Arnold & Fischer, 1994:59,60,67). Other tenets, however, are not consonant with ethnomethodology.

Philosophical hermeneutics stresses the "linguisticality of understanding", or in other words that language is central understanding as all experience is filtered through language which is "encoded and communicated in dialogue" (Arnold & Fischer, 1994:61). This opens the way for semiotic-structural analysis (Arnold & Fischer, 1994:67). Conversation analysis does not deny this point of view, but seeks to analyse the "machinery of language" in interaction, a process that questions any model that assumes "encoding and communication" from one person to another. Philosophical hermeneutics and the consumer research perspectives that derive from it accept the non-objectivity of text interpretation. As Thompson et al. (1989) argue, "texts are always open to interpretation". In contrast, Have (1999:53) argues that, although a

"data session" is necessary for agreement on the interpretation of the audio-tape, the data itself on the tape is evidence that is value free because conversation analysis observes the structure of talk-in-interaction.

Arnold & Fischer (1994) is particularly valuable in demonstrating the common ground of philosophy and assumptions adopted by a number of distinct streams on qualitative consumer researchers today. Those particularly relevant to this study are semiotics (Mick, 1986) and existential phenomenology (Thompson et al., 1989).

Existential phenomenology

Existential phenomenology claims to be a paradigm that "blends the philosophy of existentialism with the methods of phenomenology" (Thompson et al., 1989:133). The authors argue that the ontology is "in-the-world" and that experience and world view are co-constituting (Thompson et al., 1989:138). This would appear to be a form of postpositivism (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:165). The focus of the research is on the *lived experience* of the individual, which is captured by describing experience as it emerges in interviewing. The interview transcript is regarded as empirical, and a thematic description of this experience is sought.

The phenomenological interview is an in-depth interview of an individual consumer used in the methodology of existential phenomenology (Thompson et al., 1989). This method of interviewing has been described at some length and adopted in recent studies by Thompson and Haytko (1997) and Mick and Fournier (1998). Apart from the fact that CA is concerned with recording talk-in-interaction, some of the approaches are similar. For example:

- The respondent sets the course of the dialogue after an initial question.

- The role of the interviewer is similar to the conductor in this study in that the respondent's experience or talk is what matters.

- There is no intention of confirming or refuting prior hypotheses.

- The respondents' or members' own words are what is important.

Apart from the individual or group difference, there is another fundamental difference. In existential phenomenological interviewing, the transcript is regarded as first-hand evidence of the experience of the person being interviewed. In conversation analysis, only the actual audio-tape recording is evidence, and the transcript is regarded as a documentary representation of what was said at the interview session. Thus existential phenomenological interviewing fails to solve the "crisis of representation" that is "associated with the *interpretative, linguistic* and *rhetorical* turns in social theory" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000c:17) (authors italics).

The work of Thompson et al. (1989) is of interest for their attempt to establish existential phenomenology as an alternative paradigm to the logical positivism discussed earlier. The authors point out, however, that existential phenomenology "addresses and shares some of the logical positivist's concerns" (Thompson et al., 1989:142). They seem to be trying to tackle the crisis of legitimation that positivism forces on interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b:11). Their strategic approach to research, similar to the research for this thesis, is to place interest in a subject first (experience) and then use existential phenomenology as a philosophical and methodological basis for investigation. The full application of this research methodology may be seen in Thompson and Haytco (1997).

Consumer decision making

In many ways Bettman et al. (1998:188) presents the very antithesis, in terms of methodology, to this study. Its inclusion here can best be explained though a discovery in quantum theory (a branch of complexity theory) known as the wave–particle duality. This duality is presented in Figure 2.6.

Particles   *Waves*

The PHYSICAL
(Things that relate)

The MENTAL
(The relationship
between them)

The QUANTUM
REALITY

Wave/Particle Duality
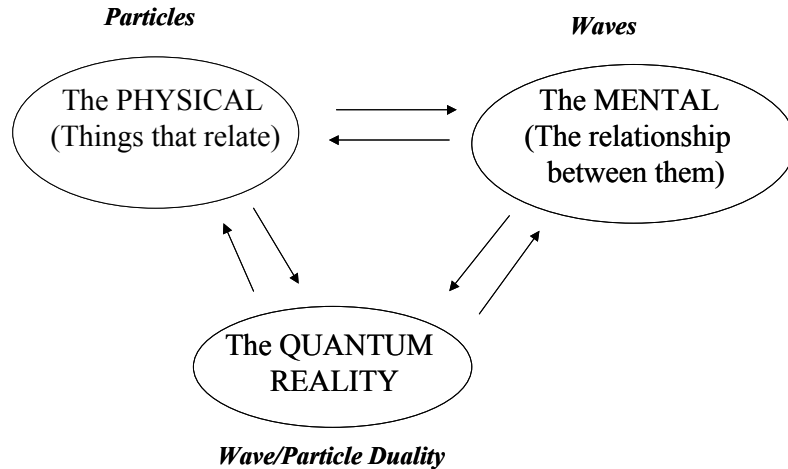
Source: Zohar (1991:83)

Figure 2.6: Wave–particle duality

The point of this model (Figure 2.6) for quantum physics is that *both* waves *and* particles are equally fundamental. Neither wave nor particle is complete in itself. We need *both* for a complete picture of reality. It is suggested here that we need both to understand consumer decision making; however, Bettman et al. (1998) give us a comprehensive review of published research on consumer decision making — and there is a lot of it over many years — but their work represents "particle" only — the attempt to measure quantitatively this human process, primarily for the purpose of prediction.

Curiously, the positivist studies reviewed on consumer decision making lead the authors to a position which, for this reviewer, seem to recognise the wave–particle duality of research and thus cry out for inclusion of interpretative investigation. Bettman et al. (1998:188) write:

> [There is a] growing belief among decision researchers that preferences for options of any complexity or novelty are constructed, not merely revealed in making a decision … People do not have well-defined preferences; instead they may construct them on the spot when needed, such as when they must make a choice.

One important property of this constructive viewpoint is that preferences will often be highly context dependent [wave-like]. In addition, because decision approaches are developed on the fly, processing will be highly sensitive to the local problem structure. This implies that processing approaches may change as consumers learn more about the problem structure during the course of making a decision.

The article goes on to review the literature on constructive consumer choice and even notes that there is a "lack of research on the dynamics of constructive choice" (Bettman et al., 1998:203); however, their recommendations for future research all imply positivist measurement. It would seem that the quest for the quantification of consumer decision making becomes out of alignment with models that are increasingly complex, yet the notion of research from the wave perspective — that is quantifying stable "facts" and interpreting conversational patterns — does not seem to exist. The research for this thesis, in exploring how a group of consumers construct their reality through talk-in-interaction, gives some insight into possibilities for researching the consumer decision process from both the particle and wave standpoint.

A consumption vocabulary: classified or co-created?

One outcome of the realisation that consumers often hold no well developed preferences but construct them as they go along (Bettman et al. 1998 reviewed above) is the attractive notion that there is a vocabulary of consumption that, if researchers could only find it, would allow consumers to express their preferences with more precision. West, Brown and Hoch (1999) set up two experiments to test for words that would show better defined preferences, show improved cue discovery and show learning. As these were laboratory experiments, conducted with university students using a quantitative research design with the statistical analysis of results, they would seem to be in direct contrast with the constructivist perspective of this study; however, both studies — West et al. (1999) and this study — are seeking similar broad goals; namely, to understand how talk, which uses words, leads to perceptions, particularly of products. For this reason, it is worth examining briefly the assumptions on which the research by West et al. (1999) are based. They write:

Whorf (1956) put forth the bold hypothesis that language "causes" thought. He argued that thought was not only controlled by the semantics (i.e. vocabulary) but by the syntactic construction of language. Our aim in this article, conceptual and empirical, are more modest …we take as given that language and thought influence each other and that both influence what we experience as reality. (West et al., 1996:120)

West, et al. (1999) do recognise that there is a "longstanding debate … between language thought and reality", and it is clear — though they do not say so explicitly — that that they subscribe to cognitivism, the perspective of cognitive psychology. The assumption is that words, sentences, ideas etc. *represent* the world in some way. The vocabulary of consumers is descriptive, it is used to categorize products both in the world outside of us and the inner world of consciousness and mind. West et al. (1999) recognise the syntactic construction of language. It follows from this that vocabulary is a linguistic representation that is used to communicate thoughts and map mental representations of the world. Thus reality is defined by the words used by the subjects in the experiments; however, the messiness of human interaction has been removed from their research. Notwithstanding their cognitive assumptions, the authors come very close to recognising that created identity, rather than correspondence to a classified reality, may be a possibility

In contrast to West et al. (1999) the research for this thesis does not treat language as a system of classification that lies between the individual's static perception and the world. It treats people in the real world as creators and co-creators of their own reality. This research is concerned with the structure of talk-in-interaction, which is the conversational "machinery" through which meaning emerges (Sacks, 1992/2000a). The theory and assumptions on which it is based are explored in full in Chapter 3. The perspective is constructionist and close to that of discursive and cultural psychology. (Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996).

Phenomenological interviewing and theory
Two recent publications are of theoretical interest to this critical review of methodologies being used by consumer behaviour researchers. Both depend on

phenomenological interviews for their data and both develop a theory from their conclusions

The study by Thompson and Haytko (1997) seeks to understand the ways in which consumers use fashion discourse to shape their perceptions of self and society. Some of the conclusions reinforce assumptions of ethnomethodology and CA that provide the theoretical perspective for this study. For example, the hegemonic view in consumer research regards culture as a pervasive influence and external to the individual. Thompson and Haytko (1997:17) show that consumers *use* culture creatively through *interaction* for their own ends to *construct* interpretations of fashion phenomena. The article ends with a model in which discourse plays the central role in mediating between culture within society (*rules*) on the one hand and personalised consumption *meanings* on the other. The important thing to note here is that while the goal is an understanding of a process that is very similar to this study, the means of getting there are very different. Thompson and Haytko rely exclusively on the interpretation of meaning. The research for this thesis explores the structure and patterns of discourse that lie behind meaning. This dimension is not recognised by Thompson and Haytko (1997).

Consumer's perceptions, knowledge and experience researched though the meanings given to technology by consumers is the subject of the article by Mick and Fournier (1998). A multi-method approach to data collection was adopted (depth interviews, focus groups, a mail survey, phenomenological interviewing). "The overall process provided a rigorous assessment and consolidation of codings in pursuit of thick descriptions grounded in histories, contexts and interactions ... It also facilitated triangulation across informants and researchers to elevate the trustworthiness of findings" (Mick & Fournier, 1998:127).

Of principal interest to researchers Mick and Fournier (1998) is the concept of paradox arising out of the literature of postmodernism and technology where writers are divided between benefits and drawback of new technology. They find that consumers do not embrace technology wholeheartedly, and they develop a range of coping strategies which is contrary to the claim of many respected theorists, for example

Gleick (1999) who asserts that Western society is thoroughly indoctrinated with scientific values and controlled by technologists.

This paradox, this "act of creative rebellion in which people engage in a range of behaviors, spurred by personal life conditions, that are countervailing to dominant long-standing ideologies" (Mick & Fournier, 1998:140) provides a new conceptual framework for consumer research. The authors point out that Thomson and Haytko (1997), reviewed above, also embraced the construct of paradox with their model of countervailing cultural meanings. For Mick and Fournier (1998) paradox is a concept that is both relevant, resonant and promising as a means of researching contemporary consumer behaviour. To date it has received limited attention.

This thesis has embraced the notion of paradox from the start. Appreciation of paradox is central to the understanding of the distinct contributions of constructivist qualitative studies and postpositivist quantitative studies in consumer research. Both are necessary for a balanced and holistic understanding of consumer behaviour. It was clear from the review of the literature that this study faced the task of reconciling paradox. The combination of CAS with CA is a paradox in itself.

2.7 Summary

The review of the literature in this chapter has shown that, to date, it appears that no consumer behaviour researchers have attempted to use CAS theory qualitatively in their work. There is, therefore, no existing research methodology to be followed.

The chapter set out to provide a review of the literature that would provide a sound theoretical foundation for the theory of the research methodology presented in Chapter 3. The literature was presented in six parts, each of these being a building block for the analytical frame described in Chapter 1. Thus this chapter provided a systematic, detailed sketch of the theories that have been explored to define the examination of phenomena in a way which is intelligible to other researchers.

In section 2.1 a broad sketch of the history of marketing established the dominance of modernism and positivist research methods in both the academic and practitioner

marketing communities. Particular attention was drawn to the effect of the postmodern challenge and crisis of representation from the 1970s, which has led to a lively and on-going debate which was termed melting-pot thinking.

Qualitative research methodology today is sophisticated and ideas trade in the electronic world economy like any other commodity. Disjunction, a separation between theory and practice, is common and what anyone means cannot be taken for granted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b). Thus, the onus is on the researcher to look deeply into the philosophy and theory underpinning the proposed qualitative research methodology. This was the purpose of section 2.1.

In section 2.3, complexity theory was introduced and CAS examined for its relevance to consumer behaviour. Ethnomethodology and CA, the theoretical perspectives, were introduced only briefly in section 2.4 because they are discussed deeply in the next chapter.

In section 2.5, the literature review returned to marketing and consumer research to explain the crisis of representation in more depth. This was necessary for two reasons. First, the research question is a challenge to the modernist mindset and a part of this crisis of representation. This challenge is taken up later in the discussion in the final chapter of this thesis. Second, it is the crisis of representation that led to the new paradigm of qualitative consumer behaviour research which is thriving today.

Finally, the chapter reviewed research subjects and methodologies used in qualitative consumer behaviour research that have been reported in refereed, scholarly journals. The review was critical seeking to establish similarities and differences from the methodology proposed for this study.

The development of the chapter and the relationship of its parts are modelled in Figure 2.7.

```
┌──────────────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ 1. The Historical Background │              │  2. Philosophy and Theory    │
└──────────────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────────────┘

        The Modernist  Mindset              Analysing Social Action:
                                            Explanation  v. Understanding

                         ╭──────────────────────────────╮
                         │   The Postmodern Challenge    │
                         ╰──────────────────────────────╯

┌──────────────────────────────┐       ┌────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   3.  Complexity Theory       │       │ 4.  Ethnomethodology & Conversation Analysis │
│ - A New Way of Looking at Science- │  │       -A New Way of Looking at Sociology-    │
└──────────────────────────────┘       └────────────────────────────────────────────┘

              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │     5. Current Literature     │
              │ -Marketing and Consumer Research- │
              └──────────────────────────────┘

  The Crisis of Representation
                                   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                                   │ 6.  Emergence of  Qualitative │
                                   │ Consumer Behaviour Research   │
                                   └──────────────────────────────┘

                     The Research Question
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Figure 2.7: The literature-review model

Chapter 3. The theory of the methodology: the research paradigm and rigour

> … no once-and-for-all substantive account of social reality is possible because there *is* no social reality to set alongside what appear to be the well-tested physical regularities of the universe … Our knowledge of social reality cannot hope to achieve even this kind of certainty; but the way one finds out about it may in principle be reasonably stable: *hence the importance of methodology rather than findings, of process rather than content.*
>
> Peter Checkland, systems theorist, (1984/1999:285) (italics added).

3.1   Introduction

At the start of this study, the analytic frame was minimal and fluid to limit the influence of pre-existing ideas. There was the broad assertion, arising from the research question, that conversations being studied as talk-in-interaction are instances of a CAS and that CAS characteristics present a new way of conceptualising consumer groups. The literature review, designed to elaborate the analytic frame, proved to be rich in associations and concepts for identifying the phenomena to be studied. At the same time there was no precedent for an analytical frame that would unequivocally classify and characterise CAS phenomena in a qualitative study. Indeed, one of the challenges of venturing into this cross-disciplinary field was to reconcile the many paradoxes that were presented; however, one principle stood out above the many demanding attention. This is expressed by the quotation from (1984/1999) that heads this chapter. It is the principle of the importance of methodology and process.

It was clear, therefore, that in order to establish a plausible analytic frame capable of answering the research question, an original theory of the methodology would have to be developed. The practical outcome of this theory is seen in the research design and methods described in Chapter 4, where the analytic frame is used to identify locations and select cases of the phenomena to be studied. Perhaps the most important part of the theory of the methodology that follows is the argument for the theorised

characteristics of a CAS that serve as sensitising concepts for the field-research process.

This chapter is presented in three main sections:

1. The theory of the methodology

   It is the nature of this kind of research to begin with a deep discussion about the theories that were thought, at the time of designing the research, to impact centrally on the research design. This part shows how the theoretical perspective of ethnomethodology meets the theoretical perspective of positivism (scientific method). Paradoxically, through a bridging theory of fact construction and discursive models, it also allows CA to be used in the search for evidence that a small group engaged in talk-in-interaction can behave as a CAS.

2. The research paradigm

   This part of the chapter describes the research paradigm which was chosen to reflect the basic beliefs and assumptions which guided the research design and field work.

3. Rigour

   This part of the chapter presents rigour in this study as meeting three criteria:

   - rigour in the application of method;
   - meeting the quality standards of the CA community; and
   - a defensible argument in favour of the interpretation adopted (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

3.2   The theory of the methodology

The methodology for this thesis originates from two quite distinct traditions of theoretical development: ethnomethodology and complexity theory. In this first part of the chapter the theory surrounding each of these traditions is described. The conceptual model for this part of the chapter is depicted in Figure 3.1

Verstehen ← − − − − 19th Century − − − − − Scientism

Phenomenology ← − − − 20th Century − − − − − Logical Positivism
First   Half

Ethnomethodology ← − − From 1960s − − − − − 'Scientific Method'

Conversation Analysis   From 1970s   Complex Adaptive Systems
Sociology of Scientific Knowledge

From 1990s

BRIDGING THEORY ←
Fact Construction and Discursive Models

↓ Theory Flow   ← − − − − − − − Reacting to Theory
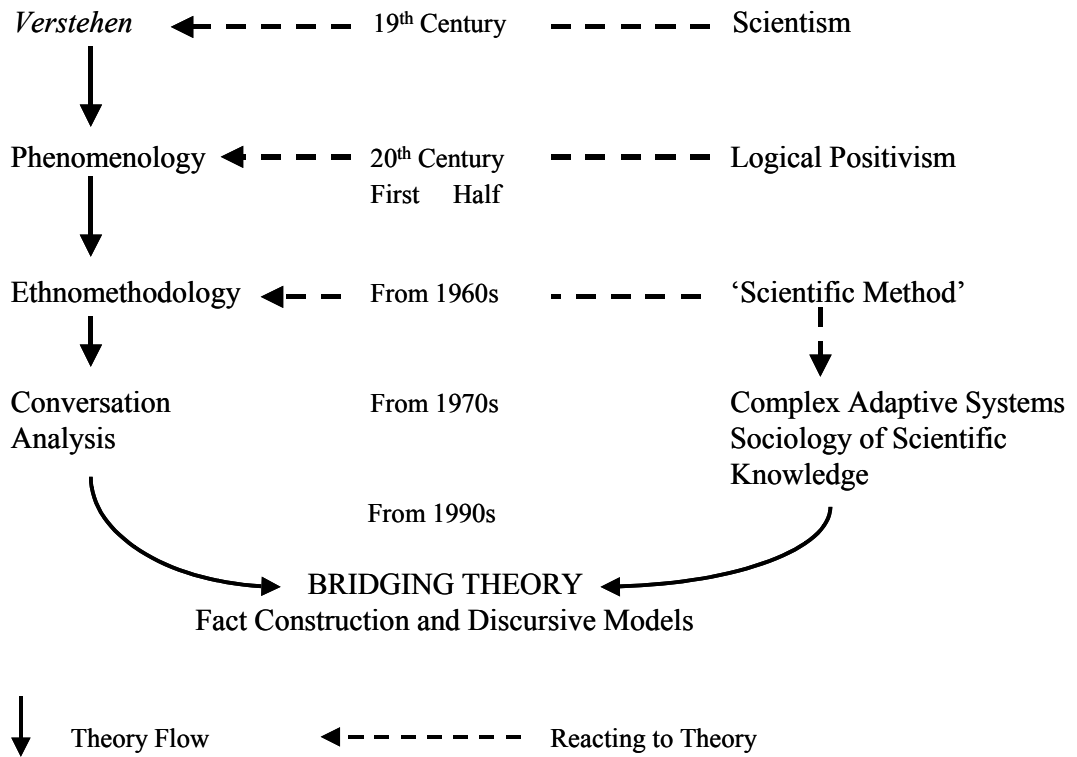
Figure 3.1: The theory of methodology

A historical approach is adopted to capture the enduring ideas, rather than the detailed arguments of any specific time. Building on the philosophy and theory discussed in the literature review, the development of the theory of methodology is presented under the following headings:

1. Antecedents to ethnomethodology: *Verstehen* and phenomenology
2. Ethnomethodology: the theoretical perspective
3. Conversation analysis: practice and theory
4. Complex-adaptive-systems theory
5. Bridging theories
6. The theory of collecting data on a complex adaptive system

3.2.1   Antecedents to ethnomethodology: *Verstehen* and phenomenology

The difference between the sciences and the social sciences was theorised by Wilhelm Dilthey in the nineteenth century. He believed that *Verstehen*, or "understanding" was the goal of the social sciences. Understanding as a key to analysing social action and explanation, its opposite, were discussed earlier. As Schwandt (2000:191) points out,

Alfred Schutz, in common with other interpretivist theorists such as Wittgenstein (1953) and Geertz (1973) were committed to further refining the notion of *Verstehen* in opposition to the climate of logical positivism. The common starting point of interpretivists is agreement that *Verstehen* involves the researcher in finding meaning (understanding) by interpreting what actors are doing in a particular way.

Schutz (1974) was one of the leading proponents of phenomenological sociology that has been described as a "Twentieth century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences" (Phenomenology, 2000). Schutz (1974) further refined the notion of *Verstehen* as:

> … the experiential form of common-sense knowledge of human affairs [which] has nothing to do with the subjective states of actors; rather it refers to the intersubjective character of the world and the complex process by which we come to recognize our own actions and those of our fellow actors as meaningful. (Schwandt, 1994:120).

Thus for Schutz phenomenology was both an epistemological stance and potentially a method of qualitative investigation.

3.2.2   Ethnomethodology: the theoretical perspective

Ethnomethodology and, in particular, two canonical texts (Garfinkel, 1967/1999; Heritage, 1984a) have already been introduced in section 2.4. *Ethnomethodology* itself is the term coined by Garfinkel in the mid-1950s to describe the study of the methods people use to produce descriptions of the social world that seem to them both rational, appropriate and able to be justified (Heritage, 1984).

Recognising the limitations of Parson's (1937) theories on social action, which were the received knowledge of the 1940s, Garfinkel turned to the phenomenology of Schutz, whose fundamental belief — reflected in his writings — was that an interpretivist science must start with a description of pre-scientific structures that are "the reality which seems self-evident to men remaining within the natural attitude"

(Heritage, 1984a:66). In the hands of Garfinkel, this became a rejection of traditional sociology's perspective on social reality. For Garfinkel and later his followers, norms, rules, structures and so on — which conventional sociologists derive from a theoretical framework — are unwarranted assumptions that presuppose a world that exists independently of social action (Coulon, 1995:17).

Five concepts are central to ethnomethodology. These are described briefly below:

1. *Indexicality*: The meaning of a word — indeed of all words — is dependent on its context of use. Context means, literally, the actual sequence of individual talk-in-interaction. Thus words and context give an utterance sense (Coulon, 1995:17-20). Indexicality is a view of language use and understanding that is radically different from traditional semantic theories (Potter, 1996:44). This model of understanding — that sense is recovered from utterances in context and that context is focused on sequence — is central to ethnomethodology.

2. *Reflexivity*: Reflexivity is the process in ordinary conversation by which we build up meaning, order and rationality by both describing and producing action simultaneously (Coulon, 1995:21). Descriptions in ethnomethodology are about people who are involved and doing something, in contrast to conventional sociology, which offers representations of what is going or has gone on (Garfinkel, 1967/1999:9-10).

   Reflexivity is a radical concept. It asserts that while we are talking — or indeed while you are reading this thesis — the meaning, the order, the rationality of what we are doing is being produced. "To describe a situation is to constitute it … 'Doing' an interaction is telling it" (Coulon, 1995:23).

3. *The documentary method of interpretation*: The meaning of a word is indexical, but at the same time we seek patterns to compensate for this indexicality of language and which make sense (Coulon, 1995:33). "Every experience of the actor occurs within a horizon of familiarity and pre-acquaintanceship" (Schutz, 1962:7). Even the unfamiliar is grasped against this background.

Garfinkel's notion of the documentary method of interpretation (borrowed from the philosopher Mannheim) is theorised as a circular process in which an individual in conversation sees an utterance as "evidence" and mentally compares this with an underlying pattern to make sense of it. Garfinkel (1967/1999:78) writes:

> The method consists of treating actual appearances as "the document of", as "pointing to", as "standing on behalf of" a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of "what is known" about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other.

Garfinkel (1967/1999:79–94) illustrates the documentary method with an experiment and goes on to show that every area of sociological investigation uses the documentary method. For example, an interviewer reviewing or editing transcripts who has to decide "what the respondent had in mind" and a researcher "historicizing a person's biography" (Garfinkel, 1967/1999:95), which is known as "the biographical method" today (Tierney, 2000:539), has to select and organise what has happened in the past to provide a relevant account of the present and possibly the future.

Garfinkel (1967/1999:79) described his demonstration of the documentary method as being designed to "catch the work of fact production". The full implications of this concept will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4. *The notion of member*: The term *member* is used in ethnomethodology to describe a member of a group who has mastered the natural language of that group and does not have to think about what he or she is doing as the routines of everyday social practice are known. It is certainly not a social category (Coulon, 1995:26-27). Since this term was coined in the late 1960s the notion has been developed substantially. For example, Shotter (1993b:135) describes a culture's

sensus communis as a process in which "socially shared *identities of feelings*" are created in a flow of activity between members (author's italics).

5. Accountability: Accountability for Garfinkel (1967/1999:1) means that "the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs" are "observable-and-reportable". By this he means that the social world is able to be described, understood, reported on and analysed as it is revealed in the practical actions of people (Coulon, 1995:25). This social world is constantly being constructed by members' talk-in-interaction.

These five concepts were initially proposed by Garfinkel as an alternative to Parsonian structural functionalism, the prevailing theory of sociology at the time. In the 1970s Garfinkel and his colleagues turned their attention to the day-to-day production of socially constructed reality, thus contributing to the rise of a new sociology of knowledge (Lynch, 1993:23) which is discussed later in this chapter

3.2.3   Conversation analysis: practice and theory

Conversation analysis, described briefly in Chapter 2, started in the 1960s largely as a result of the work of Harvey Sacks and has since blossomed into an academic discipline with courses offered by universities in the United Sates and Europe (Boden, 1994:203). The theory of its methodology seems to have advanced little since the heady days of the 1960s and 1970s (Silverman, 1998), so we turn to the writings of Sacks and his colleagues of that period.

From the outset, for Sacks — who insisted that talk could be researched in its own right — the talk itself was the action and "not merely a screen on which are projected other processes [such as] Schutzian interpretative strategies or Garfinkelian commonsense methods" (Schegloff, 1992/2000a:xviii). Sacks believed that sociology could be a natural observational science on a par with natural science and that observation should be used for theorizing (Sacks, 1984:21). Based on the findings of his research, Sacks in his only statement on methods insisted that:

- " There is order at all points" (Sacks, 1984:22), which was contrary to the view of linguistics a that time that talk cannot be described because it is disorderly (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984:17).

- Ordinary talk is organised systematically,

- Analysis must be based on naturally occurring data; hence, his insistence that evidence in CA is the talk itself captured by audio-tape recording.

- External considerations, such as preconceived ideas, should not constrain analysis (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984:17).

Thus, although it appears that Sacks rejected theory, it is apparent that his commitment to focusing on what people say in interaction and how they do it is itself a vision of how social reality works.

In 1974, Sacks et al. published their model on the organisation of turn-taking in conversation. This model, based upon the observed facts known to the three authors, is an example of theory following observation and has become the blueprint for a considerable amount of confirmatory research since then.

The authors maintain that turn-taking is fundamental to talk-in-interaction in conversation and postulate that it is applicable to other speech-exchange systems (Sacks et al., 1974:729). The model is locally managed, part administered, interactionally controlled and sensitive to recipient design; i.e. where one member in a conversation is sensitive to the other member and both are co-participants (Sacks et al., 1974: 725–7). The principles described in this model provide the theory for the data collection and analysis methods for this study. These are described later.

To conclude and summarise, these two quotations capture the essence of CA:

> Conversation analysis studies the order/organization/orderliness of social action, particularly those social actions that are located in everyday interaction, in discursive practices, in the sayings/telling/doings of members of society (Psathas, 1995a:2-3).

What conversation analysis tries to do is to explicate the inherent theories-in-use of members' practices as *lived orders*, rather than trying to order the world externally by applying a set of traditionally available concepts, or invented variations thereof (Have, 1999:32).

3.2.4   Complex-adaptive-systems theory

Building on CAS theory outlined in Chapter 2, this section reconsiders the theory solely for the purpose of transforming it into a methodology. It was apparent that there are four conceptual themes that converge in CAS theory. They are the concepts of nonlinearity and interdependence, the concept of chaos, self-organisation theory and the theory of autopoiesis. Having listened to these many voices, the time has come to consolidate and argue explicitly what is understood by complex-adaptive-systems theory in this study. The goal of this section is to analyse and extract a theory of CAS that will contribute towards a theory of methodology and serve subsequently as a benchmark for field research.

The status of complex-adaptive-systems theory

The term *theory* in *complex-adaptive-systems theory* has a very specific meaning, but there is not yet any physical (empirical) evidence that CAS exist. Within the traditional scientific community theory building is a six-step process represented as follows:

1. Researchers' conceptualisation of the domain of interest.
2. Identifying problems for research.
3. Speculation as to the solution.
4. Tentative models or representation of the researcher's image of the relevant reality.
5. Preparations for testing the tentative theory (hypotheses) by defining terms.
6. Testing the hypotheses (O'Shaughnessy, 1992:276).

Thus, traditional scientists would argue that the work on CAS that informs this study has reached stages 4 and 5. This is *not* the view held by complexity scientists. Complexity theory is a "coherent system of rules and principles, a more or less verified or established explanation accounting for known facts and phenomenon" (Gell-Mann, 1995:91). Complexity theory does not use the word *theory* in the sense of untested hypothesis, idea, conjecture, or speculation. CAS are as diverse as a City or a market, at the macro level, and the immune system in the body or a group of

consumers talking at the micro level. Conventional science tries to explain and predict the behaviour of each of these systems by identifying the parts and aggregating them to provide a picture of the whole. For complexity scientists, this approach has serious drawbacks: it is static, it ignores the systems dynamics and the whole is always more than the sum of its parts (Holland, 1995:3). Even though complex systems differ in detail, according to Holland (1995) it is the question of "coherence under change which is the central enigma for each system". This factor, which is common to all systems, is the reason for an umbrella heading *complex adaptive systems*. *"*It signals our intuition that general principles rule CAS behavior, principles that point to ways of solving the attendant problems" (Holland, 1995:4).

The diversity of approaches in complex-adaptive-systems theory

There is no single approach to CAS theory, and writers on CAS — both academic and lay — adopt a variety of interpretations that often seem to be driven by the investigative traditions of the discipline from which they come. Three main approaches will be described with notes on their relevance for the theory of methodology in this study:

The Mathematician's Approach

The mathematician's approach is exemplified by Holland (1995); however, starting from the recognition that the nonlinearity of CAS prevents the conventional "scientific" approach of developing theory from the summation of the parts, Holland (1995) turns to cross-disciplinary comparisons to identify common characteristics.

The active elements in a CAS are agents, which — in the case of this study — is the individual member. According to Holland (1995), to understand the interaction of agents, their capabilities must be understood. Each agent's behaviour is determined by a collection of stimulus–response rules. There is no attempt to locate these rules, as rules are simply a convenient way to describe strategies of individual agents interacting with the environment. In the case of this study, a substantial part of the environment is other adaptive agents, whether these are marketers, consumers or customers. Thus, each agent changes his or her rules as experience accumulates in a process of adaptation. Adaptation is at the heart of CAS theory for Holland (1995).

There are four properties and three mechanisms that are characteristics common to all CAS according to Holland (1995: 10-40). He describes these as:

1. *Aggregation* is a property of CAS, and there are two types of aggregation. First there is the common aggregation of "scientific" representation and classification for modelling. The second is more subtle and enigmatic. It is concerned with the emergent phenomena of CAS, the mechanisms that allow simple agents to form highly adaptive aggregates. In this study, one may interpret a group of consumers engaged in talk-in-interaction as an aggregate in the second sense.

2. *Tagging* is a mechanism of CAS that facilitates the formation of aggregates. Tags provide coordination, selectivity and boundary formation. *Semiotics*, the "philosophical and scientific theory of information-carrying entities, communication and information transmission" (Wilson, 1995) provides a rationale for tagging. In this study utterances of members engaged in talk-in-interaction are considered tags.

3. *Nonlinearity* is a property of CAS. It is impossible to get a value for a CAS by adding up the parts. Indeed, the behaviour of the aggregate is more complicated than mathematical summing up suggests. In this study CA seeks to analyse the machinery of talk-in-interaction, which results in patterns that reflect the whole outcome of the interaction. This contrasts with content analysis, which seeks to identify the parts (words) and often aggregates these with the help of technology based programmes like NUD*IST (Richards & Richards, 1994).

4. *Flows* are a property of CAS. They are patterns that reflect changing adaptation over a period of time as experience accumulates. Talk-in-interaction exhibits flows that build understanding. This signals the importance of examining patterns of talk-in-interaction in this study. Tags define the network of agents by fixing limits, with some tags promoting useful interactions, other tags causing malfunction. Agents with useful tags proliferate; agents with malfunctioning tags drop out.

5. *Diversity* is a property of CAS which is not accidental nor random. It is the product of progressive adaptation. Each agent depends for its place in the system by the context provided by other agents. Thus, diversity means that if any one agent drops out of the system, the system responds to replace the "gap". According to

(Holland, 1995:27) diversity is the same as the phenomenon of convergence in biology. In this study, members create their own context.

6. *Building blocks* are a mechanism in CAS that is used to generate internal models (schemata). Holland (1995:34) uses the metaphor of an identikit that has a limited number of building blocks, commonly understood as mundane reasoning, which can be combined into a large number of combinations. Both internal models and adaptation follow the same process in CAS.

7. *Internal models* is a mechanism of CAS. They are internal to the agent who selects patterns from the "torrent of input", then converts patterns into changes in internal structure (Holland, 1995:31). The relevance of building blocks and internal models to this study is modelled in Figure 3.2.

While Holland (1995) naturally views the way forward through the Santa Fe lens of mathematics and computer-based experiments, identifying and describing these seven characteristics of CAS provides for a uniform way of portraying all CAS in a common framework. "Cross-comparisons of different CAS take on an added meaning because they can be made in a common language" (Holland, 1995:90).

The Physicist's Approach

Murray Gell-Mann is a Professor of Theoretical Physics and was active in the mid-1980s establishing the Santa Fe Institute, which pioneered studies in the complexity sciences. Physics is one of the fundamental sciences concerned with life on Earth and formulates general theories from which other sciences take their cue (Gell-Mann, 1995:109).

For Gell-Mann (1995:890), "pattern recognition comes naturally to us humans: we are, after all, complex adaptive systems ourselves. It is in our nature, by biological inheritance and also through the transmission of culture to see patterns, to identify regularities, to construct a schemata in our minds". This process is modelled in Figure 3.2.
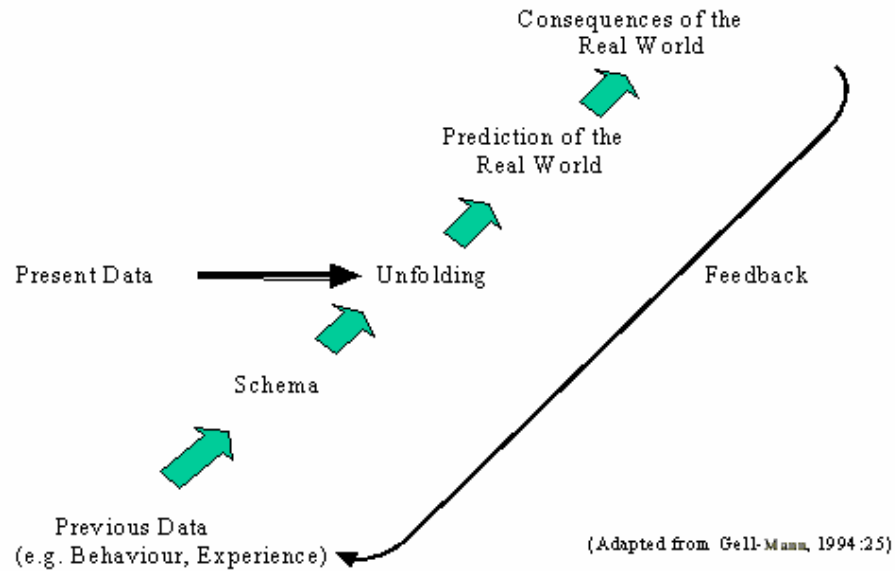
Figure 3.2: The workings of a complex adaptive system

In Figure 3.2 we see the fundamental model of any CAS — which could be a cell, an individual, a group, an organisation or a City. CAS follow what happens to data. A "torrent of data" — a stream of indiscriminate data — are sorted into a schema (Holland's "internal model") by a process of identifying regularities and compressing them. The resulting schemata are then combined with additional information ("present data" in Figure 3.2), and the same process of identifying regularities and familiarities and compressing them leads to descriptions and predictions of behaviour in the real world. This whole process is unfolding or, in the language of CAS, *emerging*. Finally we see feedback on the model, which is a process of selection, a processing of ranking schema for fitness and utility the next time round. This process is visualised as similar to the biological process of survival of the fittest.

The Biologist's Approach

As Kauffman (1991:64) and Gell-Mann (1995:61) point out, biology is filled with complex systems, and every complex system has local features with characteristics describing how individual parts of the system connect and influence each other. Kauffman theorises that the order in organisms is spontaneous and the result of self-organised systems, which challenges the Darwinian hegemony of natural selection (Kauffman, 1995:25). For Kauffman, biologists must include both selection and self-

organisation in their considerations. His views can best be understood by referring back to the Gell-Mann model in Figure 3.2, although we do not know whether the two professors corresponded.

Kauffman (1995) talks of individual agents predicting and acting to create an unpredictable emergence. There is an inevitably still within the CAS process, but agents (and that means individual members in this study) do not have expectations of a static reality but of a potential that unfolds through experience the experience of interaction. This movement, this unfolding is in the direction of the "adjacent possible" (Griffin et al., 1998:320).

Goodwin's views (1997) are close to those of Kauffman (1995). He believes that the Darwinian assumptions about the nature of life have led to an excessive preoccupation with the smallest units (gene research), and this has shaped biological reality. For Goodwin (1997:xii) biological reality is that "organisms are as real, as fundamental, as irreducible as the molecules from which they are made. They are a separate and distinct level of emergent biological order, and the one to which we most immediately relate since we ourselves are organisms".

As "biologists deal with systems (cells, organisms) that are hideously complex, with thousands of different types of gene and molecule all interacting in different ways … [new theories from mathematics and physics can offer] significant insights into the origins of biological order and form" (Goodwin, 1994:xi). The consequences of the complexity perspective on biology are that:

- Organisms cease to be simply survival mechanisms, like genes.

- They assume *intrinsic value*, unlike genes.

- *Relational* order between components matters more than material composition in living processes as in genes.

- *Emergent qualities* predominate over quantities.

- These consequences extend to *social structure where relationships, creativity and value are of primary significance.* (Goodwin, 1997: ix-xiv). (italics added)

The commonality of approach

It is recognised that by presenting the work of Holland (1995) alongside Kauffman (1995), common ground between a rule-based model of CAS and a connectionist model is being sought. The rule-based model of Holland (1995) has its genesis in artificial intelligence and works with precisely defined symbols and meanings each with a precise relationship, often mathematical, to each other to produce an abstract model of CAS (Cilliers, 1998:15).

Kauffman (1995) and Goodwin (1997) assume a connectionist model, which was first formulated by Hebb in 1949 in his work on neural networks. Hebb was concerned with the dynamics of perception (Kelso, 1995:216) and the behaviour of neurons in creating it. Hebb assumed that the brain is constantly making subtle changes in the "synapses, the point of connections where the nerve impulses make the leap from one cell to another". He also assumed that selective strengthening of synapses causes the brain to organise itself into "cell assemblies", which are the building blocks of information (Waldrop, 1992:158). This theoretical model of neural networks was supported by neuroscientists, psychologists, engineers (Cilliers, 1998:17) and biologists (Goodwin, 1997; Kauffman, 1995). Connectionist models work on evolutionary principles. There is no prediction and control as in the classical sense. Patterns perform meaningful functions rather than individual agents. Internal structure develops through self-organisation and learning is implied (Cilliers, 1998:19).

These concepts, connectionism through evolution (such as the evolution of a conversation), and patterns developed through self-organisation (in conjunction with underlying cultural organisation) are of central importance to the features of a CAS assumed for this study.

In looking for a commonality of approach, one way would be to analyse the key words used by writers on CAS. This would give some idea of the commonality of approach. In the case of CAS, however, there are no key words with universally agreed definitions that signify the concepts. CAS is a holistic perspective, decoupled from the disciplinary compartmentalism that would lend itself to the key word method. On this basis it is possible to proffer those issues that have attracted a high level of agreement. The following features represent a synthesis of the theories of leading writers on CAS:

- There is a process that we know as CAS.

- This process can be modelled in terms of flows of information.

- There are identifiable stages that a CAS goes through in this model.

- A CAS is self-organising.

- Each CAS is a network of many agents acting in parallel. Each agent is in an environment produced by its interactions with other agents in the system. Agents are constantly acting and reacting to what other agents are doing, and the behaviour of agents arises from competition and cooperation (Waldrop, 1992:145).

- Patterns are as important as individual parts, and both are complementary.

- This process that a CAS goes through is reflexive.

- A CAS (organism) is both purposive and predetermined, but outcomes are unpredictable. Predetermined does not mean deterministic, but does mean that agents are active, as illustrated in Figure 3.2, in that each operates according to its internal model, which instinctively predicts the future on a continuous basis and modifies predictions in the light of feedback information.

- Emergence is a key feature of a CAS.

These features of a CAS provide the theoretical rationale for the characteristics selected for research, which are discussed below in section 3.2.6. In summary, according to Gell-Mann (1995:24), we live in a world of indeterminacy, where nothing can be measured with prefect accuracy, so we need theories of complexity to handle the physical universe.

To introduce the bridging theory in the next section attention is drawn to two ideas that are fundamental to this methodology. The first is the idea of a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach to bridging disciplines. The second idea is the suggestion of a bridge between the mental processes theorised by psychology and the physical processes, which are the focus of the study of biology.

Many people believe, as I do, that when staircases are constructed between psychology and biology, the best strategy is to work from the top down as well as from the bottom up … Where work does proceed on both biology and psychology and on building staircases from both ends, the emphasis on the biological end is on the brain … while at the psychological end the emphasis is on the mind — that is, the phenomenological manifestations of what the brain and related organs are doing. Each staircase is a brain-mind bridge (Gell-Mann, 1995:117).

3.2.5 Bridging theory

The idea of bridging theory supports the plausibility of the question " What grounds are there for supposing that there is any link between CA and CAS? Going on from the question, a schema or model bridging CAS and ethnomethodology/CA has been conceptualised.

There are two parts to the model that bridges CAS theory and ethnomethodology/CA: the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) and social constructionist theory. Both contribute towards a theory of the thesis methodology. They are seen as relating to each other with the bridge in the middle as visualised in Figure 3.3.

Sociology of
←←←←← Scientific Knowledge (SSK)

Social Constructionist Theory → → → →→
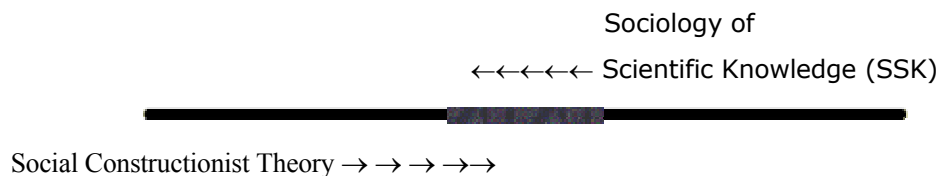
Figure 3.3: The bridge or overlap between the findings of research into the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) and the theories of social constructionism

The sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK)

Since the 1970s, when Kuhn (1962) argued that traditional accounts of science did not stand up under historical scrutiny (Chalmers, 1976:107), philosophers and sociologists have reassessed science as an institution and how it works. There has been an increasing recognition that a scientific community is crucial for its members' work in establishing beliefs, which are talked about in debate and inscribed in writing (Potter, 1996:17-25). Contemporary SSK has been primarily concerned with epistemology. It

rejects the previous view of the sociology of science — e.g. Merton (1970) — that social norms will ensure the production of true knowledge; i.e. as in "reality". There are several approaches to SSK (Potter, 1996:25-40), and for this study the focus was on the strongly analytical, and empirically oriented work exemplified by Knorr-Cetina (1981; 1999) and the theoretical work of Lynch (1993). These studies do not see themselves as critics of the philosophy of science using argument to make their point in the realist-constructivist debate, but as researchers seeking to build up an accumulation of empirical studies (Lynch, 1993:73).

In the 1980s Knorr-Cetina (1981) reviewed six ethnographic studies of laboratory practices and concluded that "direct observation of the actual site of laboratory work … decisively demonstrated the social determination of even the most technical 'contents' of science" (Lynch, 1993:91). This supported social constructionist views of scientific activity. These findings set the scene for what Lynch (1993) calls the "rise of the new sociology of scientific knowledge".

There have been many studies over the last two decades in this field, but a particularly interesting approach for this study came with the publication of recent work by Knorr-Cetina (1999:3). She wrote:

> In this study I am not interested in the construction of knowledge, but in the construction of the machineries of knowledge. Magnifying this epistemic machinery reveals the fragmentation of contemporary science; it displays different architectures of empirical approaches, specific constructions of the referent, particular ontologies of instruments, and different social machines. In other words it brings out the diversity of epistemic culture. This *disunifies* the science. … It runs counter to the thesis that there is only one kind of knowledge, only one science, and only one scientific method …
>
> (author's italics)

It is proposed that the SSK provides a bridge from CAS to ethnomethodology in two ways.

First, Knorr-Cetina (1999) provides an understanding of how CAS theorists "fit" into science. For example, Gell-Mann is a theoretical physicist and "high energy physics experiments do not actually *do* physics. For that part of the research there exist 'theorists' (especially 'phenomenologists') who make the respective calculations" (Knorr-Cetina, 1999:16). Theoretical physicists are an epistemic culture, a word preferred to *discipline* or *scientific speciality*, which have been used in the past. Epistemic cultures are "those amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms — bonded through affinity, necessity, and historical coincidence — which, in any given field make up *how we know what we know*" (Knorr-Cetina, 1999:2) (author's italics). Using the same definition, the leading theorists of CAS are members of an epistemic culture. Second, as Lynch (1993:116) argues, there is a "convergence between ethnomethodology and the sociology of science to make it a kind of 'epistemic sociology'".

Social constructionist theory as the self-organisation of meaning in conversation

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *Social Construction of Reality*, which has become a classic, made an important contribution to establishing processes of social construction as a distinct topic of study (Potter, 1996:12). They presented a general argument for social constructionism focussing on the construction of talk and text through *individual* perception and understanding (Potter, 1996:13). Gergen (1994), who reviews developments during the intervening years, draws attention to the distinction between the constructivism of Schutz (1962) and the social constructionism of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934/1964; Vygotsky 1934/1962). Constructivism "posits [an individual] mental world and then theorizes its relation to an external world". Social constructionists "give priority to social process in shaping what is taken to be knowledge at the level of the individual mind" (Gergen, 1994:68). No longer, in the theory of social construction, does the individual mind confront a material world on its own, but now the locus of knowledge lies in patterns of relationship. This is a revolution in the intellectual world that extends across the disciplines, according to Gergen (1994:129). "The dualist epistemology of a knowing mind confronting a material world [is replaced] with a *social epistemology*". (author's italics)

While Gergen (1994) was consolidating the development of social constructionist theory, largely in contrast to alternative epistemologies (positivism, postpositivism),

Shotter (1993a) was drawing on contemporary philosophy — Wittgenstein (1953) and Bhaskar (1986) — and psychology — Harré (1983) and Vygotsky (1934/1962) — to explore the social construction of the *individual* mind.

Shotter's goal in *Conversational Realities* (1994a:6) is to establish the "rhetorical–responsive" (his term) version of social constructionism by shifting focus from epistemology to practical hermeneutics. "Responsive" because he claims that our ability to speak representationally depends on being responsive to others; "rhetorical" because our ways of talking move others to action and shape their perceptions.

Shotter (1993a:7) recognises that looking at our cognitive abilities in this way contributes towards the "second cognitive revolution [which] takes a discursive turn" — a theme that is not pursued here but comes to the fore in Chapter 6. In brief, Shotter's explicit purpose is to offer arguments for relocating the academic discipline of psychology within the social activities that take place in the everyday conversational background of our lives (Shotter, 1993a:10). Shotter (1993a) is clearly trying to do for psychology what Garfinkel tried to do for sociology (1967/1999; 1991; 1996).

Shotter's (1993a) rhetorical–responsive version of social constructionism contrasts with the referential–representational version known to all us and termed mundane reasoning (Pollner, 1974; Zimmerman & Pollner, 1970). Shotter (1993) describes the difference as follows:

> As modern, self conscious, autonomous adults (and especially scholars and academics) we are all familiar with being able to use our language referentially and representationally to talk (or write) about 'things' and 'states of affairs' as we please - whether the things in question are in the world or in our heads, whether they exist in fact or are merely fictional, whether anyone is there to hear (or read) us or not … It seemed to us that this referential-representational function of language is our language's *primary* function …
>
> But in social constructionism … all the familiar ways we have of talking about ourselves … must be seen as *secondary and derived, as emerging out of the*

everyday, conversational background to our lives (Shotter, 1993a:10) (Italics added).

Thus Shotter (1993a) places himself in the position of having to answer, from the psychologist's viewpoint, the question of "How exactly does an *individual* construct his or her reality?" By italicising words that reflect CAS, in the quotations above and below, some insight can be gained.

The notion that underlying appearances there is a single well ordered reality that can be "discovered" is a myth according to Shotter (1993a:24). Reality is not homogeneous, nor the same for everyone. Therefore "it" cannot be apprehended. We should, he says, think of reality in general as a *turbulent flow* of continuous social activity containing within it two distinct activities. One is a set of comparatively "stable centres of well ordered, *self reproducing* activity, sustained by those within them being accountable to each other for their actions". The second activity comprises "moments of institutionalized order" that are separated from each other by "zones of much more disorderly, unaccountable marginal regions — *on the edge of chaos*" (Shotter, 1993a:18).

As explained above, the vocabulary of complexity theory was signified by italics. This was necessary because although there is little reference to complexity writers in Shotter's book, concepts of complexity and CAS are in evidence. Second, the notion of accountability, a concept from ethnomethodology (see above and Garfinkel (1967/1999)), is considered a factor working to create Shotter's "stable centre". Finally, the notion of a stable centre itself could easily be an epistemic culture as defined by Knorr-Cetina (1999) discussed above. The point here is that Shotter's work is just one example of many that exhibit implicit overlap between complexity theory and other disciplines.

When it comes to individual reality Shotter is clear that "our daily lives are not rooted in texts or in contemplative reflection, but in oral encounter and reciprocal speech. In other words, we live our daily social lives within an ambience of conversation, discussion, argumentation, negotiation, criticism, and justification …" (Shotter, 1993a:29). At the core of Shotter's (1993) argument for a rhetorical–responsive social

constructionism lies the problem of how, in the disorderly, practical everyday conversations, we unknowingly construct orderly ways of talking that allow us to account for and make sense of ourselves. Starting with constructionism as an ontology, Shotter points out that social constructionists "are concerned with how, without a conscious grasp of the processes involved in doing so, in living out different, particular forms of *self–other relationships*, we unknowingly construct different, particular forms of what we might call *person-world relations*" (Shotter, 1993b:12) (author's italics). These "person–world" relations are the routine ways in which an ordinary person functions in the different realities he or she occupies.

This focus of social constructionists as modelled by Shotter (1993) is shown in Figure 3.4. The self–other relationship is represented by the horizontal dimension of interaction. A number of person–world dimensions of interaction (the vertical dimension) can be seen to be produced *within* the self–other dimension of interaction in society.
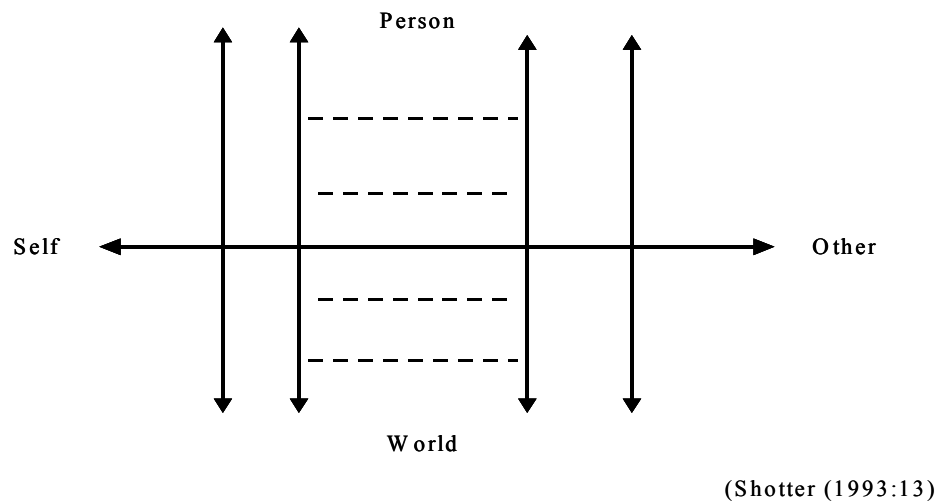
(Shotter (1993:13)

Figure 3.4: Self–other and person–world dimensions of interaction

Summarising the social constructionist perspective, Shotter (1993) writes that:

> … not only do we constitute (make) and reconstitute (remake) our own social worlds, but we are also ourselves made and remade by them in this process. It is the dialectical emphasis upon *both* the contingency *and* the creativity of human action — on our making of, and being made by, our social realities — that is, I think, common to all social constructionism in all its versions (Shotter, 1993b:13) (author's italics).

Whereas the model in Figure 3.4 has a linear relationship between the self–other and person–world dimensions, to develop his rhetorical–responsive model Shotter (1993) incorporates the phenomenon of "words in speaking". This model, which is depicted in Figure 3.5, incorporates a more flow-related and reflexive approach.

Give or lend further form or structure to

background ('world')   ways of talking

are rooted in

Adapted from (Shotter:1993a:36)
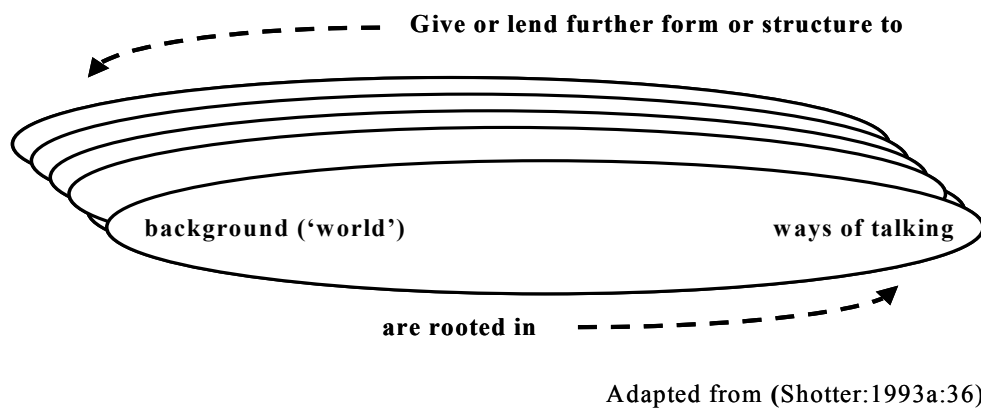
Figure 3.5: The creation in self–other relations of person–world relations

In this model (Figure 3.5), which moves from self–other relations to person–world relations, an individual is rooted in his or her background and makes use of linguistic resources (ways of talking) that are also rooted in the background. These act back upon the background now expressed as "their world" to give it further structure. In this two-way process the self–other background activities are seen as forming routine, everyday, person–world ways of talking that are used in normatively accounting for oneself and ones world in the "social realities" occupied. Concurrently, as accountable forms emerge out of these "social realities" these forms are rooted in them, thus providing a "shared structure of feeling" of what is right (Shotter, 1993a:36). This is an elegant description of mundane reasoning, addressed later in this thesis.

These models make the process of the construction of social reality look rational and straightforward. This is not Shotter's intention. In fact, the models are a means of expressing the notion of *hidden order in chaos*, as the flow of practical sensuous activity is a rationally hidden torrent of on-going, diffuse information constantly surging back and forth very rapidly. It is not suggested here that Shotter (1993a) is modelling the aim of ethnomethodological studies as explicated by Garfinkel (1967/1999:vii) in his observation that ethnomethodology seeks to "analyze everyday activities as members' methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes". It is suggested, rather, that Shotter (1993a) provides a theoretical rationale that writers on CA have hitherto tended to downplay (Lynch & Bogen, 1994:66).

Such is not the case with the discipline of management where the "discovery" of CAS has encouraged the search for disciplinary theories; e.g. Wheatley (1992). Seeking to bring to the fore theories of complexity relevant to organisations, Griffin et al. (1998) turned to the social sciences for descriptions of the dynamics of human interaction. They interpreted Shotter's (1993a) model, reproduced in Figure 3.5, as a "circle of agency", which is described as follows:

> Agents are continually responding to each other's utterances using rhetorical signs and gestures to persuade each other. In this agents are not acting in the expectation of an outcome; they are not predicting how the others will respond. Instead agents are continuously calling forth responses in each other in specific contexts. It is out of this continuous background of responses, or anticipation, that meaning emerges spontaneously and this meaning constitutes patterns of co-created agent identity (Griffin et al., 1998:322-3).

This process resonates with the biological position on complexity and CAS taken by Goodwin (1997) and Kauffman's (1995) principles of order (selection and self-organisation) "where novelty emerges into the adjacent possible …" according to Griffin et al. (1998:323).

Shotter's work so far provides a theory of the individual self-organisation of meaning. His models reflect the prevailing perspective of the discipline of discursive psychology, which sees "mental life as a dynamic activity, engaged in by people, who are located in a range of interacting discourses and who, from the possibilities [these discourses] make available, attempt to fashion relatively integrated and coherent subjectivities for themselves" (Harré & Gillett, 1994:178).

The field research in this study, however, is concerned with the way in which people construct a shared sense of understanding in a group. Already it is clear that people do not simply examine information and make rational decisions using a language which, when understood, has a more or less clear meaning to all those in a conversation. Nevertheless it can appear this way superficially and in everyday conversation it is assumed that this is what happens. More thoughtfully, a more accurate picture of how we understand each other would show that often we do not fully understand what another person says and, in practice, shared understanding occurs only occasionally if at all (Shotter, 1993a:1). Early thinking in ethnomethodology suggested that shared understanding is achieved though negotiation between participants who test, check, question, challenge, reformulate and elaborate in conversational interaction (Garfinkel, 1967/1999). In other words people are "*responding* to each other's utterances in an attempt to link their practical activities in with those of the others around them" (Shotter, 1993a:1) (author's italics). Attempts at coordination through conversation naturally constructs a social relationship.

In this study it is assumed that members of a group constitute a CAS. In complex-adaptive-systems theory it is postulated that all CAS have characteristics in common. In other words the characteristics of an *individual* processing information from the world, as theorised by Shotter (1993a), will be the same characteristics as a those of a group processing information through conversation with each other. At its simplest, this interaction may be depicted as in Figure 3.6, where four individuals (I) are interacting with each other.
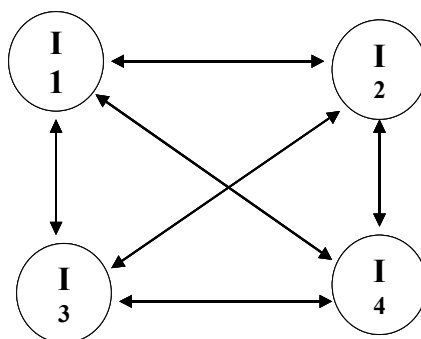
Figure 3.6: Interaction connections within a group (I = individual)

Turning back to Shotter (1993a), there is a third category of events not depicted in the model (Figure 3.5), which occurs between the poles of actions (what a person as an individual does) and events (what actually happens in or around an individual over which he/she has no control). This is called "joint action" by Shotter (1993a:39).

Joint action, which shares common attributes in its definition with emergence in CAS theory, belongs both to the model of the individual as a CAS depicted in Figure 3.5 and the model of a group as a CAS depicted in Figure 3.6. Joint action (Shotter, 1993a:39) has two important features:

- As people coordinate their activities with others and respond to them, what they want to happen and what actually happens are two very different things. Indeed, "joint action produces *unintended* and unpredictable outcomes".

- While such a situation is unintended by any of the individuals concerned, joint action has an intentional quality.

Shotter (1993a:39) quotes Giddens (1984:8) who describes this socially constructed quality as "unintended consequences [that] systematically feedback to be the acknowledged condition of further acts". Joint action, for Shotter (1993a:39) is "just the kind of notion we need, *through* which to see the workings of processes of social construction". The concept of joint action as described by Shotter (1993a) bears a very close resemblance to emergence in CAS theory. The concept of joint action is illustrated in Figure 3.7, which seeks to illustrate a dynamic model in which the

utterances of individuals (I) influences the form and structure of the conversation that flows to emerge in outcomes that are neither intended or predictable:

Flow

I 1

FFS

FFS

I 3

FFS

I 2

FFS

I 4

FFS

I 1

FFS
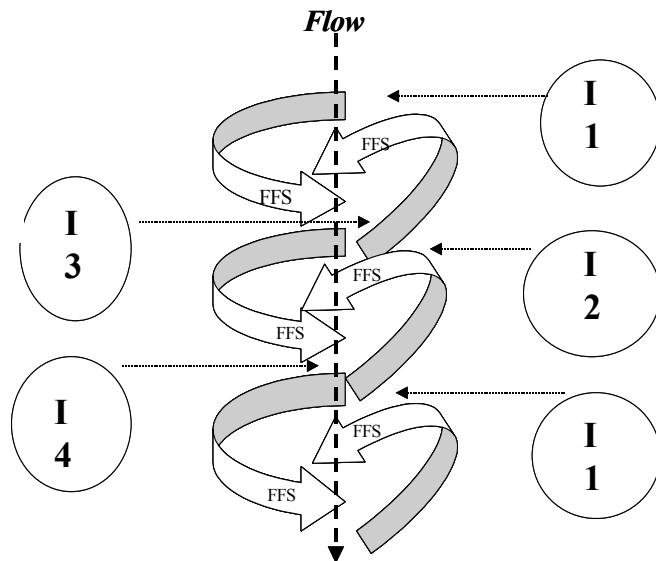
Unintended and Unpredictable Outcomes

Key: I = Individual input   FFS = Further Form & Structure

Figure 3.7: Joint action: the coordination of activities through ways of talking

There is no doubt that complexity scientists regard emergent phenomena as very important, and many are working to define their characteristics and laws (Goldstein, 1999a:49). Emergence is a foundational construct referring to "the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems. Emergent phenomena are conceptualised as occurring on the macro level, in contrast to the micro-level components and processes out of which they arise" (Goldstein, 1999a). With this definition in mind, and applied to this study, members are considered to be micro-level components, the process is conceptualised as talk-in-interaction; and the question is whether emergence, as defined by complexity, CAS and other theorists, can be detected. A discussion of the characteristics of emergence in a CAS will be presented in the explication of the theory of research methods.

This section on bridging theory started with a question: "What grounds are there for supposing that there is any link between CA and CAS? On the CAS side, the

sociology of scientific knowledge has shown that procedures of science are socially constructed when it comes to the human management of the scientific body of knowledge. On the ethnomethodological side, ethnomethodological sociology has — since the 1970s — built up a "corpus of empirical and theoretical inquiries into the properties of *in situ* human conduct" (Coulter, 1990:ix). Against this background, psychologist Shotter (1993, 1993a) has brought together and built on contemporary theories ranging across philosophy, linguistics, and psychology with a hint of complexity theory to suggest a conversational model of social interaction. Management theorists Griffin et al. (1998) have proposed a close correspondence between the Shotter model and CAS theory. These then are some of the ideas that coalesce in this bridging theory.

Returning to the metaphor of a staircase as a brain–mind bridge between psychology and biology quoted from Gell-Mann(1995:117) earlier, the bridging theory outlined here spans discursive psychology and biology. The outcome of this theory, the field research using CA, which follows, starts at the bottom end of the staircase with the goal of illuminating one small aspect.

3.2.6 The theory of collecting data on a complex adaptive system

Earlier in this chapter it was argued that there is a convergence between CAS theory and ethnomethodology/CA. Furthermore, as CA has the potential to "open up the field on fact construction" (Potter, 1996:102) there appears to be no theoretical reason why it is not possible to study the machinery of conversation in a group of people to determine whether the machinery exhibits the theorised characteristics of a CAS (Gell-Mann, 1995). The practical challenge was to make this idea operational as a data collection procedure by identifying sensitising concepts.

The data to be collected were recordings of people in a group in conversation discussing an issue of interest to consumer research. The machinery of interest would, upon analysis, exhibit the characteristics of a CAS. It was therefore essential that the data-collection exercise was set up to allow a conversation to be started, and to be recorded for analysis, in a way that would make these characteristics detectable.

Four characteristics of a CAS were selected from the theoretical literature on complexity theory and mirrored, wherever possible, from the literature on CA. These four characteristics were:

1. unpredictability (which includes spontaneity);

2. self-organisation;

3. co-creation; and

4. emergent order or disorder.

Each of these characteristics was described and justified as follows.

Unpredictability

There is wide agreement, especially in the writings of Kauffman (1995), Goodwin (1997) and Griffin et al. (1998), that it is impossible to predict the behaviour of a CAS. This does not mean that the behaviour is chaotic as there seems to be some order governing the behaviour of a CAS. This order, in terms of CA, is the machinery of talk-in-interaction. Discussing the systematics of turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974), Coulter (1983) writes that the system of turn-taking "can be considered an 'ordered optionality system', because it is not specified what any part *must* do, but rather what options *may* be selected. Conversational interaction may lapse or end. Speakers need not continue to speak. There are no external constraints that operate to produce the systematics" (Psathas, 1995a:38) (author's italics).

One objective of data collection was to design an environment for unpredictable and spontaneous talk-in-interaction. To achieve this members were selected randomly, conversation took place in a "natural" setting, and there was no intervention during data-collection sessions.

Self-organisation

In complexity theory "self-organization is viewed as the capaCity of open and living systems, such as we live in and we ourselves are, to generate their own new forms from inner guidelines rather than the imposition of form from outside" (Mathews et al., 1999a:447). Alternatively, self-organisation is seen as a process in CAS in which new emergent structures, patterns and properties arise without being externally

imposed on the system (Dooley, 1996). CA writers take a very specific view of self-organisation. Three examples of self-organisation from the CA literature follow:

> As a system it [the turn-taking system] was shown to be *self-organizing*, that is ongoingly done by the parties as they interact; locally produced in situ, in and of the occasions in which they interact. It is recursive in that it is recycled, orderly, and consistent with all the know instances of turn-taking". (Psathas, 1995a:38)(author's italics)

> Ordinary conversation is also a *self-regulating* system that enables participants to repair breakdowns in conversation and thus allows them to gain access to syntactic richness" (Markee, 2000:88). (author's italics)

> "Adjacency pairs* may be restricted, expanded, broken up — this is *negotiated* on a turn-by-turn basis" (Have, 1999:114). (italics added)

> *Adjacency pairs are a concept for analysing sequence organisation in conversation.

In the data-collection sessions, once the subject had been introduced, members were entirely free to organise themselves with respect to conversation. This included the option of not talking at all.

Co-creation

Co-creation as a term does not feature prominently in the primary literature on CAS; however, the concept is clearly present. Griffin et al. (1998:320) do use the term to describe the explicit — i.e. not hidden — process by which agent interaction emerges as a pattern. It seems that co-creation may be seen as inter-agent activity resulting from self-organisation, which facilitates emergence.

Researchers using CA are very clear about the phenomena of co-creation. For example, Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998:90) commenting on the analysis of a transcript write: "… the fact that we can see the set of coupled reactions each being done in overlap brings out the *collaborative* nature of these expressions of indignation"

(author's italics). And further on, "… they are, it seems, actively co-ordinating their actions by cueing each other, so that their talk is brought off as closely matched both in timing and in content" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:91).

Researching children in schools, Markee (2000:141), referring to her previous chapter, writes that "I have demonstrated how a conversation-analytic methodology can be used to document whether, when and how learners could successfully *co-construct* learning, at least in the short term" (Italics added).

Emergent order or disorder

Emergence in a CAS refers to the "macro-level patterns arising in systems of interacting agents (Goldstein (1999a:57) citing Kauffman (1995) and Holland (1998). "Emergents" have the following properties:

- radical novelty; i.e. features not previously observed in the CAS;

- coherence; i.e. they appear as an integrated whole;

- an evolving quality, in that they are not there to start with, but are seen to evolve; and

- an ostensive quality in that they exist by being recognised (Goldstein, 1999a:50).

Emergence has been of particular interest to some writers exploring the value of CAS theories to management. Lissack (1999b:121) refers to the possibilities arising through emergence as "the adjacent possible". Griffin et al. (1998:320) sees the order that emerges from agent interaction as "a *potential* before it emerges as an actual pattern — it is not something *hidden*, waiting to be disclosed, but something that is *co-created by agents* " (author's italics). Thus the evidence of co-creation is the potential movement into "the space of the adjacent possible".

The literature of CA does not use the term *emergence*, but the concepts appear to be present as is evidenced by the following:

- CA is concerned with flows of talk-in-interaction and flows are a property of CAS.

- CA studies the parts of talk-in-interaction in detail, not as a sample, not to put them together like a jigsaw, but to see how they constantly re-assemble to present a whole. It is the whole that makes sense.

- CA takes a particular interest in transition-relevance places. This is the place in a conversation when one speaker takes over from another in an emergent way. (See *Glossary* in Appendix B for definitions.)

- CA has found that members "orient to *possible* transition-relevance places, not to 'actual' ones " (Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998:52) quoting research by Schegloff (1992) (author's italics).

- "For this reason it is the *possibility* of completion, rather than its actual occurrence, that is the most relevant factor in turn-taking" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:52) (author's italics).

This last section has outlined the theory of the data collection procedure for the main (City) study. It has been concluded that all four characteristics — unpredictability, self-organisation, co-creation and emergent order or disorder — must be present for evidence of a CAS. The description of the data-collection session procedures in Chapter 4 shows how it was planned to make the theory of the data-collection procedure operational.

3.2.7   Summary

This section of Chapter 3 has developed the theory of the methodology that was modelled in Figure 3.1. With origins in the nineteenth century, the two traditional streams of *Verstehen* on the one hand and scientism are seen to take a "postmodern turn" (described in the historical background, Chapter 2) — a phrase popular among academics to signal the extraordinary proliferation of new ideas and new perspectives, which is apparent from the 1970s. Ethnomethodology led to CA and complex systems theory led to CAS theory. Both looked beyond the conventional wisdom of their disciplines, and each followed its own trajectory. It is proposed that when they are compared today, it is difficult to avoid noticing how many new and powerful ideas they have in common.

It will be argued, in justification of the methodology that follows, that CAS theory, which is socially constructed through scientific thinking, has the same quality as data captured through conversation and analysed by the researcher.

3.3   The research paradigm

The paradigm is the basic set of beliefs that guided the research methods and field study. It deals with first principles and ultimate assumptions. An important part of the research-methodology explanation centres around the seeming conflicts inherent in using an objective and observational approach to a qualitative methodology. The data-collection method of CA has its origins in ethnomethodology (Lynch & Bogen, 1994:83). This theoretical perspective was challenged and further developed by Harvey Sacks and it is his proposals that are adopted for this study; however for the purposes of producing a convincing argument the researcher agrees with Lynch & Bogen (1994:66) that many CA studies have focused on detailed accounts of conversations and little in the way of "a coherent research program".

The argument for CA to fulfil a particular paradigmatic role is a difficult one. In a sense, CA follows the protocols of a natural science, and yet it is presented here as a social science, the latter term being what Checkland (1984/1999) calls a qualitative science. The aspect of the theoretical argument likely to cause dissonance is the choice of a constructivist ontology within a empirical epistemology. Traditionally, constructivism has had as its epistemological purpose the interpretation of respondents' meaning. The task of determining the paradigmatic role for CA is not made easier by the tacit acceptance of an almost unchallenged support for natural science as the "real" one and social science as something that has to measure up or become equivalent to in some way. One way of doing this has been to match the important qualities of natural science with attributes of qualitative research. For example, reliability might equate to replicability, validity to authentiCity and generalisability to transferability. This has been challenged by Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

There is a stage of thinking that comes earlier than that of matching other research paradigms to natural science. That what Lynch and Bogen (1994) call "the very fact of

the existence of science". At this level, the argument almost becomes philosophical. Sacks (Schegloff, 1992/2000a:xxxi) throughout his work argued for a science that permeated social life. This version of science was not abstracted and objectified but was available to and used by ordinary people in their roles as social agents. It was visible in the form of social facts, and these were constructed and used by people as they interacted, to observe, report and account for the social activities as they unfolded through conversation. As Lynch and Bogen (1994:91) observe "Sacks treated the successful achievement of intersubjective order in the sciences as a specialized 'fact' that grounded the possibility of a formal analytic program of sociological description …".

Here we see a dichotomy. Instead of the one, real world of the scientific undertaking lies a social aspect, and this interpersonal aspect is an integral and necessary part of the impersonal detached aspect of science. The interpersonal aspect surfaces within embedded features of natural science undertakings as scientists make sense of the world around them during the production processes of their experiments. This production process is qualitative in nature and it shines through the scientific activity in the form of reporting and conversation.

In Shotter's terms, scientists would draw on their world views and personal schemata to make sense of what was happening as they "communicated" with the scientific event. An example would be the surgeon, conducting an operation, who speaks into a microphone to an audience of observers at the same time as communicating with theatre staff. Both the reporting and the conversation were not entirely impersonal as the surgeon imprints his or her "commonsense" comments. Some aspects of the conversation would be "real" and physical. Some would be meaningful and socially constructed within the specific contextual order that medical and surgical people have created for themselves. The argument that follows proposes a dialectical relationship between the boundaries of natural and social research erected by the very scientists that incorporate one within the other in their scientific lives.

In the case of ethnomethodology and CA, therefore, the idea of an empirical epistemology co-existing with a constructivist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000d:157) may be considered a special case of qualitative science (Checkland,

1984/1999). The interest in paradigm statements stems from the belief that they imply intellectual legitimacy (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:163). The paradigm for this study will be defined under three headings:

- Ontology

- Epistemology

- Methodology

3.3.1 Ontology

The ontology for this study is constructivism; and this is relativist, meaning that the existence of universal truths is denied (Pojman, 1995:690-691). A constructivist ontology asserts that reality is knowable only in the form of intangible mental constructions that are socially and experientially based. These mental constructions are local, specific and dependant on individuals — sometimes interacting in groups — for their form and content (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:110).

The two opening statements show that the ontological claim in this study is not unproblematic. On the one hand, several of the early theoretical claims of conversation analysis are resonant with positivist activities and language (Lynch & Bogen, 1994:68). Sacks, in the mid-1960s, advocated a strong reliance on observation, a systematic and reproducible method of recording, a rejection of representation by the researcher of the member's comments and an acceptance of logical empiricist investigation (Sacks, 1984; Schegloff, 1992/2000a:xxxi).

How can this render an allegiance to constructivism plausible? The justification lies in the social constructionist nature of the way that social facts are observed, recorded and accounted for. Within each social fact lies a natural organisation and structure of communication. Scientists and any other social group members have assembled observable methods and structures of social production. It is this social activity — "life within facts" — that allow the constructivist ontology.

3.3.2 Epistemology

The epistemology of the study also presents a paradox. The nature of knowledge that reflects a constructivist ontology is usually deemed to be "transactional, subjectivist,

created findings" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:168). At some stage either during an interview, focus group, narrative or story, the researcher enters into dialogue. Clarification, further description or explanation are typical requests of the respondent by the researcher. This renders the relationship of the researcher–respondent transactional and intersubjective. The researcher's role is representational.

CA does not fulfil these requirements. Researcher activities adhere more to the epistemology of empiricism than of interpretivism. For example, the researcher does not enter into dialogue, but rather ensures audio-tape recordings of talk-in-interaction, which are regarded as empirical data allowing transcription (documentary evidence), are made for analysis. The intersubjective is replaced by the researcher's acknowledgement of his or her status as a socially organised member of society, but in the research undertaking the researcher ensures the collection of data "at a distance", rather than a conversationalist who is intersubjectively involved. The features of the conversation being eavesdropped upon are "social facts". The facts in this study are those constructed through talk-in-interaction and not facts as constructed by individuals, which one would expect to find in an interpretivist epistemology (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:170). Descriptions of talk-in-interaction are analysed in terms of the sort of action that is being performed in the construction of factual accounts (Potter, 1996:121).

As is explained in the data collection for this study, the researcher set up recording equipment; the conversation was held, and the researcher collected the equipment. The deciding factor in presenting a modified interpretive epistemology is that the focus is on talk-in-interaction. The conversations of members of the social group are recorded as they are involved in constant interpretation and adaptation to each others' speech patterns. The researcher does not take up the task of re-interpreting these adaptations. Nevertheless the interpretations and adaptations people use during conversation do exist. The empirical method of data collection is subjugated to the interpretive nature of conversation, and this explains the epistemological choice; however, a key epistemological problem does exist for the CA researcher. Unlike the traditional interpretive researcher whose task is to interpret and represent respondents' descriptions, the CA researcher needs to have the tools to be able to investigate how members in social groups produce and recognise each other's talk-in-interaction.

These are the protocols of CA that are described in the data collection section in Chapter 4.

Because of the assumption that people assemble their activities by local, contextual ordering and structure, it is possible within a CA framework to apply the same sort of rigorous and systematic methodological approach as is found in grounded theory (Glaser, 1992, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). For a critical review of grounded theory, see Charmaz (2000). In addition to the qualities of talk-in-interaction addressed by writers on CA (e.g. Psathas 1995, Have 2000), the social group member's activity of constant adaptation is presented to enrich the qualitative methodology argument.

The guiding assumption of CA is that whenever social reality is approached, order is present (Silverman, 1998:58). Research using CA over the last 30 years claims to have discovered the "structures, methodological procedures, and the machinery of the production of orderliness in interaction" (Psathas, 1995a:27). Thus, as a starting point, it is clear that the analytical process of constructing the facts of the structure of talk-in-interaction (discourse) from tape recordings is very different from the representations, theories and models of an epistemology that assumes that the researcher and the object of investigation are "interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:111) (author's italics).

Social constructionism is not empirical in either the traditional positivist sense or as in early ethnomethodological propositions. In both of these cases, the empiricism of CA was as close to scientific empiricism as it was possible to be. There is a signal difference in the "empiricism" presented in this study. First, the term is used to differentiate between the representational, intersubjective stance of the interpretive epistemology. Second, the acceptance of an impersonal, objective treatment of data does not extend to the acceptance of a normative set of social facts that can be discovered and apprehended. The key to explaining empiricism within socially constructed reality lies in the ontological decision. This study is firmly embedded within the social constructionist ontology. The term *empirical* refers to the assumption that the data on the audio-tape recording is factual evidence.

3.3.3   Methodology

The purpose of the methodology in CA is to support the choice of data-collection method that will recover recognisable features of conversations or talk-in-interaction. As early as 1949, Ryle wanted to study the local regulations governing the practical use of concepts (Potter, 1996:46). CA is close to this idea and proposes that the best indication of these is through the way people structure their talk as they interact. Methodologically, CA seeks to present a generalised method for analysing the local, contextual social activities of conversation. The logic behind this method is that there are machineries of conversation that manifest themselves in speech patterns. The etic, or generalised understanding, of the situation (Brislin, 1976) is that there are machineries of conversation, and these manifest in speech patterns. The emic, or localised understanding, is that the organisation of speech patterns will have been assembled or constructed within the social group in accordance with some qualitative judgments about what is to be included or excluded. The qualitative aspect of the construction and recognition of the machinery of conversation within a social group lays the foundation for the methodological argument

The theoretical underpinnings of the methodology for this study were discussed in the first part of this chapter. Just as the empiricism in this study is a special case, the methodology becomes a special case of qualitative methodology. Qualitative refers to the ability of the members as agents to design their own versions of the world-as-experienced, using their personal and group constructs of reality. It was proposed that when people are in a group they behave like a CAS in that their discourse takes on the characteristics of a CAS. The theoretical perspective on the qualitative research side was ethnomethodology, and the data transcription and analysis methods were those of CA.

3.4   Rigour

Having chosen the constructivist ontology, not unproblematically, the rigour requirements of qualitative research were fulfilled, with the exception of some of the epistemological issues discussed earlier. The question asked by Lincoln (2000a:178), "Are these findings sufficiently authentic [trustworthy and related to the way others construct their social worlds] that I may trust myself by acting on their implications?"

was considered to be applicable to this study and the importance of rigour in the research methodology and its execution was considered to be paramount.

The essential problem for ethnomethodological research is not operationalising some theory, as in the case of cognitive constructionism discussed above, but in making the world able to be investigated in terms of the phenomena that the theory of ethnomethodology specifies (Benson & Hughes, 1991:128). This places a methodological constraint on the researcher in that nothing can be assumed to be known about the phenomena specified in advance of investigating the world through the theory. "To do otherwise would transgress the requirements of rigour in failing to establish that the world *can* be investigated by the theory to produce findings about the phenomena. Rigour, then is adhering to the methodological election to treat the social order as a member's accomplishment through and through" (Benson & Hughes, 1991:129) (author's italics). CA, located in the theoretical perspective of ethnomethodology, is often characterised as an "analytical approach that seeks to describe and analyze social actions and the organizational features of … naturally occurring, interactional phenomena" (Psathas, 1995a:45). Thus the task for the researcher is to discover and analyse such phenomena.

The concept of rigour in this study is less concerned with the debate on the theory of rigour than with the criteria for quality under which the study was conducted and, especially, ensuring that "member's accomplishment" in creating order was faithfully reported. The quality criteria for carrying out research using CA are set out in Table 3.1. The criteria for quality investigation (assumptions) have been adapted from a number of authoritative sources (Boden, 1994; Have, 1999; Heritage, 1997; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Psathas, 1995a; Silverman, 1998). The right-hand column shows, for each of the criteria, how the methods of CA were put into practice in the research methods and fieldwork used in this study, which are described in the next chapter.

Table 3.1: The methodological perspective of conversation analysis

Assumptions	Practice in the Study
CA methods were seen by Harvey Sacks as "methods anyone could use" (Silverman, 1998) though familiarity and practice is essential for quality data transcription and analysis	Practice was guided by practitioner handbooks (e.g. Have, 1999; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and skills developed during the transcription and analysis of the Preliminary Studies
Conversation has an order or orderliness within it.	The researcher did not impose any order.
There is no interest in persons, places and research settings.	Members were selected randomly by other than researcher. Places were determined by where the conversations were to take place. Research settings were natural.
Data should be derived from naturally recurring conversation.	Both the Forestville and City contexts allowed naturally recurring conversation.
CA tries to describe and analyse phenomena and not explain phenomena by drawing on a theoretical framework other than the frameworks of CA itself.	Phenomena were analysed in accordance with CA theory and conventions. The theorised characteristics of a CAS were apparent from the CA data itself.
Data-transcription assumptions	
Data is recorded by audio-recordings. This original data is the only evidence from which all analysis derives.	The original recordings were used throughout the analysis in preference to transcripts.
Transcription seeks to capture the 'machinery' of conversation using the transcription conventions of the CA academic community.	Transcription conventions were used but some additional notations were devised to transcribe phenomena for which there is no existing symbol.
Recordings must be able to be repeatedly replayed and transcribed for verification and re-examination	This practice was followed.
Data analysis: analytical assumptions	
CA research adopts a stance of 'unmotivated looking'	The strategy of analysis, described in Chapter 4, started in this way.
No assumptions are made regarding members' motivations, intentions, purposes; nor about their ideas, thoughts or understandings; except in so far as these can demonstrably be shown	This principle was followed during analysis as may be seen from examining the Appendices on Data Analysis for every session which are in Volume 2, Appendices.

Assumptions	Practice in the Study
to be matters that participants themselves are noticing, attending to, or orienting to in the course of their interaction.	
The researcher's analysis of what participants are doing is never based on some constructive analytic interpretation such as : 'taking the role of the other' 'presenting a self' 'being deviant' 'managing impressions' 'defining the situation'	This principle, or assumption, was followed so that the researcher was not part of the interpretive framework.
These are set aside because they interfere with the direct examination of the phenomena of talk-in-interaction.	The question of setting aside analytical interpretations such as these do not arise as they were not used.
Data analysis: practical assumptions	
Existing knowledge of the 'machinery of conversation', established through research on CA over the last 30 years, is accepted as a faithful description of recurrent phenomena which can be used for analysis.	Chapter 4 describes how this study builds on the received knowledge of CA. Sacks et al. (1974) systematics of turn-taking were followed.
The analytical task is, initially, to provide a wholly adequate analysis of how a single instance (utterance, individually or in sequence) is organised. The aim is to "recover the 'machinery' that produced the interaction 'as it happened'" (Benson & Hughes, 1991:130).	This principle was adopted for the strategy of data analysis described in Chapter 4.
A single instance is not usually taken as evidence of structure. Repeated instances of demonstrably similar empirical structures are admissible.	Searches for repeated instances were rigorously adopted as evidence of structure.
Data sessions and reporting	
Written reports must include transcripts of the data from which the report was written	All fieldwork transcripts, analyses and reports are in the Volume 2, Appendices.
The original recordings must be available for examination and review.	Recordings are available for examination.

3.5 The analytical concepts of conversation analysis

To gain a sense of the knowledge and practice of rigour as applied to this study, the analytical concepts of CA are explained. Previous researchers in CA over the last 30 years have established a range of accepted analytical concepts. This was achieved, in the words of Sacks (1992/2000a:411) by seeing "how finely the details of actual, naturally occurring conversation can be subjected to analysis that will yield the technology of conversation". The final result of his work and that of the many others who followed is a set of formulated rules or principles that people demonstrably follow in their natural talk-in-interaction. Not all of these rules are of interest to this study.

The question thus arose: "Where in the data does one look for evidence of the characteristics of CAS?" The starting point was the overall interactional sequences that were recorded in a content log during transcription. This shows the broad phases through which the session went. These phases were particularly marked in the Forestville sessions, where the conversations were goal focussed.

Each of these broad phases is built up my members by a continuous flow of shorter sequences. These are the starting point for all analysis using CA as they show the sequential order of talk. This is often termed *sequence organisation* and has been termed a "core idea" (Have, 1999:113) and the very "foundation" of CA (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:38). The notion of the "sequential order of talk" has two aspects: not only are turns organised by members in sequence, but each speaker's turn follows on from the previous turn and leads to the following turn. This has important implications for analysis:

- Each speaker reveals his or her understanding of the previous turn's possible completion.

- The relationship between the turns shows how members actively analyse the on-going production of talk for the purpose of negotiating their participation in it.

- In the case of this study, where the conversation is in response to a factual prompt, members will be using language to support their perspective or point of view.

Four types of interactional organisation, all closely related to turn-taking, were selected from the literature of CA (Have, 1999; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Psathas, 1995a) as being relevant to this study. These are:

1. turn-taking;

2. the management of overlapping talk;

3. the organisation of repair; and

4. the organisation of turn-construction design.

Each of these four key types of interactional organisation is introduced briefly below with examples.

3.5.1 Turn-taking

The discovery and description of turn-taking as a methodological procedure producing orderliness in interaction (Sacks et al., 1974) was an important finding for CA as a discipline. In this study, the system of turn-taking organisation is central to the analysis of the tapes and transcripts. Sacks et al. (1974) showed that the turn-taking system is self-organising, in that it is done by members as they interact (Psathas, 1995a:38). Thus, in this study, to demonstrate that self-organisation is taking place in the groups, it is essential (along with other issues) to produce evidence of the turn-taking machinery in use. At the most fundamental level, in a conversation between two people, Sacks et al., (1974) observed that usually only one speaker talks at a time; speaker change happens smoothly with very little gap, and there is seldom overlap. An example of this basic model, using a single phrase turn:

A: Oh I have – I have one class in the evening

B: On Mondays?

A: Y-uh:::Wednesdays.=

B: = Uh-Wednesday,=

A: = En it's like a Mickey Mouse course.   (Sacks et al., 1974:702)

In addition to the 'turn-constructional component' illustrated above, turn-taking possesses a 'turn-allocation component' — ways in which the next speaker is naturally allocated. In this example Sara is allocating turns to Ben and Bill:

Sara: Ben you want some (   )?
Ben: Well <u>all</u>right I'll have a,
((pause))
Sara: Bill you want some?
Bill: No,   (Sacks et al., 1974:703)

From the point of view of analysis, every turn has a three part structure: one part addresses the relation of the turn to the preceding turn, one part is that which is occupies the turn itself, and the third part addresses its relation to the succeeding turn (Sacks et al., 1974:722).

3.5.2   The management of overlapping talk

"Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time," writes Sacks et al. (1974:706). "… the system allocates single turns to single speakers … [and] all turn transfer is co-ordinated around transition-relevance places …". In group conversations, however, such as those in this study, the tapes show several members apparently talking at the same time. Research by Sacks et al., (1974) followed up by Jefferson (1983) shows that large amounts of overlap, which often look like interruption, do occur at a legitimate transition-relevance place; i.e. the place in a conversation when one speaker takes over from another. As Sacks (1992/2000a:643) comments "If one wants to show one is involved in a conversation, then starting to talk while someone else is talking is a means of doing that".

An example of overlap is provided by the following excerpt in which Vic and James both respond to Mike simultaneously:

Mike: I know who d'guy is=
Vic: = [He's ba::d
James   =[You know the gu:y?   (Sacks et al., 1974:707)

The analysis of overlap has especial relevance for this study for speakers responding simultaneously to each other may be evidence of the co-creation of meaning.

3.5.3   The organisation of repair

"Repair mechanisms exist [in the turn-taking model] for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations" (Sacks et al., 1974:723). There are a variety of ways in which people use repair to iron out real or potential trouble with the flow or progress of interaction, such as misunderstanding and a failure to hear properly. From the point of view of this study, analysis of repair can demonstrate self-organisation and contribute towards co-creation.

An example of a repair ("What's that?" in a surprised or amused tone) taken from a conversation between a doctor and patient:

P:	or when I've drunk (.) and then uh:hh then afterwards I have gastric acid
D:	heartburn
•P:	what's that
D:	huhh
P:	belches
P:	yes tha- that's what I call gastric acid

(Have, 1999:118)

3.5.4   The organisation of turn-construction design

Turn-construction design is a general category used to introduce three sequential features of talk closely related to turn-taking. These are the notions of *adjacency*, *preference* and *recipient design*.

Adjacency pairs, named by Sacks, struck him as so important that he devoted the whole of his lecture course in the Spring of 1972 to the subject (Sacks, 1992/2000b:521). Since then several major papers have recognised the notion of adjacency as one of the major instruments of sequential organisation (Have, 1999:113). Basically adjacency pairs exist when an utterance by one member requires an appropriate response by another member. Adjacency pairs are seen as their most simple in a passing greeting:

A: Hello

B: Hello

The powerful normative nature of an adjacency pair is illustrated in the following example, however, where two colleagues are passing in a corridor and greet each other simultaneously:

1   A: [Hello.

2   B: [((almost inaudible)) Hi

3   (Pause: B continues walking)

4   A: ((shouts)) Hello   (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:42)

Adjacency pairs add a further dimension to turn-taking because they are about action resulting from talk. The fact of their existence requires hearers to pay attention to what is being said. This reinforces the notion that talk-in-interaction is co-produced. Sequences as "patterns of subsequent action" (Have, 1999:114) are discussed above. Adjacency organisation, seen particularly in adjacency pairs, shows that subsequentiality is not an arbitrary phenomena but the way in which cultural norms influence talk-in-interaction at the local level.

Preference organisation focuses on the outcome of an adjacency pair sequence. While the normative nature of an adjacency pair requires a response, preference organisation is concerned with the ways in which the first part of the pair may be designed to elicit a response which is preferred or dispreferred; i.e. not preferred.

In this example, A, through the construction of her question, indicates a preferred response, while B disappoints her.

1   A: You coming down early?

2   B: Well, I got a lot of things to do before getting

3   cleared up tomorrow. I w- probably won't be too

4   early   (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:44)

Preference organisation is important for the analysis of talk-in-interaction. It demonstrates that turns are designed as a meaningful choice, instantly and on the spot, but always informed by each speaker's knowledge of the situation and other members in particular. Conversation analysts use examples of preference to draw inferences about the structure of social relationships (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:46). In this study, examples of preference organisation provide evidence of each member of a group as an autonomous agent adapting constantly to other agents in a form of self-organisation.

Recipient design is at the heart of adjacency organisation, turn-taking and its efficient interactional operation. It has been defined as "the way in which all turns at talk are in some way designed to be understood in terms of what the speaker knows or assumes about the existing mutual knowledge between him or her and the recipient" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:138)

The following example illustrates this collaborative quality of recipient design:

Travel agency

1 A: OK. And you want to rebook?
2 C: Yeah, *no*. I want actually – want to *can*cel
3   the booking,
4   (0.2)
5   so I *do*n't have
6   (0.1)
•7 A: A cancell*a*tion charge. [Okay,] what's your name?
8 C: [(yeah)]
9   Uhm, Sim-*Sim*pson
10   (sound of keyboard)   (Boden, 1994:71)

The collaborative sentence is in lines 5 and 7: " so I don't have a cancellation charge".

Recipient design is the feature of self-organisation that gives conversations their customised or context sensitive quality. This is especially true of group conversations. As Boden (1994:71) puts it:

> Speakers create turns with recipients in mind, and listeners are motivated to "hear" a turn that is for them and all participants closely and constantly track the trajectory of the talk to hear "their" turns. This is of course most noticeable in multiparty talk …

Note that Appendix B defines all the CA terms used in this thesis

3.6   Summary

This chapter reviewed the theory that lies behind the methodology. It provided the rationale and theoretical justification for the methods that were employed in the field work and are described in full in Chapter 4. The research paradigm that provides the basic set of beliefs that guided this field work was stated. Finally, the question of rigour was discussed. The assumptions deriving from the practical discipline of CA were stated, and these provided the criteria for rigour in the execution of the field work. This was followed by an explanation of the analytical concepts from the discipline of CA that were selected for the data analysis described in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 describes how the theory of the methodology was put into practice through the research methods used in the field study.

Chapter 4. The practice of the methodology: research methods

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, which addressed the theory of the methodology, it was argued that ethnomethodology and CAS theory had much in common, which was evidenced by bridging theory. It was then proposed that this bridging theory provided the rationale and justification for a practical theory of data collection procedures that were used in this study.

This theory of data collection procedures, which was set out in full in Chapter 3, holds that for the small groups selected for this study, five characteristics of a CAS must be present. These are spontaneity, unpredictability, self-organisation, co-creation, and emergent order or disorder. It was also theorised that CA, with its roots in ethnomethodology, was capable of observing these characteristics of a CAS. This chapter describes the ways in which the theory of the methodology, and in particular the theory of data collection procedures, was put into practice in the field.

4.2 The field-research process

A conceptual model of the field-research process is set out in Figure 4.1. Each of the stages of the model are described briefly here and elaborated below.

The five theorised characteristics of a CAS acted as sensitising concepts to guide the investigation and make sense of the evidence. Throughout the field research, a hermeneutic process was employed that is recorded below for the purpose of clarifying the concepts guiding the data collection process. Finally, in Chapter 5 the data analysis and findings elaborate the analytical frame by providing evidence for a way of seeing talk-in-interaction in groups as a CAS.

Goal

To test concepts

SELECTING LOCATIONS
- Forestville
- City

SELECTING CASES
Members of:
- 'Natural Group'
- Organisational Semi-formal
- Organisational Natural Group

SENSITIZING CONCEPTS
- Spontaneity
- Unpredictability
- Self-organisation
- Co-creation
- Emergent Properties

Guides Investigation
Makes Sense of Evidence

The Hermeneutic Process of Data Collection

CLARIFYING CONCEPTS & CATEGORIES

Data Analysis & Findings in Chapter 5

ELABORATING THE ANALYTICAL FRAME

(Source: Based on Ragin, 1994)

Figure 4.1: A conceptual model of the field-research process

Two research methods were used in the field study:

- CA was used to describe the machinery of talk-in-interaction; that is, the ways in which people in a group actually produced their conversations. CA was used in all three locations of data collection.

- Data captured by electronic-group-support-systems technology (EGSS) was combined with transcript data for content analysis in two preliminary studies and in all the six City studies.

In this chapter these two research methods are described in the context of the conventional stages through which qualitative research proceeds. These are:

1. data collection;

2. data transcription; or

3. data analysis.

Examples of evidence and supporting documents that are complementary to this chapter may be found in Volume 2. The full documentation is in electronic form. Note that pseudonyms have been used for the place names of the locations of data collection and for all participants in every data session recorded.

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Introduction

Qualitative research is strongly influenced by the selection of location and subjects to be researched (Ragin, 1994). After preliminary data-collection sessions, two locations were chosen. These were termed the Forestville study and the City study.

In every study, the focus was on talk-in-interaction among members of a group. There were three groups, which are known in CA as 'speech-exchange systems'. While each group differs in the way in which talk-in-interaction takes place, they all share the common characteristic of turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974).

At the Forestville location, there was the unique opportunity to collect data from two organisational groups. The City location provided a special opportunity to test concepts with a "natural" group.

In CA, the evidence is always the data on the audio-tape recording itself. The tape recordings captured, verbatim, the actual talk-in-interaction as it took place at a particular time and in a particular place (Have, 1999:33). The transcripts, upon which the analysis was based, are known as documentary evidence, although they are actually secondary data; that is, data once removed from the original source.

This emphasis on the importance of primary data means that that the data collection process must be authentic and consistent. The word *authentic* here means that the physical act of data collection meets the demands of rigour espoused by the CA community. These requirements for rigour in research methods were set out in Chapter 3. AuthentiCity also means that the data-collection sessions reflect the language-specific conversational format of the designated speech-exchange system. This requirement, which takes the place of theoretical sampling in traditional interpretive

studies, is discussed below. The word *consistent* means that each data-collection session is managed in a fashion that exhibits a consistent approach designed to penetrate the way members use and assemble the machinery of talk-in-interaction.

Sacks (1992/2000b:169) referring to the unit of analysis (described in section 4.5) describes the machinery of talk-in-interaction as follows:

> We want to think of that particular sequence as really one machine product. That is to say, it's not this conversation as an object that we're terribly interested in, but we can begin to see the machinery that produces this [the sequence/unit of analysis] as a series of moves, and to appreciate it as a series of moves among the potential set of moves that are otherwise to be actualized by some people — and we don't care who they are.

> In a way, our aim is just that; to get into a position to transform, in what I figure is almost a literal, physical sense, our view of what happened here as some interaction that could be treated as the thing we're studying, to interactions being spewed out by machinery, the machinery being what we're trying to find; where in order to find it we've got to get a whole bunch of its products.

Thus the researcher's task in this study was to develop data-collection procedures that would penetrate the way members assembled their conversation. To achieve this, a reflexive approach to data-collection procedures was adopted. Based upon the theory of collecting data on a CAS, described in full in Chapter 3, a general procedure for data collection was developed. In the preliminary sessions, this procedure was adjusted for "best fit". A similar process of learning took place in the Forestville sessions with a specific focus on CA techniques. In the City sessions, which combined EGSS with CA, the reflexive approach of adjusting each session from the experience of the previous one continued.

It is recognised that the reflexive approach to data-collection procedures leads to a loss in standardisation; however, the primary objective was to develop data-collection

procedures that, through experience, moved increasingly closer to naturally occurring talk. This raised the question: "What is naturally occurring talk?"

Naturally occurring talk has been defined as "spoken language produced entirely independently of the actions of the researcher … it is natural in the specific sense that it is not 'got up' by the researcher using an interview schedule, a questionnaire, an experimental protocol, or some such social research technology" (Potter, 1999:328). This particular definition is designed more to provide a contrast with other data-collection methods than to illuminate the concept of naturally occurring talk. In the paragraphs above and the quotation from Sacks (1992/2000) the implications of this concept have been set out. Potter (1999:328) conceptualises naturally produced talk "not as a straightforward discovered object, but as a theoretical and analytic stance on conversational interaction".

This section on data collection is presented under the following headings:

Section 4.3.2 (Speech-exchange systems, physical location and member selection) provides an overview of the 15 data-collection sessions, which are classified by speech-exchange systems (defined below).

Section 4.3.3 (The contribution of the Preliminary and the Forestville studies to the City research design) is an account of how the data-collection procedures were developed iteratively and reflexively starting with the preliminary studies, followed by the Forestville studies.

Section 4.3.4 (Data collection procedures for the City study) is an account of how the research design for the City studies was theorised to achieve the main objectives of determining whether CAS can be used for consumer research.

Section 4.3.5 (Iterative adjustments to the City research design) is an account of how the iterative design process continued after each City data-collection session.

Section 4.3.6 (Discussion and justification) concludes section 4.3 (Data collection).

4.3.2 Speech-exchange systems, physical location and member selection

Sacks et al. (1974:730) maintained that their systematics for the organisation of turn-taking was a basic form. They recognised that in a single society there could be many variations in the way turn-taking takes place, according to the turn-allocation rules of the particular gathering. Each gathering, with its specific "rules" for turn allocation was termed a *speech-exchange system*.

Speech-exchange systems were said to lie on a continuum from ordinary conversation, being the least constrained with equal opportunity for participation, to lectures and debates as the most constrained. There are many gradations in between. The characteristics of speech-exchange systems at the ends of the continuum are conceptualised as follows:

Debate ◄————————► **Ordinary Conversation**

Pre-allocation of turns	Local allocation of turns
Equalisation of turns	Maximises size of set of potential speakers to each turn but no method of doing this
Turn size longer	Turn size shorter
Multiplication of sentence units	Increasing internal complexity within single (or minimised) sentence units

<div align="right">(adapted from Sacks et al., 1974:729)</div>

The reason for classifying the data sessions according to the speech-exchange systems into which each falls is that every speech-exchange system has its tacit rules for the production of conversation. Thus in the data analysis that follows, turn-taking is one of the principles of analysis common to all sessions, but the form of each session varies according to the speech-exchange system in which it is embedded. Three speech-exchange systems were researched. Two were in the Forestville study where the focus was on a context-related conversation (management development). The third speech-exchange system was in the City studies where the focus was on a topic-relayed conversation (financial services). This is explained in full below.

A total of 15 data-collection sessions were held. The distribution of these sessions according to the speech-exchange-system classification is set out in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1:   Data-collection sessions classified by speech-exchange system

Speech-exchange system	Location		
	Preliminary	Forestville (CA)	City (CAS)
Natural group	2	N/A	6
Organisational: semi-formal	1	3	N/A
Organisational: natural group	0	3	N/A
Total sessions	**3**	**6**	**6**

N/A = not applicable

In the City study, and in two preliminary studies that preceded it, data were collected from the speech-exchange system that is termed here a *natural group*. Eight data-collection sessions fell within this speech-exchange system. The recording of natural conversation in a meeting-room session, as was done in the City study, was the intention from the start of this research.

The Forestville data-collection sessions aimed to capture organisational conversation in a natural setting. There were two distinct speech-exchange systems: *organisational: semi-formal* was the speech-exchange system evident in staff meetings; *organisational: natural group* was the speech-exchange system used by members of the project groups. Three data-collection sessions were conducted within each speech-exchange system.

The City data is different from the Forestville data because the City sessions were set up specifically to see if CAS could be used for consumer research. The Forestville data contributed towards this study in two important ways. The data-collection sessions were designed to provide insights into the role of talk in groups, which is discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis. Additionally, they provided the opportunity to test CA in a totally natural setting, so that if necessary, modifications could occur.

Forestville is a conference centre outside Melbourne in the state of Victoria, Australia. The occasion was a five-day residential meeting of staff and employees of a large international industrial company. There were six recording sessions. Three of these fell into the category of a speech-exchange system termed here *organisational: semi-*

formal. The three members of the meetings were staff, and the subject discussed was the reception of the day's program. The second three data recording sessions are termed *organisational: natural* because, although the meetings took place in an organisational context, the speech-exchange system allowed natural conversation. Members were employees meeting as project groups of 6–7 people. The researcher was not present at any of the data-collection sessions at Forestville. The recordings were made by invitation from the members, and anonymity was guaranteed. The recording equipment was set up unobtrusively, left running and collected at the end of each session.

The physical venue for the City data-collection sessions was a meeting room in a commercial building in Perth, Western Australia. The six data-collection sessions held there are termed a *natural group* speech-exchange system. The justification for this being a *natural group* is argued in the discussion at the end of this chapter.

The method of member selection was not sampling, in the sense of a representation of an estimated population. Indeed, it would be impossible to estimate a population of people engaged in talk-in-interaction at any given time. Also, in an ethnomethodological study of this kind, typical variables — such as age, race, class and gender — are not "automatically" treated as relevant (Boden, 1994:77). Selection took place at two levels. The first level was the selection of members to constitute the group to create the talk-in-interaction. In CA, these members are regarded as *specimens* representative of a *category* whose talk-in-interaction was observed (Have, 1999:48). The category of interest in this study was consumers of financial services. The requirement for selection to this category was that members must have the ability to participate actively in consumption of financial services, which eliminates very young people, the mentally deficient, the elderly and those on welfare benefits.

The members were recruited randomly by a marketing research agency. The only criteria were that members should be employed in organisations, preferably without focus group experience, and that in each group there was a gender balance; e.g. two women and two men. These constraints were placed to ensure that the members were likely to have some knowledge and interest in the service or product. Without some

knowledge and interest it was difficult to envisage any worthwhile conversation taking place.

The second level of selection was the selection of data to be analysed. This is discussed in section 4.5.

4.3.3 The contribution of the Preliminary and the Forestville studies to the City research design

The research process was innovative, with no exact precedent to follow. First a model was conceived that is explained in full in the next section of this chapter. Then operational notes were prepared to guide the process and coordinate those engaged in the data-collection sessions (the researcher, the conductor and the technician). After each session, a review took place that modified the procedure for the following session.

The chronological summary of the data-collection sessions that follow demonstrates the iterative and reflexive nature of the process. This shows the interpretivist view of practical hermeneutics as a technique of understanding in action. It also constructs a methodological foundation for this study (Schwandt, 2000:194).

Data collection for the Preliminary study

Three preliminary studies were carried out for the purpose of testing and developing the visualised data collection procedures. Each of the preliminary data-collection sessions is briefly described.

Preliminary 1 was held in a meeting room in the City. There were seven invited members, the conductor, two technicians and the researcher as non-participant observer. The overall conclusion was that the objective of the meeting, which was to simulate natural conversation in response to a prompted theme, such as would take place among ordinary persons, was not achieved. In particular, Preliminary 1 brought to the attention the practical difficulties of operating the EGSS software and the way in which the conductor runs the meeting. It was clear that each session must be structured so that it moves away from facilitation and a semi-formal meeting towards a natural encounter in which member initiated conversation can take place. These

lessons led to modifications in the data collection procedure which were incorporated into Preliminary 2.

Preliminary 2 was held in a EGSS meeting room in the City. There were four invited members: two men and two women. All were members of the general public. Running the meeting was the conductor and two technical support staff. The researcher was present as a non-participant observer. The session was conducted under revised operational instructions (no. 2). The lessons from Preliminary 1 were taken into account and the visual prompt, incorporated into the EGSS software, was used.

This data collection was successful in its design; however, it was clear that further adjustments would be needed to achieve a suitable environment for the City studies. An important discovery from Preliminary 2 was that standard orthography, which is universally adopted in transcriptions of data collected by interview, was totally unacceptable for conversation analysis. Standard orthography and CA transcription are compared in section 0.

Preliminary 3 was held in a conference centre located outside the City. Twelve participants were involved in an organisational meeting using the EGSS technology that lasted one hour. There were several reasons for regarding this session as an informative contribution towards the testing of the data-collection methods. These were:

- There was data collection from a large group.

- There was observation of a an *organisational: semi-formal* speech-exchange system at work.

- It involved the operation of EGSS technology and especially templates that determined the overall structure.

- Members acted in a task-based, goal-oriented manner. Generally all participants seemed to contribute, suggesting normal symmetry in this respect; i.e. no dominant member, so turn-taking was equal.

- The contrasting role of the facilitator in EGSS sessions was compared with the proposed role of the conductor in the City sessions to come.

Overall, Preliminary 3 tested two extremes for elimination from the data-collection possibilities. One was the avoidance of a large group. The other was the confirmation that the well established and widely used EGSS meeting methods were unsuitable for this study.

The preliminary data-collection sessions, together with full documentation made at the time, appears in Volume 2, Appendix D (electronic).

Data collection for the Forestville study

The Forestville data-collection sessions presented a unique opportunity to test the practice and theory of CA data collection, transcription and analysis by gaining practical hands-on experience. Furthermore, this data collection was carried out in a totally natural organisational setting.

There were six data-collection sessions at Forestville. As described in Table 4.1, three data-collection sessions were classified as falling into a speech-exchange system designated *organisational: semi-formal*, which were staff discussions on the day's events. Three data-collection sessions classified as falling into a speech-exchange system designated as *organisational: natural group* were project groups working on a presentation. In every data-collection session, the tape recorder was set running and the researcher was not present. The records of the Forestville data-collection sessions are discussed in section 4.4.

The contribution of the Forestville studies to the research process lay wholly in the subsequent experience of transcription and analysis. Consequently, this is reported in detail in the findings in Chapter 5; however, as a part of the process of developing the research procedures, the Forestville studies showed that:

- The systematics of turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974) were seen to work equally well in both speech-exchange systems;

- Natural conversation in groups could be effectively captured on audio-tape with a quality able to be transcribed apart from occasional cases of overlap.

- The CA conventions of transcription and analysis did produce a large amount of documentary data relevant to the research question.

Examples of the Forestville data collection, transcription and analysis are in Volume 2, Appendices E and F. The full documentation is in electronic form.

4.3.4 Data collection procedures for the City study

The purpose of this section is to describe the overall theorised data-collection procedures that were employed in the six City studies. These procedures benefited from the experience of the preliminary and the Forestville studies summarised above. The procedures were adjusted after each session as is recorded in the section that follows.

The components of each data-collection session

Each data-collection session in the City Study, which was scheduled to last 30 minutes overall, consisted of the following components:

- A meeting room with four members at one end of the table in front of keyboards with a screen at the other end.

- The conductor who started and closed each conversational session with minimal input and no intervention during the session.

- The electronic-group-support-systems technology (EGSS) using Zing software that allowed each member to enter his or her response to the prompt, which then appeared on the screen. The Zing software was operated by a technical-support person.

- The prompt (Figure 4.2), which started and ended each conversational session. The prompt itself showed a photograph of a man about 27 years old with biographical data. The prompt was projected onto the screen by the technician for all members to see and introduced verbally by the conductor. The purpose of the prompt was to initiate a conversation on this young man's financial future. (See section 0 for more details.)

Jason Donelly

27 years Old

Steady job

Earning $36,000

Likes: drinks, holidays and sport

Considers retirement a long way off and doesn't save much
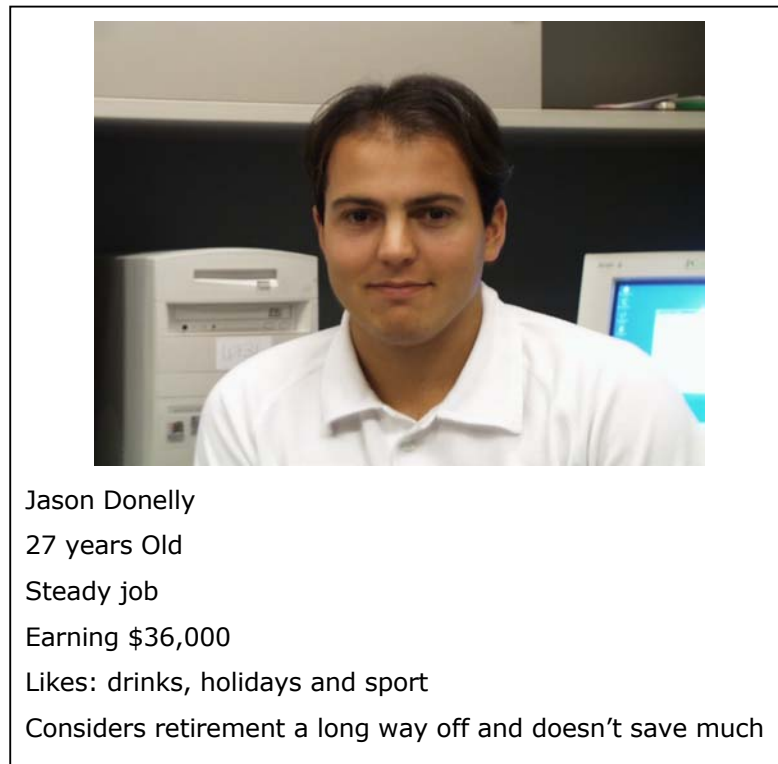
Figure 4.2: The prompt
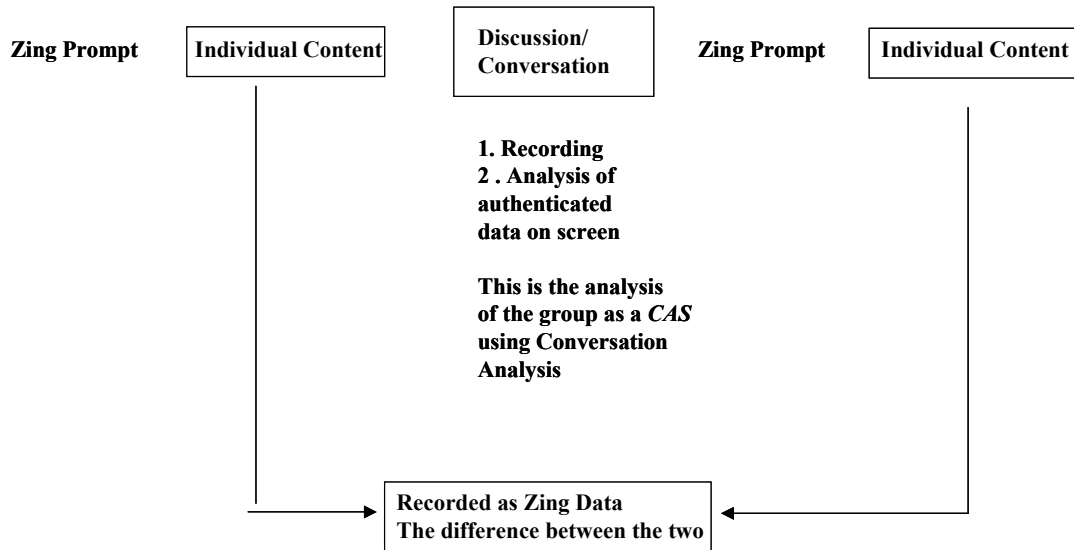
Figure 4.3: The research procedure

A model of the research procedures

The research procedure in the meeting room in the City studies is illustrated in Figure 4.3 above.

The data-collection procedure and operational notes

The procedure adopted for each data-collection session in the City study was designed to capture evidence of the characteristics of CAS in two ways. First, by asking each member to record his or her response to the prompt before the conversation and after the conversation. Second, by tape recording the natural conversation as it occurred between the two keyboard data entries. Data captured in these two ways allowed analysis by CA of the conversation between the two showings of the prompt, and it allowed content analysis using the Zing data and content transcripts.

The data collection procedure is described in the following summary of the actual operational notes used in the City sessions. These were the operational notes that had been modified from the preliminary session experience.

The overall objective

The objective of the City data-collection session is to create a situation with a group of members in which conversation and verbal interaction can occur naturally. Thus, the minimum of intervention is a primary goal. The audio recorded data is being collected for subsequent analysis of patterns of interaction and sequential structures, not meaning. The Zing data is being collected to determine whether an individual shift in response takes place after the discussion.

A general description of the research procedure

Four members are seated at tables in a meeting room. Each member has a small keyboard in front of him or her that is attached inconspicuously to one laptop computer keyboard that is connected to a central computer manned by a technical support person sitting inconspicuously to the side of the room. Individual data entry is projected onto a screen for all to see.

Each session is managed by the conductor, whose role is described below. The computer and its software are known as *Zing,* the brand name for the *Grouputer* system developed by Findlay (Findlay, Hudson, & al., 1991; ZingTechnologies & Grouputer, 1991–2001). The Grouputer is a facility designed in Australia that allows up to 12 participants to share ideas and judgements at the same time and place. These are operated by a technician.

Once the members are settled, the conductor carries out a warm-up exercise using the Zing technology. This exercise has two goals: one is to familiarise members with the physical task of data entry, the other is to allow members to establish some sort of familiarity with each other. It is anticipated that this part of the session will take 15 minutes.

The research session starts with a visual prompt that requires each member to enter his or her response using the keyboard. The prompt shows a photo of a young man with a biographical sketch alongside. The conductor invites members to "Look thirty years ahead, and suggest what he should do to ensure a comfortable financial future".

After individual data entry, members are invited to discuss their individual responses to the prompt. During this part of the procedure the screen is blank. The discussion is audio-recorded for subsequent analysis. This discussion phase may last up to half an hour. In the third part of the procedure, the prompt is shown again and the conductor invites members to record individual responses on the keyboard.

The research procedure goes through four distinct stages that, in practice, should flow seamlessly into each other. The pattern will be retained for each group session as will the recording arrangements for consistency and comparison.

The role of the conductor

The term *conductor* was chosen to signal the role of the person conducting the group meeting. This differs from the usual role of the facilitator in EGSS, who plans meetings, asks agreed questions, manages the meeting and so on. It also differs from focus group interviewing in which questions are structured and the role of the interviewer is directive

The conductor is not the researcher. The main role of the conductor is to be neutral and unobtrusive. The conductor starts the conversation and ends it. Apart from that, the role of the conductor is to ensure an orderly meeting and a friendly ambience with the minimum of intervention, allowing polyphonic responses in which the voices of the members are heard without being collapsed into a single voice or interpreted by the

conductor. Above all, the conductor must adapt to the world of the members encouraging them in a neutral fashion to share their concerns and opinions only when necessary.

A script for the conductor

Welcome and introduction

Conductor welcomes members and thanks them for coming.

Stresses that naturalness is important

Explains the purpose of the research in very broad terms

Explains our privacy policy.

Warm up

Exercise to familiarise members with keyboards and each other.

Data entry of names.

When members feel comfortable –

Sets the scene verbally

"Imagine you are at a barbecue chatting in a group. A friend comes along who would like to talk about his son, Jason" "Here is some background information"

Prompt appears on screen

"You can see what Jason's done with his life so far. I feel that we should look thirty years ahead and give this Jason an appropriate financial outcome when he reaches 55. Add impromptu comments as necessary.

First individual input by members on computer keyboard.

"Now I would like you to enter individually on your key board, what you would do if you were this young man and you were planning for the future."

This starts the actual research session.

Conversation

The Conductor invites free discussion on the subject.

"Now let's put our individual views to one side and discuss together possible financial futures for Jason, our friend's son".

Second individual input by members on the keyboard.

On the grounds that everyone has had their say, or similar plausible reason, the Conductor closes the discussion. Prompt shown a second time and individuals are invited to respond again. It is essential that all members make a data entry even if they repeat what they entered the first time.

Conclusion
Conductor thanks members and closes the session.

The operational notes for the City data-collection sessions appear in Volume 2, Appendices 1.2, 3.2 and 5.2.

4.3.5   Iterative adjustments to the City research design

Data collection in the City studies
The City studies benefited from the experience of data collection in the previous studies and, in keeping with the reflexive and iterative approach adopted, adjustment continued after each session in the search for the "ideal" operation.

There were six data-collection sessions in the City study, each of approximately 30 minutes in total duration. The talk-in-interaction segment (i.e. the conversation between the first and second individual EGSS inputs) varied widely as noted below. These data-collection sessions followed the operational notes that are summarised in section 0.

The conductor, technical support person and researcher reported on the first four data-collection sessions immediately after each session. Only the conductor and technical support person reported on the last two data-collection sessions as the researcher was not present. Based on these reports and observations minor modifications were made to the data-collection process. This section chronicles this hermeneutic process with a brief account of each session.

City group 1 sustained a natural and spontaneous conversation following the prompt for over 20 minutes. In discussion with members afterwards, they said that while financial services were interesting, they needed to know each other better before

chatting. Operational instructions were revised to spend more time on pre-session warm up.

City group 2 conversed after the prompt for four minutes. After that, they claimed to have nothing more to say. The conductor took the group though two more iterations (i.e. showing prompt and asking them to discuss). Each iteration lasted about the same time. In discussion to conclude the session, members spoke more spontaneously and affirmed their interest in financial services.

City group 3 responded well to the prompt and conversation ranged widely. It lasted 36 minutes providing a rich source of recorded data. It was concluded that the session format was working well allowing members to manage their own interactions.

City group 4 conversed for five minutes after the prompt. No iterations were attempted. There were several factors militating against a successful conversation that are discussed in Chapter 5.

A review of the first four City studies
After the first four City sessions, the research team reviewed the data-collection process. It was clear that the process in the meeting room is crucial to getting a group to relax and talk naturally, while the EGSS technology itself did not seem to inhibit members. Certainly most of the members were comfortable with keyboards and data entry. The curtailed conversations in City groups 2 and 4 seemed to be due to local circumstances, such as the late start of both sessions.

Following this reappraisal (recorded in Operational Notes 5) a pre-session 'assimilation exercise' was introduced to replace the EGSS warm up exercise. It was also decided that the researcher would not be present at the data-collection sessions to minimise the possibility of providing an audience for members.

Sessions for City groups 5 and 6 went smoothly and resulted in rich conversations on the product related topic.

The complete documentation for these sessions (termed City 1–6) is in Volume 2, Appendix G.

4.3.6 Discussion and justifications for the "natural" group and the prompt

Setting up practical investigative procedures to capture data on the theorised characteristics of CAS raises a number of issues of theory and operational definition that need to be discussed and justified. That is the purpose of this section of the data-collection method.

Naturally occurring events and ordinary conversation

Garfinkel (1967:vii) stresses that ethnomethodology is concerned with the study of members' methods of constructing reality from everyday and ordinary activities. This position is contrasted with the view of Durkheim, who teaches that social facts have an objective reality. Garfinkel (1967) is not suggesting that research is confined to "everyday and ordinary activities". His interest lay in "the procedural study of common-sense activities" (Have, 1999:6).

The term *conversation*, as used in conversation analysis, means "people are talking with each other, just for the purpose of talking, as a form of sociability or … to indicate any activity of interactive talk, independent of its purpose" (Have, 1999:5). The importance of speech-exchange systems, and especially the differences caused by unequal power, have been discussed above. The question is: "To what extent in the City study, which was held with invited members in a meeting room with some computer interaction, was conversation 'ordinary'?"

In designing the data-collection procedure for the City study, close attention was paid to the criteria for ordinary conversation as defined by Sacks et al (1974). In brief these are characterised as :

- the local management of turns;

- the production of talk by one party at a time;

- the production of short turns;

- the production of turns made up of clausal, phrasal and lexical objects;

- a wide variation in length of session; and

- no specification in advance of what was to be said.

It should be noted that all these characteristics focus on the production of conversation, and none of them refer to the environment of the conversation. Indeed, what is a "natural" environment? CA studies have been done in doctors' consulting rooms, law courts, counselling interviews, police interviews, telephone conversations and many other artificial environments. The most important factor was to create, within the meeting room environment, the opportunity for a naturally occurring conversation that was in no way manipulated to allow the study of the talk itself (Schegloff, 1992/2000a:xviii). Too often, writes Schegloff (1997:184), analyses of discourse are made to fit the analyst's context and not that of the participants. The understandings of the participants, which are built up on a moment-by-moment basis are the data from which analysis and interpretation should grow.

To some extent, this study could not reach the ideal of "dropping in", as in CA studies on doctor–patient conversations or exchanges in the courts of law. There is, however, something purpose built or artificial about all environments, and as long as the researcher does not sway a developing conversation towards a theme or stance then the construction of a meeting venue was not considered within itself as impeding the development of a natural conversation.

It is true that conversations at an actual barbecue, as opposed to an imagined one, do not start with a prompt, but they do start with *ordinary utterances*. In this case, ordinary utterances were used by the conductor to introduce the prompt, just as one would when striking up a conversation about a friend's son. Thereafter the conversation was ordinary with members talking freely, developing and managing their own conversation, whether they decided to converse or not.

The Prompt: role and purpose
The prompt was designed to achieve a particular goal at a particular moment in a particular conversation. Furthermore, it is designed for the recipients — the group members. (See *Recipient design* in the Glossary, Volume 1, Appendix B.)

The prompt is a *membership categorisation device.* This is a device actively employed by speakers to formulate and reformulate the meanings of activities and identities (Sacks, 1992/2000a). Silverman (1998:86) gives the example of a host at a party who introduces a guest to a group by providing brief biographical details of the guest. This resolves a problem for members of the group providing a clearer understanding of the new member and allowing conversation to proceed.

The prompt and its introduction by the conductor in this study go further than a mere introduction at a party. They start a story that is locally occasioned and, as Psathas (1995b:21) observes, "stories are sequentially implicative for further talk".

All these are good technical (CA) reasons for introducing the prompt and creating ordinary conversation. The subject of the prompt is also very important because it invites the conversation on the product-related topic of financial planning. Market research in the United States shows that word-of-mouth recommendation is particularly important to consumer decisions on certain products. Financial planning is one of these (Walker, 1995:39). In the City study, it was clear that there was a high level of interest in the Jason problem posed by the prompt and no reluctance to participate and give advice.

4.4 Data transcription

4.4.1 Introduction

"To understand the profound orderliness of social life requires *not* aggregation and abstraction, but attention to the fine-grained details of moment-to-moment existence, and to their temporal, spatial and profoundly sequential organisation" (Boden, 1994:65).

Data were collected in two ways:

1. Audio tapes recorded at all 15 data-collection sessions.

2. Responses to the prompt were recorded on the Zing software at the six City data-collection sessions.

This section describes the methods and issues arising from the transcription of data recorded on audio tape.

4.4.2 Transcription in conversation analysis

The role of the transcript is to make *what* was said and *how* it was said available for analysis. Indeed, transcription is the core activity of CA. It demands careful, repeated listening to audio tapes to make detailed transcripts using the conventions of CA (Have, 1999:75-78).

Transcription is also the first stage of analysis. As the audio tapes contain the data of the actual conversation as it took place, the transcription is a representation of the data that serves as a convenient tool for understanding the data. Transcriptions and analysis try to note how the phenomena appear during the course of their *actual* production. In other words, transcripts try to capture the phenomena of interest in a written form. Thus the act of transcription places the onus on the researcher to represent, as accurately as possible, the actual talk and sequential positioning of this talk on the pages of the transcript (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:73-77).

4.4.3 Transcription strategy

Transcription followed the traditional processes of CA:

1. A *content log* was prepared for each tape. This was a summary description of what happened on the whole tape with notes. During this process *data segments* were identified. These are the parts of the recording that were circumscribed by a natural boundary; for example, a subject or theme. The content log provided an overall map of the interaction showing the structural organisation of the conversation in terms of its typical phases or sections (Heritage, 1997:166). Each section shows that members were jointly involved in achieving a task.

2. This was followed by a search for *conversational episodes*, which were transcribed in detail. These show sequence organisation, which is at the heart of CA. Preliminary *data analysis* took place at the same time.

3. *Data excerpts* are lines taken from the *data-analysis transcript* to illustrate a conversational episode in an analysis, report or presentation.

Note that definitions are provided in Appendix B to this volume. Examples of process of transcription described above may be seen in the Appendices for selected data-collection sessions at Forestville and the City. They are in Volume 2, Appendices E, F and G. The complete data are available in electronic form.

The model in Figure 4.4 shows the transcription process in the box and its relation to data analysis.
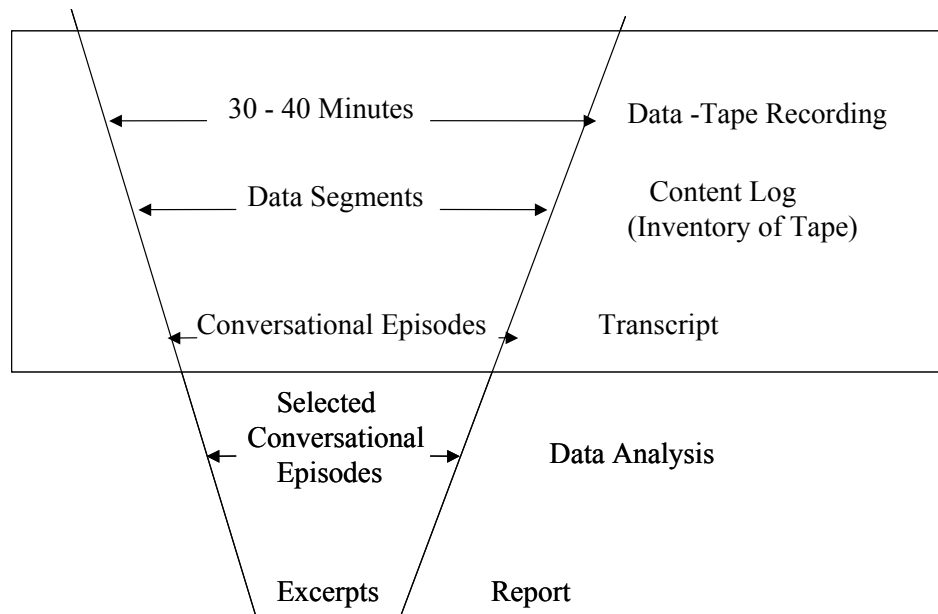
Figure 4.4: The transcription process

This model of the transcription process illustrates how excerpts are selected to provide rich data to support the analysis of the mechanism of local talk-in-interaction.

4.4.4   Transcription conventions

In order to represent *what* was said, CA practitioners often transcribe words as they literally sound. This practice was adopted in this study when it appeared to be relevant. CA has its own conventions for transcribing *how* utterances are said.

The conventions used in transcription for this thesis are set out in Appendix A. Some additional notations have been made to the standard conventions to meet the requirements of analysis for this research.

4.4.5 Standard orthography compared with conversation analysis

Standard orthography (SO) is the skill of writing words with "proper" spelling, where letters represent language sounds. It was recognised early in the study that the transcription of audio tapes could be a tedious and detailed process. For this reason, it was decided to see whether it was practical to have the tapes transcribed by a professional, allowing the researcher to listen to the tapes and adapt the transcription to the CA conventions.

The Preliminary 2 tape was sent to a word-processing agency for transcription. The professional transcript was returned in the form known as standard orthography. The researcher using CA conventions then transcribed the tape. The conclusion from this exercise was that CA transcripts from the original tape can only satisfactorily be done by the researcher in person using CA conventions.

The comparison between SO transcripts and CA transcripts, summarised below, was prepared to highlight the differences between SO — which is the way discourse, interviews and meetings are frequently transcribed — and CA transcriptions, which are made by researchers committed to that discipline.

4.4.6 Literal versus literary transcription

CA attempts to transcribe utterances captured on the tape as accurately as possible. One may say they are literal. For example, extract 1a below may be verified for accuracy from the tape.

1a	CA	
45	St	there are three things he can do (.) he can (.) blow all his
46		money now he can save all his money he can (.) try and
47		know a little bit because you only live once and save for his
48		future

In contrast to CA, SO transcription reads like a play. Each actor has his or her own turn; non-verbals are usually depicted in brackets; e.g. *(laughter).* Standard punctuation is used. Extract 1b below is the same passage as 1a transcribed by the word processing agency.

1b   SO

28   (   ) he is doing. He'll blow all his money now. He can save all

29   his money and retire, no, a little bit because you only live once and save for
        his future.

Rationalisation and in-filling

In the extracts above, note that the SO transcript introduced "he is doing" which was not on the tape. This set up the sense for the rest of lines 28 and 29.

Collapsing

The CA extract below shows considerable overlap indicated by [   ]. Lines 105–111 are difficult to hear because there is talking in the background. In lines 112–114 the speakers voices are sufficient for the transcriber to recognise them but impossible to make out what each person says.

2a   CA

104   Da   [= and if you put a little bit away (°   )

105   ( )   [[(((talking in the background continues))

106   ( )   [no, no

107   ( )   [[(((talking in the background continues))

108   St   [what you got credit (   )

109   ( )   [[(((talking in the background continues))]

110   D   [that 's quite a lot a money [too =   ]

111   St   [it could fetch]=

112   D   = [(   )]

113   St   = [(   )]

114   Da   = [(   )]

115   D   = he could save something

116   Da/B   =[(   )] =

117	St	= what he's gota do is sit down and do a budget=
118	D	= budget=

In the SO transcript, extract 2b, the typist "makes sense" of what is being said. There is no overlapping speech, omissions are largely ignored. Her brackets (   ) are the same as those used in CA to indicate inability to transcribe what was said.

2b **SO**

81	I mean if you put a little bit away ( ) [ ]
82	
83	( )
83	
84	That is quite a lot.
85	
87	He could save something
88	
89	What he has got to do is sit down and do a budget.
90	
91	Budget

Omission and Conversion

CA transcripts faithfully include the following: pauses (.), overlaps [ ], stress and other production features. For example, CA extract 2a above clearly indicates not only background talking, but overlap between the main speakers in lines 111–14. These are not transcribed in SO extract 2b.

Non-lexical utterances such as 'um', 'er', 'oh' and so on are analytically relevant features of talk-in-interaction. People actively coordinate their actions by cueing each other in many non-verbal ways. Extract 3a illustrates this.

3a **CA**

191	Da	=who knows ( ) use in thirty years time
192	St	ha, ha (.) sixty ( ) and that's a lon:g way off from
193		twenty seven=

194	D	[=yea]
195	Da	[=um]
196		(2.0)
197	St	anybody above forty's <u>old</u>
198	D	uh
199	St	well er
200		(2.0)
201	St	ow
202	Da	(　) probably coming up in superannuation (.) that's
203		one of the best ways to go

Extract 3b, which covers the same strip of conversation, omits all non-lexical references and is thus much shorter.

3b	**SO**
165	Who knows if you are still going to be here in 30 years
167	time?
168	(　　　) 60, that's a long way off from 27.
169	
170	Yeah.
171	
172	Yeah.
173	
174	Anybody who is about 40 years old.
175	
176	He can probably tidy up his superannuation. That's the
177	best way to go.

Emphasis

CA transcription seeks to capture a range of speech production characteristics. Emphasis, indicated by transcribing words in upper case indicated that these words were louder than the surrounding talk. Extract 4a is a good example; when reading it you can practically hear D shouting the others down.

4a   CA

164   Da   (I think it) only takes you about 30 years to save up

165   enough to do anything with it=

166   D   =no way=

167   ( )   [ha,ha,ha, ha ha →

168   D   [WELL, IN 30 YEARS TIME WE HAVE A WINNER (.) GOTA

169   WINNER he'll get a fly-buy card]

170   ( )   ((talk over continues))   ]

171   B   the whole thing is you lose so many points [(.)] every

In SO there is no indication that D's emphasis is any different from surrounding speech.

4b   SO

144   It only takes you about 30 years to save up enough to do

145   anything with it.

146   Well, in 30 years time we have a winner. He'll get a fly-buy

147   card.

148   You lose so many points every year if you don't use it. That

4.4.7   Transcription format

The arrangement of the transcript on the page follows these conventions:

- The Jeffersonian system of vertical transcription was adopted because it is the most common among CA researchers.

- New lines were started when either there was a turn change or the margin was reached.

- Intra-turn pauses were formatted within each speaker's turn.

- Inter-turn pauses were placed on a new line.

4.4.8   The transcript file

The transcript file contains the information as set out below.

The place and date of the original recording.

Date of transcription. All tapes were transcribed and analysed by the researcher.

Identification of participants (or members)

Names are not used on transcripts to preserve confidentiality. Participants were identified in the left hand column via a letter code.

Words as spoken

Although this research was conducted in Australia, the three speech-exchange systems examined exhibit substantial differences in diction — the choice of words, the construction of utterances, pronunciation and enunciation. It is recognised by the researcher that representing the words as spoken in standard orthography is an "idealization of *speech* in terms of the standard *language"* (Have, 1999:81). The practice in these transcriptions is to modify standard orthography when appropriate to catch deviations in speech practice. For example, consider this excerpt from Forestville Tape 5A, data segment 1.

> 70   A   wanna sae business again [so]I crossed that outan made that
>   company=

The transcription practice described above — that is, to transcribe words uttered literally only when it appears relevant to the structure — is the normal approach for applied conversational analysis. For example, see Knorr-Cetina (1999:xv), who believes that transcription should be adequate for the level of analysis.

Sounds as uttered

Apart from words with meaning, sounds as uttered were transcribed in relation to other utterances. See especially *vocal sounds* in the Glossary in Appendix B.

Inaudible or incomprehensible words.

These were entered according to transcription conventions.

Spaces

Spaces were entered according to whether they are intra-turn or inter-turn occurrences. See transcription conventions for how duration of silences were transcribed.

Overlap of speech or sound.

Overlaps of speech or sound were marked in the transcription with square brackets, e.g. [ ]. This is an important indication of a *transition-relevance place.* See the Glossary in Appendix B.

The process of talk

The process of talk (pace, stress, volume etc.) was transcribed using CA transcription conventions.

4.4.9   CA transcription in summary

The basic technique of transcription was to "visualise on paper the time-line on the interactional stream, and to place each participant's contribution in relation to those of others" (Have, 1999:33). The purpose of transcripts was to "provide the researcher with a quick access to a wide range of interactional episodes that can be inspected [and analysed] for comparative purposes" (Have, 1999:78).

4.5   Data analysis

4.5.1   Introduction

> The analytic task is to explicate and describe members' methods that could
> have been used to produce 'what happened in the way it did.
>
> (Benson & Hughes, 1991:132)

In Chapter 1, the analytic frame — which classifies and characterises the social phenomenon under study (Ragin, 1994:63) — was defined as complex adaptive systems. Talk-in-interaction is the phenomena under study, which is an instance, or case of this broader assertion.

This analytic frame was deliberately minimal and fluid at the start of the research to limit the influence of pre-existing ideas, which is in keeping with the tenets of conversation analysis. In Chapter 3, particularly in those sections that discussed the theory of the methodology and the theory of collecting data on CAS, the concepts and ideas that framed the research were clarified. These elaborations and refinements of

the concepts provide the criteria for the selection of evidence for analysis (Ragin, 1994:84).

Two types of data are under study. The first is conversation recorded on audio tape in both the Forestville and City studies. The second is the City electronic data, which comes in the form of data individually typed by members, and is used in conjunction with content transcripts, derived from the CA transcripts, for content analysis.

This part of Chapter 4 describes how the transcripts were analysed using CA and how the content analysis was carried out.

4.5.2   Analysis of audio-tape data using CA

Selecting the data to analyse
Uniquely to CA, two sampling issues are borne in mind. One is close to the conventional idea of sampling persons. This was discussed in section 4.3. The other sampling issue arises out of the highly detailed nature of analysis in CA: the sampling of units for analysis.

In Figure 4.4, the transcription process was modelled in which audio tapes of up to 40 minutes duration were logged for content, and transcribed as data segments and conversational episodes. Figure 4.5 highlights the selection of key conversational episodes for data analysis.
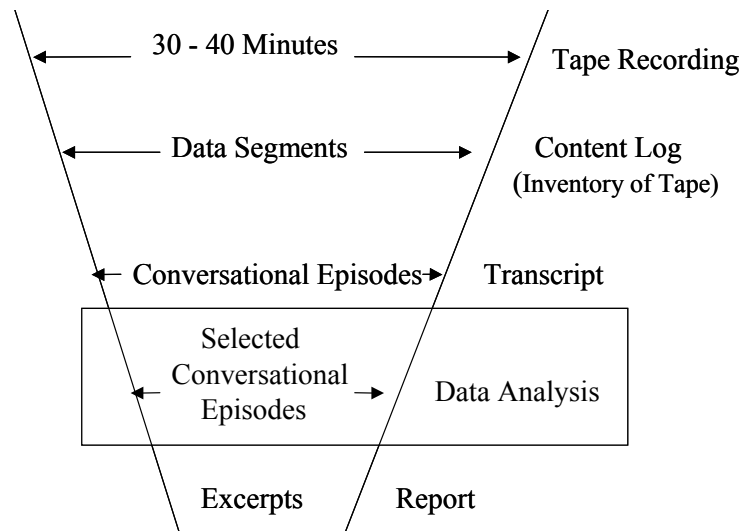
Figure 4.5: The selection of conversational episodes for data analysis

In CA the unit of analysis is neither the group nor an individual (Boden, 1994:77). The unit of analysis is a *conversational episode* consisting of linked utterances. It is always backed up by a *data excerpt*. The conversational episode "allows the study of actual activities … [and is] a natural unit and a analytical unit at the same time" (Sacks, 1992/2000a:95). The more instances analysed provide more examples of the methods in action, rather than securing the warrantability of the description of the machinery itself (Benson & Hughes, 1991:131).

The Instance as a locus of analysis

In section 3.3, the epistemological and methodological position of CA was set out. As a consequence of this position, the analytical task is, initially, to provide a wholly adequate analysis of how a single *instance* (utterance, individually or in sequence) is organised. The aim is to "recover the machinery that produced the interaction as it happened" (Benson & Hughes, 1991:130).

The instance was the locus of analysis. The researcher approached the data (the tape recordings) with as few preconceptions as possible with the intention of identifying the machinery that produced the interactions as they happened. Instances, in the form of conversational episodes, were identified and analysed. Instances are not specified as instances of anything other than the fact that they happened (Benson & Hughes, 1991:130).

The strategy for the analysis of data on tapes and transcripts using conversation analysis

A three-stage strategy was adopted for the analysis of tapes and transcripts. This strategy was adapted to suit this study from discussions, examples and proposals in Pomerantz (1997), Have (1999) and Hutchby (1998). The three stages of this analytic strategy are as follows:

1. During the transcription of each tape "unmotivated looking" was used to discover, describe and analyse the "*structures*, the *machinery*, the *organized practices*, the *formal procedures*" that members used to produce order (Psathas, 1995a:2). These phenomena — conversational devices and sequence types — were analysed as conversational episodes supported by a data excerpt from the transcript. This first stage was adopted for all Forestville and City study analyses. For each data-collection session, an analysis appears in full in the Appendices in Volume 2.

2. In the City study, the conversational episodes were combed and the transcripts and tapes re-visited to answer two core analytical questions:

   - Are members accomplishing their interactional business by organising themselves, and are they co-creating their conversations?

   - How do members demonstrate their active orientation to self-organisation and co-creation?

   A formal description of empirical examples was made concentrating on the sequential environment for the purpose of defining what the device or sequence type is doing. In other words, each conversational episode selected was analysed to show how each member's talk interacted with the others to create sequences. A number of these instances was sought to build a collection (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:95)

3. A single case analysis (Schegloff, 1987) was carried out in-depth to demonstrate self-organisation and co-creation in contrast to the collection made from several instances in the City study to demonstrate the working of CA and add robustness.

4.5.3 Content analysis of Zing data and CA transcripts

The objective of carrying out data collection by EGSS technology and analysing this data in combination with the recorded conversation using content analysis was to investigate whether in the meeting room environment of the City studies it was possible to observe emergence and movement into the space of the adjacent possible.

The theoretical assumption was that members enter the CAS with local knowledge only. As Sacks (1992/2000b:92) says "… the *local resources* are what people make conversations out of and endlessly". They do not know each other. They do not know what they will be discussing. The prompt acts as a membership categorisation device —"a highly selective and variable mechanism for 'doing' social relations" (Boden, 1994:57) — which formulates the meaning of the conversation to follow.

Data were indexed in an inductive process with "categories emerging from the analyst's hermeneutic absorption of the text" (Frankland & Bloor, 1999:146). The process followed the following steps:

- The transcripts were read through to note patterns or subjects of interest.

- Single words or short phrases occurring frequently were grouped together. These became a broad index of categories.

- Rereading the transcripts verified the allocation of headings to the index.

- This index — or meanings grouped under headings (categories of meaning) — became the data for subsequent modelling and comparison.

Data indexing was applied to three City studies — City 6, City 3 and City 1 — because these studies were judged to have achieved a successful natural conversation with satisfactory Zing data entry. The procedure is described in the follows sections:

- Indexing of Zing data;

- Indexing of conversation transcripts; and

- Analysing emergence.

Indexing of Zing data

The first computer keyboard entry (known as Zing data) recorded the individual, local knowledge, described by Sacks (1992/2000b) above, for each member.

It is theorised that the group, as a CAS, comes into being between the first individual data entry and the second individual data entry in a pure form, in that it is totally self-organising and unpredictable. The first Zing data entry records individual members' thoughts in response to the prompt before any conversation has taken place on the subject raised by the conductor's introduction and the prompt. The second Zing data entry records individual members' local knowledge at the close of the conversation.

The data entries were recorded on the computer and transferred to the researcher's word processor. The raw Zing data were subjected to simple editing to remove the worst typographic errors and correct spelling. No correction was made to grammar, syntax or order. The Zing edited data, which included the first and second data entries, was indexed for categories of meaning (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

The raw Zing data for City sessions 1, 3 and 6 appear in Volume 2, Appendix G 1.6, G 3.6 and G 6.6.

Indexing of the conversation transcripts

The group conversation between the first and second data entry was isolated. This part of the transcript was edited to remove CA notations that would have prevented coding. As a result of this editing, the attribution of utterances to individuals was obscured and the content of the conversation flows in a stream without apparent organisation. This transcript was then indexed for categories of meaning (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

The content transcripts for City 3 appears in Volume 2, Appendix G 3.8. The transcript indexing for City 3 appears in Volume 2, Appendix G. 3.9. The transcripts and indexing for City 6 and City 1 are available in electronic form.

Analysing emergence

The outcome of the indexing process described above was, for each data-collection session, three sets of categories of meaning. They are visualised in Figure 4.6.

Zing Data Entry 1   Conversation   Zing Data Entry 2

Categories of Meaning   Categories of Meaning   Categories of Meaning

Emergence of Meaning
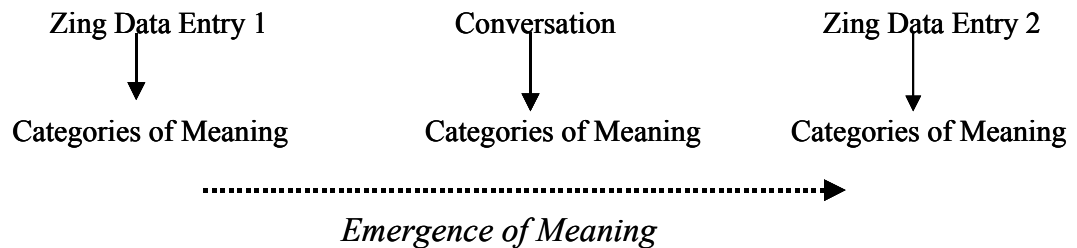
Figure 4.6: Three content data sets

These three data sets were compared and conceptually modelled (Ryan & Bernard, 2000:784) to draw conclusions on the emergence of meaning.

4.6   Summary

This part of the methodology, the practical research methods, described how the data were collected, transcribed and analysed. The data-collection sessions were categorised by speech-exchange systems. The ways in which the data were collected in each speech-exchange system was described in detail. The preliminary studies started the hermeneutic process of developing a data-collection method for the City studies, which culminated in the design for the City studies. Tapes were recorded of the conversations at all Forestville and City sessions for subsequent analysis by conversation analysis.

The over-riding purpose of these data-collection sessions was to capture and analyse the machinery of talk-in-interaction. It was proposed that these data have the potential, when analysed, to exhibit tangible evidence of self-organisation by the group and the co-creation of understanding, which is central to the notion of the group as a CAS. For a CAS to be viable, it is essential that spontaneity and unpredictability are present. The research process played an important role in constructing the environment for these characteristics to happen. Additionally, EGSS

data and conversation transcripts were analysed to see whether the CAS characteristic of emergence could be identified.

The results of this field research are set out and discussed in the Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, a comparison is made between data collection using CA and focus groups. Focus groups were not seen as an alternative data-collection method during the development of the research methodology, and the reasons for this are explained later.

Chapter 5. Findings

5.1   Introduction

Can concepts from complex-adaptive-systems theory and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour ?

The research question states the overriding goal of this study; that is, discovering whether concepts from CAS can be plausibly used to research consumer behaviour. This goal clearly draws on resources such as the theory of CAS, the perspective of ethnomethodology and the practice of ethnomethodology represented by CA to produce a fresh approach to consumer research that is argued in Chapter 3.

Because this is a study dominated by a theoretical goal, supported by an empirical one, the findings provide a commentary on the theory and the methodology as well as describing the field research activities of CA, and the machinery of talk-in-interaction on the consumer product of financial services.

The findings in this chapter will be discussed in the light of the research question and within the broad context of the objectives that were stated at the outset of the study. These objectives were to:

1. analyse the literature on consumer research to establish the existing consumer behaviour research perspectives;

2. analyse the literature on complex-adaptive-systems theory (CAS) to isolate characteristics for field research;

4. see whether concepts from conversation analysis (CA) can be operationalised for data collection (a) in a meeting-room environment and (b) using an electronic group support systems technology to enable the natural conversation necessary to demonstrate the operation of a complex adaptive system; and

5. explore whether the outcome of the fieldwork, using conversation analysis, indicates CAS and CA to be a useful tools for further consumer behaviour research.

After the first literature review, the analytic frame was elaborated and clarified in Chapter 3. These elaborations and refinements of the concepts and ideas in the analytic frame (Ragin, 1994:90) provided the criteria for the selection of evidence for analysis — the theorised characteristics of a CAS. In Figure 4.1 a conceptual model of the field-research process showed how research locations and cases were selected.

As data collection proceeded it became evident that a further elaboration of the analytic frame was called for in that more specific objectives needed to be formulated to give a satisfactory answer to the research question. These specific objectives emerged as a result of the fieldwork and the exploration of the methods and technology to surface the evidence of the operation of CAS. The process by which these specific objectives were developed followed the hermeneutic, iterative methodology that was described in the research methods in Chapter 4.

The findings in this chapter are presented as follows:
- a statement of each specific objective;
- a statement of the finding relating to that objective;
- evidence to support the finding:
  - analysis; and, where applicable,
  - extracts from the tape transcripts.

Table 5.1 is a guide to the structure of the chapter. It shows how each specific objective is linked to data collection and the location in this thesis of the evidence supporting the findings.

Table 5.1:   Table of findings: data location and presentation

Data source	Objective 1 Preliminary studies (CAS)	Objective 2 Forestville groups (CA)	Objective 3 City CA (CAS)	Objective 4 City content (CA & CAS)
In chap. 5 text	Operational notes conclusions	Table and examples, linked sequence analysis	Data summary	Data summary and models
In Vol. 2 appendix	Operational notes	Data analysis, linked sequence analysis	1. Collection; 2. Single-case analysis	Raw data, content transcripts

This chapter of findings provides the findings in full with supporting evidence then a summary of the findings. The chapter concludes with an overview of the whole chapter.

5.2   Objective 1: The preliminary studies

The specific objective was to discover *key process issues* that would impact on the *design of CA* in the proposed CAS *research environment*.

An important aspect of this study is its duality. One finding reported on concerns with key process issues of CA. The other reports on issues important to the theorised characteristics of CAS.

The three preliminary data-collection sessions were completed by November 2000. They drew attention to four process issues on which a position had to be taken before the next phase of data collection started. The first issue affected all subsequent studies. The next three issues affected the City studies only.

The four process issues being reported on are :

1. transcription
2. the environment
3. electronic-group-support-systems templates; and
4. key process issues

5.2.1 Transcription

- Transcription cannot be carried out by audio-typists because (a) standard orthography is used; (b) passages are omitted; and (c) elision to give meaning is common.
- The researcher requires skills in CA transcription techniques that can be acquired by study and practise.
- CA researchers must have patience to log and transcribe audio-tapes as it takes at least four times as long as transcribing in standard orthography.

Examples

The following excerpts are taken from the transcripts of the Preliminary 2 tape. The same passage was transcribed first by an audio typist in standard orthography (SO) then, at a later date, by the researcher using CA conventions. Excerpt 6a shows how the typist "makes sense" of the conversation. Words not on the tape are added to help the reader make sense.

6a   SO
185   Well, I don't know, with $36 000 he couldn't really go that
186   mad could he? It is a good income but it is not right over the
187   top.
188   He could come down to 30, well under 30, about 25, 26 ( )
189   his tax (   )taking out his super (   ) 23, 24 clear, that is about 600 a week.

Excerpt 6b is the identical passage from the tape transcribed literally using CA conventions to show how members constructed their talk-in-interaction.

6b   CA

212   Da   [( ) with thirty six thousand he couldn't really

213   that mad could he (.) its good a good income but it is

214   not er right over the top=

216   St   =yea, come down the (   )(.) well under

217   thirty about twenty five (.) twenty six will (come and

218   pay) his tax [(.)]an taking enough time take in out his super (   )

219   Da   [um]

220   St   twenty three twenty four clear years (.) that about six

221   hundred a week huh

In excerpt 7a the typist presents a conversation between two people that appears very tidy, well balanced and seemingly rational

7a   SO

201   So what should we advise him to do then if we were to advise him,
        what do you think?

203   Go and see his bank.

205   Go and see the bank manager.

207   And go and organise a holiday account and bill paying facilities and
        organise his superannuation too.

In excerpt 7b, the CA transcription by the researcher shows that the conversation was a rapid interchange between three members each sparking off thoughts from the other to co-create advice to Jason.

7b   CA

235   ( )   so what should we advise him to do (that way)=

236   D   = if we were to advise him, (.) what do you think

237   B   = go and see his bank =

238   D   = go and see the bank manager=

239   B   = °and organise a holiday housing loan and bill paying

240   (.) facilities=

241   Da   = and organise his superannuation

5.2.2   The environment

FINDING 1.2

> The three preliminary studies produced clear findings on the practical steps to be taken to simulate a "natural" conversation session. These were further validated in the City data-collection sessions. It was clear that for a CA study such as this one, the environment must ensure
>
> - a setting in which natural conversation can develop between members and the impact of the technology is minimal;
>
> - the prompt introduces the subject as naturally as possible; and
>
> - the conductor achieves minimal direction of the session, while gently controlling the process.

A reminder

The word *environment* is used here in a very specific sense to mean the setting up of a data collection situation for the City studies that met the requirements of CA. These were:

- A "natural" environment is one that provides the opportunity for naturally occurring talk (Schegloff, 1992/2000a:xviii).
- *Naturally occurring talk* was defined as an event in which "people are talking with each other just for the purpose of talking" (Have, 1999:6)
- The implication of naturally occurring talk is that there is no intervention whatsoever from the researcher.

As an example of the effect of the environment, two excerpts from the Preliminary 2 tape are contrasted below. Both illustrate the context-sensitive nature of CA, which means that turn-taking in talk-in-interaction is highly sensitive to what is actually occurring in the context in which the talk takes place, including the immediately preceding talk (Psathas, 1995a:36).

The first example shows how the environment can inhibit natural talk. In excerpt 1, there is a conversation going on in the background between the technical persons. Members of the group continue talking but their talk is clearly stilted.

Excerpt 1

89	D	= I think he is just taking it cruising at the moment =
90	Da	=yeah=
91	D	= [how old is he twenty seven now
92	( )	[(((talking in the background
93	St	[definitely ( )=
94	( )	[[(((talking in the background continues))
95	Da	[=he's only a kid=
96	( )	[[(((talking in the background continues))
97	D	[=but still they say you are never too young to start =
98	( )	[[(((talking in the background continues))
99	St	[= start saving

(Preliminary 2, lines 89–99)

Excerpt 2

Context sensitivity, in the sense of each member responding with sensitivity to the utterances of other members, is illustrated here:

146	St	though I think in todays world credit cards are the cheapest
147		way of (.) done correctly credit cards are the cheapest cheapest way of
148		um (.) paying your money=
149	D	= you do ?=
150	St	=yea =
151	D	=that'l be ( ) I don't really have much information much I
152		don't really have much knowledge of credit cards they
153		(.) they frighten me=

154	St	=well if you currently [write a cheque (.) that costs]
155	Da	[( ) it costs you ( )]
156	St	costs you five cents and you got banking fees s:o um (.)
157		if you use your credit cards (.)[one payment]
158	Da	[pay it when its due]
159	D	maybe you can get the credit card that's gota lota airmails for when he
160		wants to go on his holiday
161	Da	yea he can use the flybuys
162	B/St	((mumble))
163	Da	(I think it) only takes you about 30 years to save up enough to do
		anything with it=
165	D	=no way=

(P2, lines 146–65)

Commentary on Excerpt 2

Stu starts with his views on credit cards, lines 146-147.

Don is not sure about this (line 149). Stu is certain: the "yeah" is emphatic.

Don then feels he needs to explain why he queried Stu (lines 151-153).

Stu then starts to justify and explain his statement (line 154)

Immediately Darlene interrupts to correct him (line 155)

Stu continues regardless.

Darlene interrupts to correct him again (line 158)

Stu then says you can "get the credit card that's gota lota airmails for when he wants to go on his holiday" (lines159–160). He means frequent flyer points.

Darlene interrupts and corrects Stu again (line 161).

Darlene ignores a mumble between Barb and Stu (line 162) to observe that it takes 30 years to save up.

Don concludes "no way" (line 195)

This excerpt illustrates that when the talking in the background ceased, a rapid free flowing conversation involving all group members developed.

5.2.3 Electronic-group support systems templates

FINDING 1.3

- The templates and structures embedded in EGSS software, in general, could not be used in studies of this nature.

- The Zing software was found, however, to have the ability to allow the writing of a custom-made template that is specific to the data-collection needs of any study.

These three preliminary studies, and especially the third preliminary study, which compared interaction within a small group with interaction in an institutional setting, brought to light a fundamental misunderstanding that was buried in the original candidacy proposal and in subsequent preparatory work for the theoretical contribution towards the final thesis.

Before these preliminary studies were carried out, it was assumed that electronic group support systems programs (such as MeetingWorks™ or Zing) as they stood would be appropriate for the electronic capture of individual data at the start and the close of each research session. Even before the preliminary sessions, in technical training sessions for the Zing computer program, it became apparent that the templates already on Zing and similar software were unsuitable for the planned research as they imposed a predetermined structure onto the session.

As a result of this first finding and a meeting with the Zing software designer, permission was received to write a custom-made template that was specific to the data-collection needs of this study. The second finding was the successful operation, after practice by the technical support staff, of the customised template.

5.2.4 Key process issues

FINDING 1.4

- Special procedures were required for this study, which had to be adjusted as the study progressed.
- Collecting data from small groups in conversation for analysis by CA required a special process to allow a natural conversation; as opposed to other qualitative

> data-collection methods, which require respondents to talk about pre-formulated questions.
>
> - The procedures for the conduct of the data collection were specific to this study.

The outcome of these findings was the specific procedures necessary for this study summarised as follows:

1. The environment needed to be natural and conducive to conversation between all members.

2. The conductor was not allowed to fill the traditional functions of a facilitator.

3. There was no predetermined plan for the meeting, apart from the simple procedure of starting the conversation with a prompt.

4. There was only a research procedure, which precluded the use of any EGSS template.

5. The primary data on talk-in-interaction was collected through the tape recordings of the conversation session.

6. The computer was used for individual data collection only — at the start and close of the research session — as a part of content analysis.

These procedures met the requirements of CA for a "naturally occurring" conversation and allowed the collection of individual data using EGSS.

5.3   Objective 2: Forestville group (CA)

The specific objective of analysing data from the Forestville and City tapes was to observe the machinery of talk-in-interaction employed by members to create shared understanding.

The research process in this study was both reflective and iterative. The preliminary studies resulted in reflective data; that is, findings that led to a deeper understanding of the process requirements of the data collection process. The Forestville findings, which are reported here, were iterative in that the cycle of data collection, transcription and analysis operations are repeated to produce results that were an even closer

approximation to the goal of achieving a process to report on CAS in small groups in the City studies. Because the research process is iterative and reflective, the first two findings from the Forestville studies were introduced in Chapter 3 to explain the theory of the research methods.

FINDING 2.1

The Forestville data-collection sessions were groups without moderation or facilitation. The proposal that CA could be context-free and yet have valuable analytic qualities was borne out by the comments below.

Within the context of organisational CA, the data collected from the Forestville groups were natural (meaning here "no intervention") in that every data-collection session was "natural" talk-in-interaction that took place while the researcher was not present. Indeed, there is evidence from the tapes that members soon forgot they were being recorded.

FINDING 2.2

The following proposal by Psathas (1995:36) was upheld: "CA studies are 'context free', unlike ethnographic studies, as there is no interest in the particulars of persons, places, time or subject discussed".

The context of the data collection at Forestville was different from the context of the data collection in the City studies. For example, the Forestville studies exhibited a context typical of organisational CA in that:

- Group members accepted the context.
- The meetings were goal oriented.
- The inferential framework (the subject of the meetings provided by the consultant) was accepted by members without question leading to pre-planned outcomes.

One of the emerging benefits of CA as the researcher's experience grew, was that its analytical qualities did not rely on data-collection contexts.

> There were two distinct speech-exchange systems that determined the ways in which the talk-in-interaction took place.

As soon as the Forestville tapes were logged it became apparent that the character of the group meetings was very different, and both Forestville sessions differed from the preliminary, and subsequent City sessions. To identify the different speech-exchange systems, names were allocated by the researcher as follows:

Forestville staff meetings were called *Organisational: semi-formal* (Tapes 1,4 and 6). Forestville project group meetings were called *Organisational: natural group* (Tapes 3, 5A, 5B). The subsequent City Sessions were called *Natural group.*

The following examples illustrate the nature of the two organisational speech-exchange systems.

5.3.1   Examples

Pre-allocation of turns
The staff meetings had a formal chairman. The project group meetings appeared to have a leader with limited authority to control the meeting.

Length of Turn
Excerpt from Staff Meeting Log (Forestville 1, Log E 1.1)

Data Segment 1 Conversational Warm up	5' 25"
Data Segment 2 An's Report	5' 57"
Data Segment 3 A's Comments	2' 46"
Data Segment 4 D's Comments	6' 45"

Project Group Meeting Transcript (Forestville 5b, DS6, Transcript F 3.5): The longest single turn is about 25 seconds when a section of the group report was being read out.

Equalisation of turns

Staff meeting: The excerpt from the log above shows that the chairman is ensuring that all members have a turn.

Project group meetings: Transcripts show that the allocation of turns is generally locally organised. Only very occasionally does the 'chairman' intervene to either keep order, bring the meeting back on track or invite comment from non-contributing members.

Clarity of Sentence Units

Staff meetings: The excerpt that follows shows that in the staff meetings, where turns were allocated, clarity of expression is achieved.

Excerpt (Forestville 4, DS 2, Transcript E 2.2)

10   D   people didn't participate who I thought would have

11   participated and ones who I thought we would have had a bit

12   of trouble with jumped straight in and um: =

Project group meeting: In the natural group speech-exchange system, where members are competing for turns, there is far less clarity in each turn as the following excerpt shows.

Excerpt (Forestville 5b, DS 6, Transcript F 3.5)

150   B   [no I w]asn't lookin at it

151   like that I was looking at it from the point of view is that (.) the idea of

152   it wuz =to um   (.) for us to do it[(.)] that may be autonomy might be

153   um =

FINDING 2.4

The systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation, described by Sacks et al. (1974) were observable.

As finding 2.3 has established that there were two different speech-exchange systems at Forestville, the findings reported from this point on will refer to each speech-

exchange system, rather than the composition or goal of the group. Regardless of these characteristics, in all recorded sessions — as this finding states — turns were used, and the feature *one party talks at a time* was preserved.

5.3.2 Examples of classic turn taking

Organisational: Semi-formal (staff meetings) — Forestville 1

This episode, at the start of the first Forestville staff meeting is selected to demonstrate "classic" turn-taking. It starts in line 1 with An who "owns" his turn-construction unit (TCU). His TCU comes to an end when, in line 3, D interrupts in order to make a request before An goes on to another subject. An immediately tails off in line 2 and his last word is inaudible**.**

Having grasped what D wants, An interrupts by way of reply in line 5, keeping the conversation on the track. As soon as D gets the point of An's reply, he interrupts again (line 7). An completes his utterance over the interruption and they both end in agreement leading to a short pause (line 10). A takes this opportunity to take her turn "can I ask a question ?" which is related to the previous sequence. In lines 13 and 14, D speaks over A, who immediately replies – line 16.

In this short interaction, perfect understanding appears to have been achieved.

Data excerpt

Line 1

An   …I did er, I have got a lota observational stuff that I was taking the notes from when
          we were critique[°(   )-]

D   [I'd like] to capture some of that (.) doesn't matter how long the
          tape goes for↑ (.) if you're willing to share some of it, I I don't [mean

An   [well   I'd   only   be
          reading out exactly, I'd only be reading out exactly wot I said [(.) ( ) that stuff=

D   [oh ok ok yes that's =

An   that's all]

D   =alright] leave the leave that goin
          (.)

A can I ask a question (.) cos mines (.) a bit like An, but I didn't read everything out cos I didn't it would have been too long (.) now if you want me to elaborate any little points when its my turn or, [take that for granted ok]

D   <[yea if you want if you feel co]mfortable doing it=

A =yea I feel comfortable

Line 16   (Forestvillle 1, CE 1, Lines 1-16)

Organisational: Natural Group (Project group): Forestville 3

After a short pause, C says "Elaine" raising his voice to indicate next speaker.

Elaine replies "ok" softly in line 20.

C then says "umm Pete" indicating Pete as the next speaker.

Note that both Elaine and Pete are replying to the same question, which is not repeated. This is evidence that members' responses are governed by the preceding conversation. In this case, C had already said feel alrite" to other members**.**

Data excerpt

18		(.)
19	C	Elaine↑
20	E	°ok
21	C	umm Pete
22	P	I'm feelin a bit alrite=
23	C	=oh rite, you say where we come from?=

          (Forestville, DS1, CE1, Lines 18-13)

FINDING 2.5

> The four types of interactional organisation — upon which this study focuses (described in Chapter 3) and that were chosen for their relevance to the observation of a CAS — were present and able to be observed.

The four types of interactional organisation selected were:

- turn-taking;

- repair;
- turn-construction design; and
- overlap.

Finding 2.4, reported above, confirmed that turn-taking, the overriding principle of the systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation, described by Sacks et al. (1974) was observable. The three other selected types of interactional organization are reported on here.

5.3.3   Repair

Organisational: semi-formal group (staff) — Forestville 4

An starts off formally in lines 3–5. D quietly corrects him in L 6, while A chuckles.

This leads, in lines 10–21, to a light-hearted interaction, with speakers overlapping each

other. Thus, episode 2 starts with a repair that leads to shared humour and overlap.

Is it a co-creation of mood through humour? Participants suggest literal meaning (i.e. the exact time) is not really very important.

Data excerpt

3		An	Wensday, dae three, workplace charge for ABC, An
4			speakin, I'm here with D and A (.) start at seven thirty in th
5			morning (.) with the Cat and Butterfly story=
6	D	=°eight thirty I hope (.)
7	A	°heh,heh
8		(0.5)
9	An	°yea, thank you D
10	D	°heh,heh
11	A	ACTUALLY HE SAID THAT YESTERDAY AND I THOUGHT [I,m]
12	An	[yea]
13	A	not going
14		to alter that and so I ( ) love it [keep it heh, heh]
15	D	[I did that once too] and
16		admit to think that I um [started] that earlier spoil my
17	An	[started]

18	D	[reputation]
19	A	[becomes th]e[norm, yea]=
20	An	[° heh,heh]
21	D	= that's all I was sayin of course=

<div align="right">(Forestville 4, CE 3, Lines 3 –21)</div>

Organisational: natural group (project group) – Forestville 5A

The self-repair takes place in line 359 where B starts with "<u>you</u> cn", then changes his mind to "<u>I can</u>". Whether the repair was a simple grammar correction, or a change in sentence structure cannot be deduced.

Data excerpt

358	B	but the thing that I like about it once <u>said</u> , was that it (was) exactly=
359	•	that (.) <u>you</u> cn (.) <u>I can</u> come in and say to you <u>Indy</u>, <u>Indy</u> you're doing
360		a great job on that roll grinder

<div align="right">(Forestville 5A, DS 4, CE 11, Lines 358–60)</div>

5.3.4   Turn-construction design

Organisational: semi-formal group (staff)

An example of preference organisation:

35	D	you're on the course now (.)
36	An	day four (.) day four's the day Thursday day four ***

<div align="right">(Forestville 6, DS 2, Transcript E 3.3)</div>

An example of an adjacency pair:

1	D	Are you ready **A.**
2	A	I am ready and willing with a sense of direction purpose and

<div align="right">(Forestville 6, DS 3, Transcript E 3.3)</div>

Organisational natural group (project group) — Forestville 5A

In this excerpt three members construct their conversation. In line 42 B constructs his utterance as a reaction to A's previous utterance quietly and almost

apologetically. B's utterance is designed for A. A challenges him to explain with a single word in line 43. This is an organised preference. The word "and?" only makes sense as a challenge to B.

The rest of the sequence shows the organisation of the design of turns continuing. B starts in line 44, pauses and C cuts in to agree with A, line 45. Other members of the group make neutral noises. A takes over emphatically in line 48 stressing that his approach is personal.

Data excerpt

42   •B   °I'm sorry (.) yesterdae wanna hada one word one line statement now

          we hava half a page you know er <u>story</u>=°

43   A   =and ?=

44   •B   °oh I got=°

45   C   °= I donhava problem with it °

46   *   mm

47   *   °(inaudible)

48   •A   <u>personally</u> um, er yea I don't know I don't know what yu . (.) yu like

<div align="right">(Forestville 5A, DS 2, CE 1, Lines 42–48)</div>

5.3.5   Overlap

Organisational: semi-formal (staff) — Forestville 6

Overlapping talk is evident as members talk over each other while discussing individuals (lines 410 –413). A and D both carry on simultaneously the same conversation (lines 418-419) all three talking, then slight pause before D takes over in line 422.

Data excerpt

409   (2.0)

410   A   I didn't pick anything negative up (° [   ) but then (   )=

411   D   [she contributed in the =

412   A   =yea (.) yea that's right]

| 413 | D | = morning   ] he'll go away and have to think a bit |

413   D   = morning   ] he'll go away and have to think a bit

414   about it (.) [over time he'll]actually put bits of it together =

415   A   [he's a reflection]

416   An   = ° ((mumble)) quite a lot of people [to talk to ((mumble))]

417   D   [yea yea yea]

418   [fast   [heh heh]

419   An   [sure um [heh he]

420   A   [hhh]

421   (1.0)

<div align="right">(Forestville 6, Sequence Analysis, 409–421)</div>

Organisational: natural group (Project group) — Forestville 5A

Overlap leading to two meetings

This episode lasts a total of 4 minutes 13 seconds. Because of the nature of the episode, described below, the tape playback counter numbers (c.), which are recorded in the Tape Log, provide a more appropriate way of monitoring the conversation than turn-taking represented by lines in the transcript.

Between counters 467–540 it is clear that two meetings are taking place: one near the microphone, the other further away and quieter. Sacks (1992/2000a:95) observes that when too many people are talking — he does not say how many, but experience from the preliminary groups suggests more than four — then the group will split, and each conversation will observe the one-speaker-at-a-time rule.

It was not possible to transcribe turn-taking in both groups with accuracy, but utterances from both meetings are clearly audible. Each meeting seemed to be following its own turn-taking rules. C's voice is clearly audible in one group, but there is no apparent effort to bring the other group in line, nor do the conversations seem to relate to each other structurally, though they might be on the same subject. The data excerpt below shows the conversation leading up to the two meetings in the hope that it would shed some light on why the two meetings developed.

The data excerpt starts with a summary by C of some points discussed previously. Two members (A and P) and perhaps a third (B) self-select their turns in response to

C. This rapidly leads to overlap, lines (66–71) for about 30 seconds when talking in the background starts quietly (line 79). This becomes the second meeting.

Of interest is the way the second meeting developed. Between c. 469–79, a total of 24 seconds, one can hear first interruption then overlap in the background, as if some members are testing C to see whether he will react. Then a full-blown alternative meeting was apparent.

One may speculate that the conversation between P and B was perhaps too ponderous or did not interest the others, so to get their turns some members took it on themselves to talk to other members who would listen and thus became the second meeting.

After 2' 47" (c. 536) there is a pause in both meetings as all seem to listen to E, but they soon go back to the two separate meetings.

From c.557 the second meeting peters out. The run down of the second meeting follows a similar pattern and timing to the start described above. One may perhaps conclude that in both cases (the start and the end of the second meeting) a shift in attention drove the change. The conversation between P and C becomes clear on the tape as all members listen. This episode concludes when all join in a quiet laugh (c.563), and B says "Wot were you blokes talking about ?" (line 88).

Data excerpt   (counter 455–563)

64	C	…well, wot I'm getting through ( ), simply sayin mean is, is a <u>lack,</u> of
65		communication on <u>all</u> different levels, not just pay or jobs or (.) any er
66		against management versus, whatever you want to call it [but]
67	A	[not]not <u>a</u> <u>clear</u>
68		<u>divisio</u>n in [there]
69	P	[but's] <u>always</u> <u>the</u> <u>case</u> , <u>no</u> <u>communication</u> <u>either</u>=
70	A	=its always gonna be like [that] like the men situation for example=
71	P	[<u>certainly</u>]
72	P	=<u>one</u> <u>boss</u> <u>from</u> <u>Worship</u> works different, the other one works different=
73	A	=that still hasn't changed=
74	*	=°in your place it should be (..............)=]
75	C	= still got that, us and them=

76	P	=yep=
77	B	=you never know wots [coming through the [(................)]=
78	P	[no communication]
79	**	[((talking in background))………….....=
80	B	=(...................[.........)]
81	P	[you con]sider two, the two foremen
82	**	=[((talking in background))………………………………………→

<div align="right">(Forestville 5A, DS 3, CE 2, Lines 64 - 82)</div>

5.3.6 Limitations of the CA transcription conventions

FINDING 2.6

The CA transcription conventions do not provide notations for some of the phenomena of talk-in-interaction observed

The limitations, from the point of view of analysing organisational natural group data are described below.

Pace of turn varies and may be:
- rapid;
- average; or
- slow.

There are conventions for speeding up and fading away but these do not cover this variation.

Continuers may be ambiguous. For example:

mm   may indicate the intention to start a turn

yea

mm   enthusiastic tone   = I agree a lot

mm   toneless   = yes, go on

mm	dull tone	= I am being polite

yea

but   both may be used as used as a 'Trojan horse', which is a covert way of gaining the turn.

Additional notations were devised by the researcher to describe phenomena and used as follows:

Used in tape logs:
- classic turn-taking (CTT);
- cross talk (CT) sequences of overlap;
- all talk (AT) another form of overlap; and
- laughter, especially when "All ☺"

Added to transcription conventions:

**   This indicated two or more unidentified speakers.

FINDING 2.7

A phenomenon that was present on the audio tapes of the three Forestville project-group meetings was termed *linked sequence analysis* by the researcher. This phenomenon was unexpected, and at the time, there did not seem a reasonable explanation for it.

Findings 2.4 and 2.5 reported above are based upon an analysis of turn-taking mechanisms (Sacks et al. 1974) that reveals *articulation points of action* that interactively structure sequentially achieved social action (Boden, 1994:206-208). The phenomenon of linked sequence analysis was substantially different. Interpretation of this finding required a further search among CA literature, and this is discussed in Chapter 6.

The transcripts of the three project-group meetings showed how members handled, in their talk-in-interaction, the intangible product that was their reason for being present at Forestville and the meetings.

5.3.7 An explanation of the intangible product

Forestville was the venue for a managing-change workshop run by a consultant for employees of a large industrial company. The consultant's goal was to achieve behavioural change. Through a series of talks, exercises and meetings the outcome intended was a modification or change in beliefs and attitudes among those attending towards the organisation, its managers and its procedures. In marketing terms, the consultant had the task of "selling" an intangible product called change. The Forestville project group audio tapes show conversational machinery by which the members were asserting, debating, and modifying their understandings of the product and of what was required from them.

Three examples from the same meeting

1. Defining the task

This excerpt occurs right at the beginning of the meetings. A is the informal leader who introduces the task (lines 11–13). Note the comparatively long pauses between utterances in lines 14, 16,19, and 24. It is early in the meeting and utterances are measured/deliberate compared with later in the meeting.

B and C immediately see a simple solution to A's statement (lines 15 and 17). Four members, not identified, chip in (lines 20-23). They have different ideas. A wants "everyone on board" (line 25-26). One member seeks to sum it up with "chinge it is". ("Chinge" is the Australian dialect for "Change"). Another member shouts "Change" in line 28. Two other members laugh mockingly (lines 29–30).

Data excerpt

11 A we're supposed to make a um one (.) one by one a choice

12   over (.) or declaration of whether we were control or a

13		performance type of person
14		(0.3)
15	B	no definitely a performance group
16		(0.3)
17	C	°thats ( ) isnt it=
18	A	=oh <u>God</u>, thats what he said to start with an he ° ( )-
19		(0.2)
20	*	°(I don't reckon you) get too much information an (crowded) is yours°
21	*	°anything=°
22	*	°= we:ll I keep looking (.) looking for an anser (.) ( )°
23	*	°were headed in the right direction for a start°
24		(2.0)
25	A	you have tuh ree um read out what you ( ) to the job description
26		to get everyone on board ( )
27	*	chinge it is=
28	*	=CHINGE=
29	*	<u>ha, ha</u>
30	*	ha, ha I cant help it=

<div align="right">(Forestville 5A, DS 1, lines 11–30, F 2.4)</div>

2. Decision on the format

This conversational episode occurs about 24 minutes into the meeting. Leader A asks D's opinion. He replies "I consider that a freezer". Other members agree (lines 372-374). A in line 376 takes that as a decision of the group on the format; however, members of the group show cynicism: "That's one thing they definitely want", Line 371. "Yea hype", said with a snarl, (line 383)

The group is clearly doing the task requested, but in conversation is sceptical about the task.

Data excerpt

370	•A	[(<u>Dave?</u>)] =
371	D	=I consider that a freezer (.) and that's one thing that they definitely want=
372	Ind	=[yus, yus]= [yes, yes]
373	*	=[yea, yea] [yea]

374	*	[wot]s that a freez[er]
375		(.)
376	A	OK well um alright we we sort of (.)sort of decided [on (.) the (.)]°format=
377	C	[format then]
378	Ind	=format's is going to improve ( ) on this list then put <u>down</u> this list
379		as all that we [discuss]( ) [and willingness (.) that's the thing they=
380	*	[very ( )]
381	B	[yea around, willingness]
382	Ind	get from their [()]
383	•*	[yea (snarl)] <u>hype, just hype</u> like (.) I think
384		(.)
385	*	°pass those copies around

<div align="right">(Forestville 5A, CE 12, lines 370–85, F 2.4)</div>

3.   Thrashing out a consensus

This conversational episode occurs over one-and-a-half hours into the meeting. The group members are engaged in agreeing to the exact wording of their statement. It is a question of the use of words *my* education or *our* education. It is finally resolved in the last line of this episode.

Data excerpt

112	•B	I I[<u>really bel]ieve</u> I cant force, you cant force it [down other] people's =
113	Ind	[(mumble)] [(mumble)]
114	B	= throats that you can try and motivate them to consider↑ it=
115	Ind	= °you got ([ ) that]is how it works=
116	**	[yea, yea]
117	B	=<u>so, do we like mine, or my or our</u>=
118	C	=I prefer our its my chance to[(.)]for the concept of the date my=
119	A	[ok]
120	C	=chance too (.) <u>personal</u>[(.)] I mean youre goin, by ( )=
121	B	[ok]
122	*	[yea]
123	B	= um ( ) its very much the individual ([is th]at we all[……..)
124	*	[yea]
125	A	[<u>I didn't</u>=
126		= write it, I didn't write at my as in considering it was just mine[…]

127	**		[(LOUD=

127   **   [(LOUD=

128   **   = interruptions from several members and talking over each other (8.1) =

129   B   = <u>our means that we all</u> (.) not just me or the group its all of us[ ] [and=]

130   A   [ok]

131   C   [allrite]

<div align="right">(Forestville 5B, CE 5, from Transcript F 3.5)</div>

Note the flow of the talk: there are no pauses. There is running commentary, line 113 for example. There is agreement, for example line 116. The leader is defending his use of the word "my" in line 126. Several members shout him down loudly in lines 127–8.

B is emphatic that "we" should be used: "<u>our means that we all</u>". C agrees. A capitulates in line 130.

This episode demonstrates how members of the group construct, through talk-in-interaction, a written statement that is subsequently considered to be a consensual view of all members of the group.

FINDING 2.9

> Four of the theorised requirements for the existence of a CAS in a group engaged in talk-in-interaction (unpredictability, spontaneity, and self-organisation and co-creation) were evident in the Forestville Project groups.

5.3.8   An example of unpredictability

This excerpt starts with the group trying to get back to work after it split into two meetings. A is genuine in asking "What you blokes talking about", and some members are rather sheepish. There is a pause in line 95 and the listener expects the meeting to get back on track.

Data excerpt

88   A   [<wot] you blokes talking about ( )>=

89   C   =er=

90   *   =heh,heh,heh,

91   *   (have this chicken faze an I wuz tryin to (   )=

92	*	=(we'll throw the tape ( )=
93	*	=ha,ha,ha,ha,ha=
94	*	=thanks J.
95		(2.0)
96	C	so: (.)
97	*	sh, sh, sh
98	*	=<u>enemies</u>=
99	*	=<u>enemies</u>=
100	*	=<u>shh, shh</u>=
101	*	=ouuu ((low moan))=
102	*	=(THATS THERE) SHAFT US=
103	*	=yea=
104	*	=SHAFT US=
105	**	=ha,ha,ha,=
106	*	=BEING SHAFTED=
107	**	=ha,ha,[ha,ha]
108	*	[the <u>en</u>]emy that just walked in=
109	*	=ha,ha,ha,ha

<div align="right">(Forestville 3, DS 1, lines 88–109, F 1.4)</div>

"Sh, Sh, Sh" in line 97 alerts the others to the fact that "enemies" (members of another project group) have been spotted. There are loud shouts of "Shaft us" (a vulgar Australian expression for disable).

5.3.9   An example of spontaneity

The spontaneity in this excerpt is self-evident.

Data excerpt

5	A	… the only one we <u>really</u> need to go on is [dependen]ce versus autonomy=
6	B	[autonomy]
7	A	= th <u>final</u> fundamental choice, do we wanna be treated like children, or do we
8		= wanna fuckin be treated like adults=
9	C	= I like that, that that if you're right=
10	A	= an an there was <u>so</u>, an did ya see wot I, when u:m I not not sayin there
11		anythin wrong with them, but when I, when I sat down with that group and

12		and threw out that thing about fuckin, you know, u:m disciplinary council
13		type thing [inst]ead =
14	C	[yea]
15	A	= of having someone standing over with a big fuckin stick (.) and a couple
	of	
16		em just couldn't grasp it (.) you know they they couldn't grasp it they just=
17	C	= I find it hard to grasp=
18	**	(oh yea, yea, you know)=
19	B	I can see it I[I]
20	D	°[if] youre my boss ( ) how come you tell me off you =
21		= know [( )]
22	**	= ((several talking at once, animated)) cos we're all fascists =
23	E	=cos we're all shareholders

<div align="right">(Forestville 5B, DS 3, lines 5–23, F 3.3)</div>

5.3.10 Example of self-organisation and co-creation

This episode may represent co-creation at its, best and C comes through on the tape rather like the principal instrument in a piece of music that states the motif (theme) that is then taken up by other instruments in counterpoint. The result is a variation on the theme created by all the instruments. The analysis below illustrates this:

Lines 111–14 the problem is stated: getting a handout photocopied. Line 115 everyone agrees with this. Line 116 –7 D offers a solution. Lines 118, 119 B and D rapidly cut in to agree that it is a *possible* solution. The tone and brevity of this intervention suggests that they are not committed to support at this juncture, allowing someone else to react in more detail. Lines 120–1 C obliges, knowing that B and D are neutral. Line 122 D confirms his support with hearty "yea, yeas".

In line 123 C continues, while several others agree and offer apparent support (lines 124,125). The sequence from 125–7 sees D expressing his view, while the others chorus "yea" and "mm". At the end of line 135 someone latches with a brief comment (unintelligible), while C latches instantly to take over the turn.

This rapid turn-taking, overlap, continuers such as "yea" "mmm" illustrated in this conversational episode dominates the rest of the data segment.

Data excerpt

111	A	= um, one two three five people out the front or do we want uma
112		handout type thing (.) and if we do want a handout type thing there's
113		er photocopier next to our classroom down there but I'm not sure how
114		we get it tied down=
115	*	=[yea]
116	•D	=[well] <u>Ann</u> has offered us her computer to project on and she's spoke to me again
117		just before lunch and said (.) can feel free to get me and come and get it=
118	B	=that's <u>Ann</u>=
119	D	=yep=
120	C	=<u>both</u> realistically that probably going to be an exit <u>instead</u> of putting in an
121		embarrassing situation[which I]don't mind doin I I <u>don't</u> reckon <u>I</u> <u>should</u>=
122	D	[yea, yea]
123	C	= do it [cos I done it [that many tim:es,] you know and maybe, =
124	*	[um yea]
125	*	[(talking)]
126	C	= maybe better if maybe um er we <u>type</u> it out (.) but we did it =
127	D	= cos that your side for J to ty[pe it] we um (.) we um [bounce] that =
128	C	[yea] [yea]
129	D	= w[hen]someone else I good on paper, bounced that give it=
130	C	[yea]
131	D	=out to everyone [who come in an we jus go th book room] =
132	*	[yea, um yea, um]
133	D	=[take it in turn read whatever its nothing ( ) buta bit=
134	*	[yea yea yea]
135	D	= paper so you're getin up stand up (.) we can do it the way =
135	*	= ( )=
136	C	=and that's probably something different to what has ever been done =
137		=here anyway (.) no Bill ( ) …….

(Forestville 5A, DS 4, Lines 111–37, F2.4)

The Forestville data-collection sessions were found to contribute towards the reflective and iterative data-collection process by providing a bridge between the preliminary studies and the City studies

The design process, referred to in Objective 2, fostered a reflective and iterative process. There were two fundamental aspects to the bridge between preliminary and City studies. The first was the experience of designing environments for six totally natural sessions. The second was the testing of CA transcription and data analysis through exposure to small group talk-in-interaction.

5.3.11 Summary of findings for Objective 2

Objective 2 was to test whether the theoretical elements in the CA literature apply to small-group conversations recorded at Forestville. This objective was tested across six conversations (data-collection sessions) and two speech-exchange systems. These were:

- Forestville tapes 1,4 and 6:   Staff meetings: Organisational: semi formal

- Forestville tapes 3, 5A, 5B: Project groups: Organisational: natural group

The examples discussed show that all elements were present. This confirms that the theoretical elements in the CA literature do apply to the group organisation setting.

To deal with the findings in the group setting, new notations had to be devised by the researcher. In addition, a further element, not anticipated in previous readings of the CA theoretical literature, emerged that was termed for (the purpose of this study)'linked sequence analysis. These will be further discussed in the discussion Chapter 7.

There were three additional findings which were not foreseen in the statement of the objectives. These were evidence:

a. in the project groups of the intangible product "change in the organisation" being handled by talk-in-interaction;

b. of three characteristics of a CAS which were surfaced by CA; and

c. of data collection, CA transcription and analysis.

5.4 Objective 3: City CA (CAS)

Objective 3 is reported with reference to the City CA (CAS) data in Table 5.1. Specific objectives for these City sessions were to:

1. design a setting where the environment allowed people to be spontaneous and unpredictable; and

2. conduct a conversation that would be recorded and analysed by CA to demonstrate self-organisation and co-creation.

5.4.1 A reminder

Unpredictability and spontaneity are a function of the environment. Without an environment allowing these characteristics in a group engaged in talk-in-interaction, a CAS, as defined for this study, is not operating. The environment was defined as:

a. Physical: the meeting room, its layout, seating, screen, computer, keyboards, placing of Conductor and technical person.

b. Social: creating an ambiance which is relaxed, casual, friendly but focussed in preparation for the task.

c. Visual: selecting the appropriate visual and words for the prompt.

d. Verbal: selecting the appropriate words by the Conductor to introduce the prompt and start off the conversation.

The operational notes developed from the preliminary studies attempted to specify the ideal environment that was within the researcher's control.

FINDING 3.1: SPONTANEITY AND UNPREDICTABILITY: THE EFFECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In all City sessions, spontaneity and unpredictability were achieved. This did not mean that in all sessions there was full cooperation or participation. The City 1, 3

and 6 sessions exhibited characteristics consistent with the theorised expectations of a CAS.

This finding confirms Finding 1.2

5.4.2 Discussion of the Evidence for Finding 3.1

In all City sessions, spontaneity and unpredictability were achieved. In every City session, members organised themselves as they saw fit. They behaved with spontaneity and unpredictability. The result was a wide difference in enthusiasm and participation. For example, the conversation between prompts ranged from four minutes in City 2 to over 30 minutes in City 3. It was concluded that the environment was responsible for the group reluctance to sustain a conversation in City 2 and City 4. (See Finding 1.2.) In City 5, a single member dominated. The other members exercised their right to respond passively or not participate at all.

City 1, 3 and 6 sessions exhibited characteristics consistent with the theorised expectations of a CAS. In these three sessions, it seemed that the environment "worked" for members who engaged in natural conversation. Thus, these three sessions provided rich data for analysing all four theorised characteristics of a CAS.

FINDING 3.2:   SYSTEMATICS OBSERVABLE

The systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation, described by Sacks et al. (1974), were observable.

This finding confirms Finding 2.4 (Objective 2) from the Forestville study reported above. Detailed evidence from the City session tapes is not presented here as examples of the organisation of turn-taking were offered in support of Finding 2.5 (Objective 3) above. The following is a summary of the analysed incidence of conversational episodes in the City 1, 2 and 6 sessions. (These are reported in full in Volume 2, Appendix G).

City 1

CE 1 shows a repair sequence. The other ten conversational episodes focus on overlap. This conversation exhibits several different types of overlap and clear examples of the covert dominance of turns by an individual member.

City 3

The tape and transcript proved a very rich source of data for analysis. Twenty-two conversational episodes were noted and analysed, with particularly good examples of self-organisation and co-creation.

An example of conversation analysis as a means of observing the machinery of talk-in-interaction

This short data excerpt, which occurs right at the start of the talk-in-interaction on the City 3 tape, illustrates several of the CA systematics ("rules").

1. Latching between turns: lines 27–8. The quiet laughter follows immediately on from "ask advice", and "well, I …" follows immediately on from that.

2. Transition-relevance place (TRP): line 29. A's utterance gets quieter towards the end. She inserts the comment that she is tired, which starts to break continuity of utterance, then she closes on a drawn out "um:". She may or may not have been going to continue. We don't know. But clearly both A and D saw this as a TRP.

3. D self selects to start his turn in line 30.

4. B self selects also (line 31), but starts his turn a fraction behind D. Although it is technically an interruption, there is no evidence to suggest it bothers anyone.

5. D continues raising his voice slightly, line 30. This is his way of dealing with B talking at the same time. D's determination to hold his turn was noted at the time by the observer. B makes a brief utterance and then stops, Line 31.

6. A interrupts in line 33 with a loud "NO" and then continues. Note that at the time A was responding to the phrase "your personal", which was used by both B and D. Her response was instant, illustrating that members respond to previous utterances in line with CA theory. She would have known she was interrupting, but she cannot have known that B would have already stopped speaking. A continues firmly, and D stops, allowing A to go on.

7. Items 3–6 above illustrate overlap and the way members deal with it by creating order.

8. Note also that A refers on two occasions to an event that she had created and may have been shared by others if they read her data entry on the Zing screen: line 28 "put it up there" and line 34 "as I said up there".

9. The whole data excerpt took 22.57 seconds. Within this the overlap, from lines 30 –3 takes 6 seconds

Data excerpt

Line 26

•A   ask advice=

*   °ha,ha,ha=

A   =well I, I'd take it I put it up there that, <u>because</u> he's only tweny seven I think its really quite young, to:: personal,° oh my eyes or something is tired ok, um:

D   I mean [(   ) <u>your</u>] <u>own</u> <u>personal</u> =

B   [<u>better</u> to do yer ( ) put your <u>personal</u>]

D   =views[because you ( ) completely because you have to put yours]

A   [NO you <u>can't</u> you see becos, um I would <u>say</u>] like I said up there by the age of thirty

Line 34   (City 3, CE 1, Lines 26–34)

Styles of Turn Management

There were different styles of turn management; that is, the way a turn is managed when a member has a turn. In the City 3 conversation these were:

- fast — slow;
- no pauses — long pauses;
- monotone — high/low pitch;
- stress on some words — no stress on any words;
- relaxed — tense;
- hesitant with words repeated — no hesitation, no repetition;
- loud — quiet;
- breathy — no sign of breathiness; and
- tailing off at the end — strong endings.

This part of the machinery of talk-in-interaction does not appear to have been elaborated in the literature on CA.

A member's reflection on his experience in the group.

In the discussion at the end of the City 3 data-collection session, one member reflected on the experience of the session and its possible longer-term effects in the following words:

> That's a that's a little bit of a hard one I would think, like when you're talking like that you're talking an you're not thinking in <u>depth</u>, if you like, if you go away, and I guarantee that most of us some time or another in the next week two weeks •hh things that have been said <u>here</u> will come into our minds and think, well, maybe maybe I should think a bit more about that, maybe I should go an do, find out a bit more about that particular, •hh maybe not in this, this conversation but in other conversations and that, •hh you get, you know, because <u>you</u>, you know, you're kinda <u>talking</u>, um fairly quickly as well, things are flying around and something (   )
> say stick with me, and may not know about (   ) <u>but</u> I will get a message, you know <u>find</u> <u>out</u> more about it you know et cetera an and take it further, which you won't get at the end of thirty minutes discussion.
>
> (City 3, Transcript, Lines 501-511, G 3.4)

City 6

There were 12 conversational episodes in total. Several of these were extended sequences as members interacted and clearly co-created spontaneously.

FINDING 3.3: SELF-ORGANISATION AND CO-CREATION: A COLLECTION OF CONVERSATIONAL EPISODES

Audio tapes from the City data-collection sessions 1, 2 and 6, analysed as a collection of conversational episodes, showed clear evidence of four of the theorised characteristics of a CAS: spontaneity, unpredictability, self-organisation and co-creation.

A reminder: analysis by building a collection

This is an analytical approach of CA in which conversational episodes were combed and the transcripts and tapes re-visited to answer two core analytical questions:

1. Are members accomplishing their interactional business by organising themselves, and are they co-creating their conversations?

2. How do members demonstrate their active orientation to self-organisation and co-creation ?

The empirical examples that follow are formal descriptions for the purpose of defining the 'machinery' of talk-in-interaction which provides evidence of how members self-organise and co-create their conversations. The characteristics of spontaneity and unpredictability are present in the overall environment and mood of members as reported in Findings 2 and 3 above and evident in these data excerpts.

Example 1: Self-Organisation

In the first four lines (122–6), C is talking about a range of investments for Jason. A takes his turn to change the subject "I wonder where he lives". (Line 127). A pauses, no one takes a turn so he continues quietly. B, in line 128, is responding to the pause (offer of a TRP) but she is still thinking about what C has said. A just carries on, lines 129-130. C overlaps (line 131), clearly having switched his thoughts to the question of where Jason lives. In the last 4 lines B opens up another way of looking at the problem.

In this part of the episode members seem to be negotiating the subject to be talked about (self-organisation).

Data excerpt

Line 122

C that'll be the <u>first</u> issue ( ) there's a hu::ge amount of range of investment opportunities that he can invest in, ( )property funds, share funds, mixtures um, the works property itself , shares themselves directly yourself, um superannuation , there're huge amounts=

•A =I wonder where he lives (3.0) ° I wonder whether he (….. ..) =

B =<u>maybe</u> <u>he</u> <u>could</u> <u>divide</u> <u>the</u>=

A =cos he does he still live at home or does he wanna do that sort of thing °or is

  [he happy (   ) was he renting]or what=

C   [yea move back home so he save more money]

•B   =so what was the matter [(   )] °he's at least tweny seven=

D   [no he's tweny seven but]

B   = an he's °thinking, you know, hes saving all the money an, the future isn't

Line 133   (City 1, CE 5, Lines 122-133)

Example 2: Three way co-creation

This episode follows starts with the last four lines of example 1 above, when B introduces the subject of what Jason might be thinking. First A contributes to her thoughts in line 136, followed immediately by C in line 137. This provides a good example of the three of them exchanging utterances to co-create shared knowledge.

Data excerpt

Line 131

•B   =so what was the matter [(   )] °he's at least tweny seven=

D   [no he's tweny seven but]

B   = an he's °thinking, you know, hes saving all the money an, the future isn't really the trend at the moment, people treat them like spend all they have they think they're payin [( ) yea that's it, that's] it that's my idea=

A   [blow it, have fun, live life, seriously]

C   = and that's why, a get rich stand quick[(.) is attractive, =]

D   [would be very attractive °yea]

C   = because A, I can grab that in two years time an, go round the world=

D   =yep=

Line 140   (City 1, CE 6, Lines 131-140)

Example 3: The co-creation of shared understanding

This conversational episode follows immediately on from example 3 above. It shows how the group move straight into the co-creation of shared understanding.

A's loud utterance in line 33 — "NO you can't you see…"— is a response to both B and D who had been talking at the same time (overlap). It is clear she is responding to D because B has only made a comment, which we see later in the tape is his preferred way of taking part.

A's turn, line 33 and 34, starts with overlap and she uses the loudness of her voice to break in although there is no natural TRP. Then B and D both complete their turns

allowing the one speaker (a) to emerge. Immediately B and D drop out, A drops her voice. It is transcribed thus: "I would say] like I said up there". A refers to knowledge which she assumes is shared by the others - "like I said up there" refers to the screen which all could have seen.

B starts(line 35) as soon as A has completed (latching). B completes his comment and D starts his turn, line 36 (no latching here, because there is a slight pause). A interrupts attempting to start a new turn (line 37) with "well you cn". There is no TRP there. D ignores her and completes his turn. C immediately latches onto the end of D's turn (line 38) with a strong "yea, but…". Note that A did not try.

As soon as C completes her turn, A latches on (line 39) starting her turn with "turn thirty " and laughs. A has repeated the phrase "turn thirty" used by C in her turn. In context it is clear that her laughter is gentle self mocking as she is rather older. D overlaps using a laughter pause as a TRP. His voice is serious. B then overlaps D but his comment is unintelligible, (Line 41). D completes his turn as sole speaker, line 42.

A latches onto D with "My parents would have done it" and more laughter. She is both referring back to her remark in line 39 but also responding to D. Finally in line 44 D starts a turn and this is analysed in CE 3 below.

Data excerpt

Line 33

- •A   [NO you <u>can't</u> you see becos, um I would <u>say</u>] like I said
             up there by the age of thirty go and visit a financial adviser=
- B   =<u>why</u>, why leave it till you are thirty
- D   <u>so a new start</u>[<u>for the better</u>] <u>you get into the habit</u>=
- A   [well you] cn]
- C   =<u>yea</u>:: <u>but it</u> might be a bit young for that when you turn thirdy you know=
- A   =<u>turn thirty ha, ha, ha, ha, ha</u>[<u>ha, ha</u>]
- D   [<u>should</u>] <u>have been do</u>,[should have been doing]=
- B   [(   )]
- D   =it for ten years already=

A   =[my parents ( )woulda] done it ° huh, huh, huh yea]

D   =[( ) um personally]again fact bein I(been

Line 44   (City 5, CE 2, Lines 33 –44)

Example 4: Repair as self-organisation

D is talking, lines 96–8, when A interrupts with an emphatic "it depends". This looks like an *other-initiated other repair,* a CA term for a correction offered by the recipient. D's instant reaction, line 98, is to shout A down with " AND::" which is prolonged. A responds with a quiet "°yea", line 99.

Immediately D realises that he has shouted and says "sorry", but continues and justifies himself ""just the other point". Another example of *repair* occurs in lines 101 and 102. B corrects D, who accepts the correction.

Data excerpt

Line 96

•D   =[but] renting can be cheaper specially, if if you're working at hime or stuff like that where its all just a tax deduction, but its always goin to depend on your circumstances and stuff like that,[AND::] <u>sorry</u>, just the =

A   [<u>it</u> <u>depends</u>, ° yea]

D   = other point was um, <u>buying</u> a house with a grant that the g.s.t. grant um you know the seven thousand fer [(.)]<u>fourteen</u> fer , fer a new home

B   [fourteen now]

D   = that hasn't been lived in, um its just like, you know<u>,</u> <u>cash</u> <u>in</u> <u>hand</u> more

Line 103   (City 3, CE 7, Lines 96 –103)

Example 5: Co-creation through deliberate involvement

C wonders whether a twenty seven year old would "think like that (lines 117–8). She addresses D "you're the closest there" because he is about 28 years old. C is offering the turn to D (recipient design) in order to deliberately involve him. D has already taken advantage of a TRP (C pausing and dropping her voice) to start his turn, while she completes her turn with "so how do you feel ?" D refers back to the prompt in lines 119 and 120, contrasting "drinks, holidays and sport" with "family life". A and B are clearly responding in a similar way, starting turns to complete the thought (lines 121 and 122). D continues. A and B do not develop theirs turns.

Before D can compete his turn (line 123) all the other members are laughing. They cease laughing at the same time and we hear a sole voice from A "we all thought we'd been there". This leads to all laughing again, line 128. As soon as it stops, B latches on to circle back to the barbecue.

This excerpt may be interpreted as the co-creation of a brief, but real, shared reality.

Data excerpt

Line 117

- C   I dunno, < becos I dunno whether a tweny seven year old would think like that, yu youre the closest <u>there,</u>[so how do you feel]

D   [(you you shouldnt)] given me those drinks holidays and sport, but he's not really much [into family] life, but we're =

A   [he's not]

B   [no he's no]

D   =trying to persuade him to do[something like that] =

A   [ha, ha, ha]= we all thought =

C   [ha, ha,ha   ]

B   [huhh, huh, huh   ]

A   =we'd been there=

**   All ☺ =

C   =but th, but th group of people he was talking to at the barbecue

Line 129   (City 3, CE 9,   Lines 117 –129)

Example 6: The machinery of co-creation

This example illustrates the following machinery:

- The conversational episode is entirely locally managed with short turns.
- Comprehension seems complete.
- Utterances are exchanged rapidly, alternating turns, without interruption.
- A seems to hold the main theme, lines 202 and 208, while the others offer commentary.

It is concluded that this machinery we see in action is the empirical manifestation of the theorised characteristic of co-creation. At the end of CE 13 it appeared that D would be allowed to have a reasonable length turn, but he was hesitant - note the repetition in line 201 " you are you are risking risking to to", so his "um" signals a pause for A and B to start simultaneously. A makes a statement in line 202 which is a complete utterance. B, C and D exchange utterances very rapidly between lines 203 - 207. A resumes in line 208 with a brief acknowledgement "yea I know", and seems to complete her thought from line 202 "I mean…".

Data excerpt

Line 201

- =you are you are risking risking to to an extent but, um=

A = [but I mean] you (give) anywhere, don't you=

B = [th <u>the</u> <u>advice</u>]

D = yea   dut=

C =not (in public) shares(don't)

D = probably do a big insurance (dope) on it=

B =[yeas]

•A =[<u>yea</u>]I <u>know</u> but that was, I mean how how many insurance companies have

Line 208   (City 3, CE 14, Lines 201–8)

Example 7: signalling the wish to take a turn

Signalling the wish to take a turn is clear evidence of a member's proactive involvement in a conversation. This is a very short episode selected to illustrate an overt technique of signalling the wish to take a turn by using a marker.

A is in the middle of her turn, and there is no transition-relevance place, so D interrupts with a sharp sound "tit" (line 232). He may well be mimicking the sound in "getting" used by A (line 231), but there is no evidence that D intended to build an utterance on this sound. The moment A pauses, both C and D latch on to start a turn (lines 233 and 234). C immediately gives way, and one suspects that was because D was firm, having already decided what he was going to say.

The use of *markers* to attract attention or signal a desire to take a turn are observable elsewhere, particularly in the case of D who is more pushy than the others and appears more adept in managing turns. It also seems that each member has a distinctive style of marker, in the same way that each member has a distinctive style of carrying out a turn.

Signalling the wish to take a turn through the use of markers is a clear demonstration of one of the many tools used by members to self-organise talk-in-interaction.

Data excerpt

Line 229

A   =<u>basically,</u> you know you gotta weigh upp: the risks and °<and the only way
         to do that is just like talking with people an [get]ting advice from other
         people>=

D   [tit]

C   =also

D   = its ( ) judgment called your own judgment, call it, you trust your own

Line 234   (City 3, CE 16, Lines 229–34)

Example 8: overlap and the Trojan horse

When members are involved in talk-in-interaction there is often competition to take a turn. In this example, there are three incidents of overlap arising from this competition. *Trojan horse* is a term coined for this study to identify a situation in which a member wanting to take a turn deliberately lulls the speaker with agreement and then interrupts.

In the first incident, there is no TRP and C uses "yea", a continuer to start her turn, which is a Trojan horse. D clearly takes "yea" at face value, that is agreement and completes his utterance (lines 266 and 267).

In the second incident, A uses the TRP to start a turn (after "you know," in line 268). A repeats the word "people" from C (line 268) and starts her turn. C stops immediately A starts.

In the third incident, C uses a TRP ("in that," in line 270) to offer a continuer - "true". This is another 'trojan horse', because C pauses to agree "yea" allowing C to drown her out so that she terminates her turn.

In both the first and third incidents, the person interrupting completed the utterance with a thought that was different to that planned by the speaker. In other words, the interrupter was using completion to take over the turn and express her views.

Data excerpt

Line 266

•D   =yea, compulsory super and as [I said before that it was more voluntary]

C   [yea , but I mean before that it was   some]thin
           that rich people had , you know,[people]

A   [or   people]   who'd   been   employed   by
           companies that in that, [yea public sector where]

C   [true, I <u>don't</u>   <u>think</u> (   )]   there is a minority =
           majority of working class Australians if you like, who are not involved in

Line 272   (City 3, CE 18, Lines 266 – 272)

Example 9: Co-creation through sentence completion

Initial hearing of the tape suggests that all were talking (AT) for 14 seconds from line 92–100. Close attention to detail in the overlapping voices shows that members were actually replying to each other rapidly and without utterance completion. In other words they all took part in creating shared understanding. By line 100, D emerges as the dominant voice.

Data excerpt

Line 90

•B   =<you nee <u>you</u> <u>need</u> to offer them somethin > to look forward to, rather than
           sorta scare them into it though, (thinking of <u>playing</u> stock market) (.) if ( )
           enjoying, you [know (small things like that) an rather,=

C   [I think the stock market (   ) a house is the first thing =

B   = rather <u>young</u>]=

C   =you would buy]

231

D	=but it's the easy way to make some money=
C	=true but, I mean,=
A	=if [you do it right]
D	[but <u>our</u> <u>son</u>,] and at some, just a small, we're <u>starting</u> <u>him</u> on the road we <haven't actually done it yet> but he's just turned

Line 100   (City 6, CE 3, lines 90–100)

Example 10: Co-creation using humour

All the members of the group are participating using imagination and humour to co-create.

Data excerpt

Line 302

•	any<u>more</u>, but then at least hopefully hes hes got some kind [of practice=
D	[hes sayin the =
C	=yea, and pursuing that] I dunno (.) well that's wot I suggest =
D	=<u>rewards</u> from it yea it works]
C	=good on JD (.) JD his notes=
D	=I'm ( )]
A	[give] him a kick up the <u>backside</u>=
C	=by <u>fuckin</u> ( ) I mean all we can do is, suggest things and its up to him to[and of curse anybody can ( ])=
A	[<u>yea</u> , you <u>really</u> wan it thats right]
B	= (only) at twenty seven years old hes probably gota long way to go ( ) to him[yea, huh, huh, huh] it depends how much he wants =
C	[if that's wot he <u>wants</u> ha, ha, ha]
B	=his money an how much he, [(.) wants that ( )]
A	[well I always think its]the right people who get=
C	=[huh, huh, huh]
B	=[huh, huh, huh]
D	=[huh, huh, huh]
A	=[huh, he takes]the right people on holiday=
C	=if he licks the right <u>arse</u>, yes [( )]might discount t<u>hat</u>=
B	[huh, huh, huh]

D   [huh, huh, huh]

A   [huh, huh, huh]

    (2.0)

Line 325   (City 6, CE 12, Lines 302–25)

<div align="center">

FINDING 3.4: CO-CREATION OF SHARED UNDERSTANDING:

SINGLE CASE ANALYSIS

</div>

> • The co-creation of shared understanding in a group engaged in talk-in-interaction can be observed using CA.
>
> • The single case analysis of the co-creation of shared understanding confirms the analysis of this characteristic of a CAS, reported in Finding 2.4, by building a collection of conversational episodes.

A reminder

Single case analysis: The goal of a single case analysis is to examine in detail the production of an extract of talk-in-interaction. This provides a contrast with the collection of conversational episodes and adds robustness to the findings (Schegloff, 1987).

The analysis that follows tracks the co-creation of shared understanding in detail. The conversation is continuous, but for the convenience of analysis it is broken down into three parts.

Part 1: Lines 329–39

At the start of this part C holds the turn and is saying she employs people and does not want to pay people to sit around and learn. B comments "alright for big companies" which is overlap (line 330) but C continues. Then A uses a pause (TRC) to start (line332). C signals A that she will keep the turn by raising her voice (line 331) and repeating "an hour, an hour, an hour". She actually inserts a longer pause (.) after the second "an hour". This is almost a challenge to A: "let me finish".

So C then concludes her turn with "when they first start" allowing a pause (.) which both B and A use to start a turn. We hear C in line 333 add "I mean you know softly".

It is clear that this is like a postscript - she gives up gracefully, but it doesn't really count.

B takes a short turn in line 334. Its similar to line 330, a comment on the main speaker. Its also typical of B's conversational style. A continues with her turn, ignoring B. Longer utterances are also typical of her style. In line 337 uses a TRC (sigh ●hhh) to try to start a turn with "°yea, I dont think". The "yea" is quiet, a continuer, immediately followed by "I don't think" which is loud. This was referred to earlier as a Trojan horse, as it can be used to lull the speaker with agreement but hidden inside the agreement is an attempt to capture the turn. In this case it does not work as A carries on. In the last two lines (338, 339) we see A concluding her turn and B taking one of his short "commentary" turns.

Data excerpt

Line 329

●C	I do not want to pay him [to sit around ●hh and learn] how to get richer
B	[alright for big companies]
C	=than me, [you know if I'm talking about an hour,] an hour (.) an hour when =
A	[yes,< but I mean wot about ( )>]
C	= they first start (.) [°I mean you know]
B	[that would be like]they're the managers]
A	[I don't think you] think [( )] enough of the] of the both in an hour for its being important [●hh ( ) he started] earlier when,
C	[°yea, I dont think]
A	=you, you know, either one or even two years time ●hh its powerful =
B	=oh years eight, nine or ten or something=

Line 339

Part 2: Lines 339–53

This excerpt is basically a conversation between C and A with comments from B. D is not participating for the moment. At the start C holds the turn, lines 340 and 341.

B starts a comment. "that's" but goes no further, (line 342). A immediately starts a turn (line 343) although a TRC is hardly perceptible. A is doing two things: she is responding to C's statement that " I don't think they will be listening" and she is using

B's "but" to provide a reason. In other words, C followed by B, followed by A have co-created to produce the construct "children will not be listening at that age because they will not be getting money".

As soon as this is established, C disagrees with the single reason "money". She takes the turn from A in line 346 with a firm "No", continues with her explanation. A uses a pause to insert her comment "I don't know" (line 348) while B adds his short comment "but how much?" in line 349. C continues in line 349. A overlaps in the next line (350). C slows down, allowing for A's comment, but never gives up her turn. In line 353 C completes her turn. A's overlap

Data excerpt

Line 339

B   =oh years eight, nine or ten or something=

C   =[yea I don't] think they'll listen at that age to be honest I don't think they will

         be listening at that age, I think I [admire,] [( )]

B   [that's]

A   [because] theyre not] getting

          monee:y,< theyre alot of them out I'm sure they got partime jobs, but alota

          them aren't getting monee:y>, [I think ( )]

C   [no, you'll find they] they will take it in a lot

          easier then, [than, its] complex [cos they left school,] by earning =

A   [°I don't know]

B   [but, how much]

C   =money and they start spending, from wage to, to wage, because, why

          shouldn't I, [°you know, I think they]

A   [well that's why I think they should talk about it in employment]

C   = they learn about these things before they get out in the whirlpool

Line 353

      Part 3: Lines 354–78

This conversational episode shows how D changes the subject of the conversation from education to credit to suit his interest. In the previous episode we don't hear from D, but now in lines 356 and 358 he takes his turn starting with his views on Australia

savings and credit. D's conversational style is to start a turn, hold onto it and talk generally as long as he can. In fact, later in the session, when the other members become tired, he is successful at doing that; however, in this episode members are still fresh and engaged in the conversation, so they are not going to let D continue. In this respect, we observe local management by members at its best. D is forced to use short turns by the others, even though he tries to stay with his theme.

So this is an analysis of overlap, interruption, comments by all the other members as D holds on. Here are some of the highlights:

A and C combine to poke gentle fun at D in lines 359 "having fun out there?' and line 360 C laughs. A mockingly agrees with D in line 362 : "I know, yea". D says he can read of the debt figures (line365). A cuts him off loudly (interruption) with "you can never make out those figures". D goes onto safer ground from line 368 talking about his mates. C interrupts D (line 373) talking firmly and evenly. That's generally her conversational style. It is most effective in stopping D. In line 375 he makes a half-hearted attempt to start a turn " d'ye d'ye" which C ignores. D gives up. C carries on evenly to the end of her turn (line 378).

Data excerpt
Line 354

•B	[that's] why the compulsory super's there make sure they don't spend it all=
D	=<u>yea,</u> but, but <u>yea</u>[( ) well] the thing is in Australia we=
B	[how much do they (love)]
D	=got[like rather [we got] one of the lowest, um, lowest =
A	[heh,heh you having fun out [there?]
C	[ha,ha,ha]
D	=levels of of domestic savings we're u<u>seless</u>, as as a c<u>ountry</u>[absolutely]=
A	°[I know, yea]
D	=useless fer [(no matter) how much savings] um credit debts, each credit =
B	[most savings and credit debt]
D	= debt I, [I, I can read off]

A   [you can never]make↑ out of those figures, that's wot I I I er

        [think about yea]

D   [the only reason,] the only one of my mates that can, save money, um =

B   [there he is ( )]

D   =out of, < an we do all the mates>, worse than have to get into debt te, to buy
        anything, they have to buy it, pay it off , an < let the same one as everyone
        know> they didn't step to to purchase[(off) um]

C   [(lets have it)] grown up, an and they =
        get clearance to do that, [most] people my age, and a bit older =

D   [d'ye d'ye]

C   =than that have bin, like saddled with hire purchase and then into credit cards
        an that •hh, I mean that's basically ( ) wot they learning by, by example °cos
        they haven't bin taught=

Line 378   (City 3, CE 20 & CE 21, Lines 329–78)

5.4.3   Summary of Findings for Objective 3

Objective 3 had two parts. These were to:

- design a setting where the environment allowed people to be spontaneous and
  unpredictable; and

- conduct a conversation that would be recorded and analysed by CA to demonstrate
  self-organisation and co-creation.

The findings for Objective 3 confirm that an environment for data collection was
established which met the requirements of a 'natural' environment in that the
conversation which took place in three groups appeared spontaneous and
unpredictable. Talk-in-interaction in these three groups was analysed in detail using
CA and there was evidence in all three sessions that self-organisation and co-creation
took place.

5.5 Objective 4: City content (CA and CAS)

Objective 4 is reported with reference to the City content (CA and CAS) data in Table 5.1 The specific objective was to:

> Investigate whether electronic-group-support-systems technology in the meeting-room environment enables the natural conversation necessary for the analysis of the group as a CAS using content analysis to determine whether emergence was taking place.

FINDING 4.1

The conversations that took place in the City study sessions did not appear to be inhibited by the presence and the use of the EGSS technology.

Both in the design of the research methods (Chapter 4) and in the findings in this chapter the achievement of "natural" group interaction has been paramount to achieve a research environment that fostered talk-in-interaction. It was also pointed out that the use of CA is not generally context-sensitive. The City data-collection sessions were monitored for any adverse effect on group behaviour, particularly in City 1-4 where the researcher as observer was present. Neither the conductor nor the technician were able to detect inhibitions created by the technology.

FINDING 4.2

Emergent suggestions for Jason's financial future were observable in the content analysis of the City 3, City 6 and City 1 data-collection sessions.

5.5.1 A reminder

Emergence was the one theorised characteristic of a CAS that CA analysis is not able to demonstrate convincingly. Individual data entry by members, using EGSS, before and after the conversation were analysed for coding categories and compared with the conversation between data entries.

The findings from the content analysis reported below are not presented in chorological order. The analysis of City 3 is presented first, followed by City 6 because these two sessions contained the richest data.

5.5.2   City 3

Individual data entry 1

Seven categories of meaning were indexed from the raw Zing data entered by members *in response* to the first prompt. These are shown on conceptual map Figure 5.1.
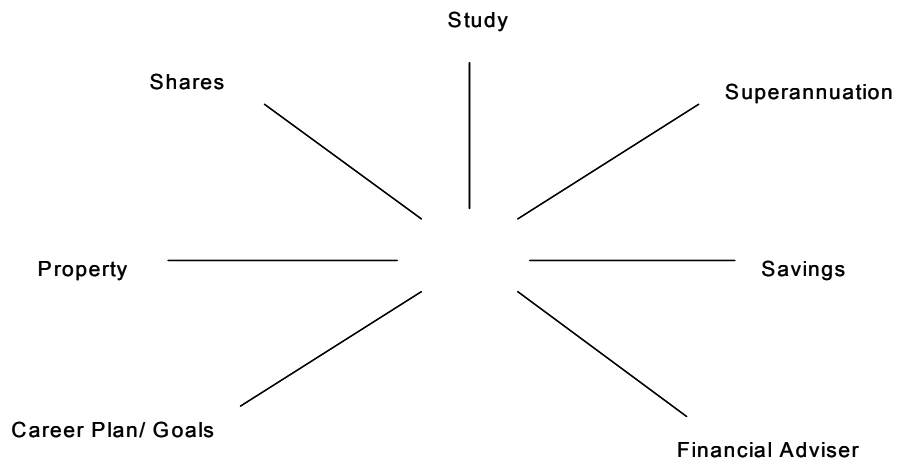

Figure 5.1: City 3 analysis: individual input 1

The conversation

After data entry 1, members engaged in conversation *in response* to the prompt. Twelve categories of meaning were indexed from the audio-tape transcript of this conversation. Figure 5.2 shows the items talked about spontaneously during the conversation *between* the prompts.
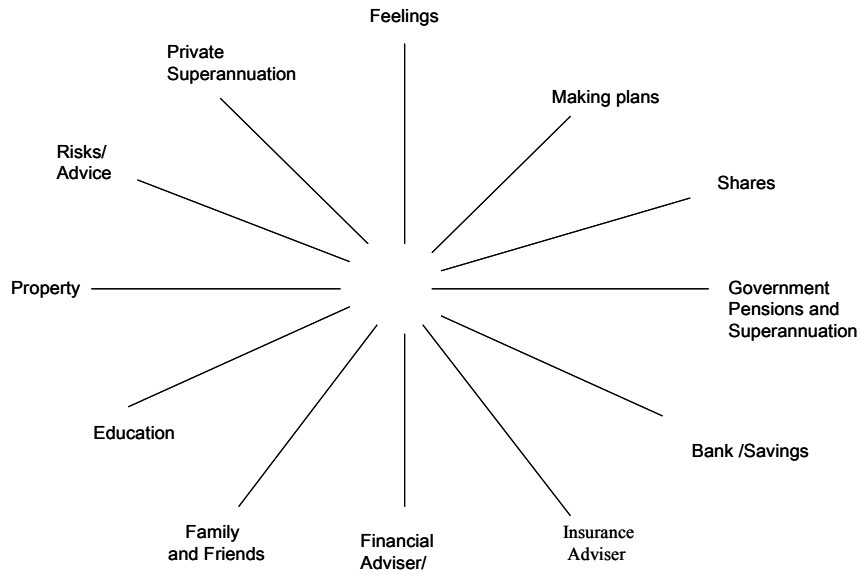
Figure 5.2: City 3 content analysis: categories from conversation

Individual data entry

The following are the seven categories of meaning indexed from the raw Zing data entered by members *after* the second prompt. These are illustrated in Figure 5.3.
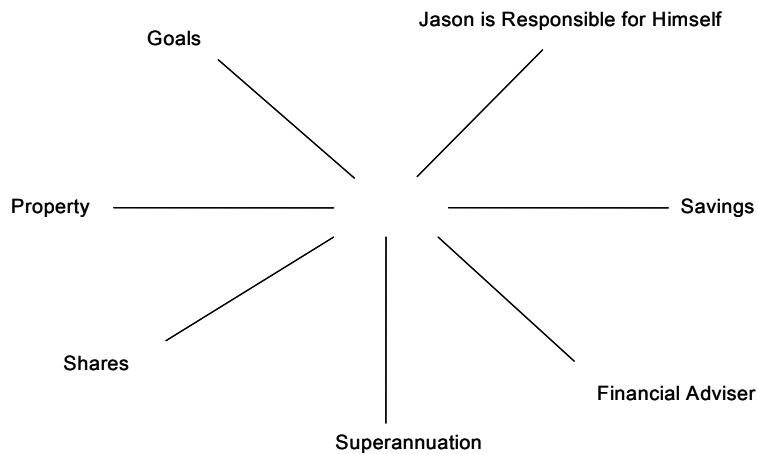

Figure 5.3: City 3 content analysis: individual input 2

Emergence in City 3

The analysis above suggests two emergents: the emergence of category and the emergence of meaning.

In table 5.2, there was one emergent category in individual entry 2 which was *Jason is responsible for himself.* The other categories were a repetition of previous categories, rather than an encapsulation of them.

Table 5.2: Categories of meaning in City 3

Individual entry 1	Conversation	Individual entry 2
Financial adviser	Financial adviser	Financial adviser
	Insurance adviser	
Save	Bank/savings	Savings
Shares	Shares	Shares
Property	Property	Property
Superannuation	Private superannuation	Superannuation
	Government pensions	
	And superannuation	
Career plan/goals	Making plans	Goals
Study	Education	
	Family and friends	
	Weighing up risks	
	Feelings	
		Jason is responsible for himself

The emergence of meaning is indicated by categories underlined in Table 5.2.

During the conversation, seen in the presentation of indexed categories above, either embellishment or emergence takes place. Embellishment can be seen in conversation categories that are not underlined. In all these categories the conversation embellishes categories that had already been individually entered. Emergence of new meaning is clear from underlined categories

The City 3 content analysis data are in Volume 2, Appendix G 3.5–3.9

5.5.3 City 6 content analysis

Individual data entry 1

Figure 5.4 shows the ten indexed categories of meaning resulting from individual member data entry into the computer in response to the prompt *before* the conversation.
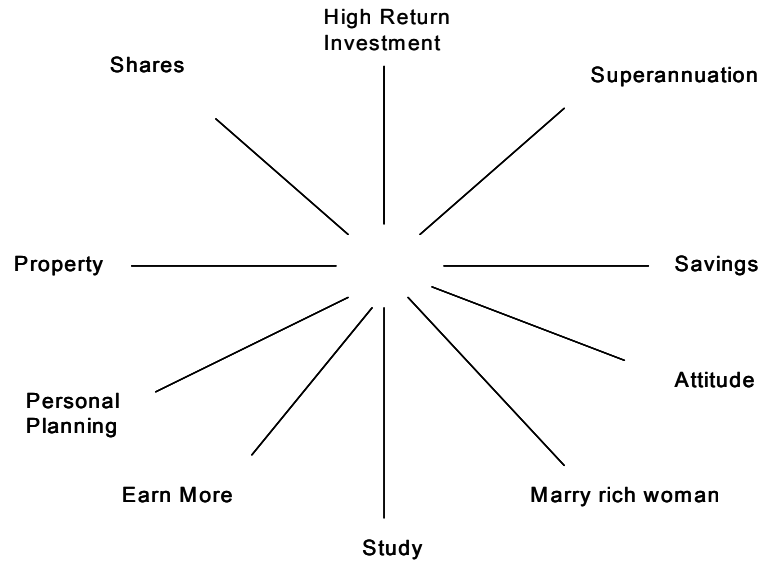

Figure 5.4: City 6 content analysis: individual input 1

The conversation

Ten categories of meaning were analysed by indexing the transcript of the tape of the conversation *between* data entry 1 and data entry 2. The concept map, Figure 5.5, shows these ten categories of meaning.
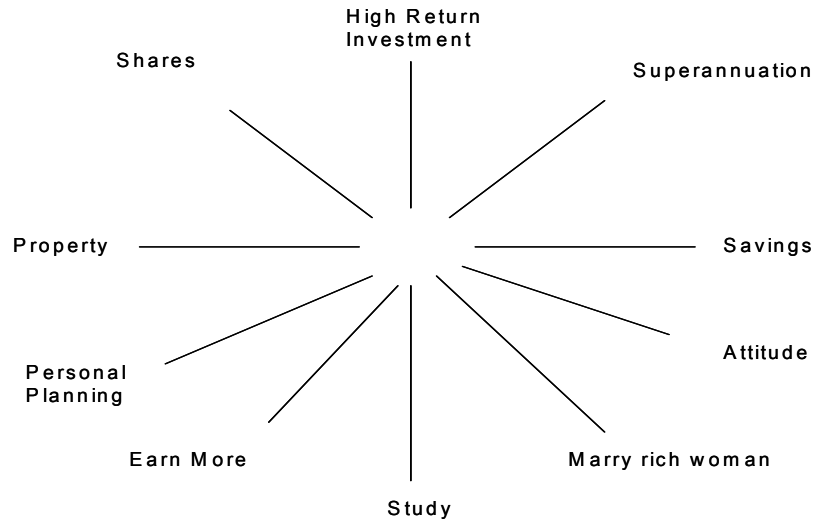
Figure 5.5: City 6 content analysis: individual input 1

Individual data entry 2

Nine categories of meaning were indexed from the raw Zing data entered by members in response to the prompt *after* the conversation. The concept map in Figure 5.6 shows these nine categories of meaning. Figure 5.7 shows content analysis.

Figure 5.6   City 6 Content Analysis: Individual Input 2

Figure 5.6: City 6 content analysis: individual input 2

Emergence in City 6

In Table 5.3 there are two emergent categories in individual data entry 2: *Advice* and *Family and Friends*. In the conversation new meaning emerged into the categories 'Government pensions and superannuation', and 'Incentive'.

Table 5.3:   Categories of meaning in City 6

Individual data entry 1	Conversation	Individual data entry 2
Superannuation	-	-
-	<u>Government pensions And superannuation</u>	-
Shares	-	-
Savings	-	Savings
Property	Property	Property
Personal planning	Planning	Personal planning/attitude
Attitude	Jason's attitude	-
Get rich quick	Get rich quick/life style	Get rich quick
High return investment	Stock market investment	Stock market
Earn more	-	Earn more
-	Financial adviser	Financial adviser
-	-	*Advice*
-	-	*Look at successful family And friends*
	<u>Incentive</u>	-
Study	-	-

The City 6 content analysis data are in Volume 2, (electronic) Appendix G 6.5 – 6.9.

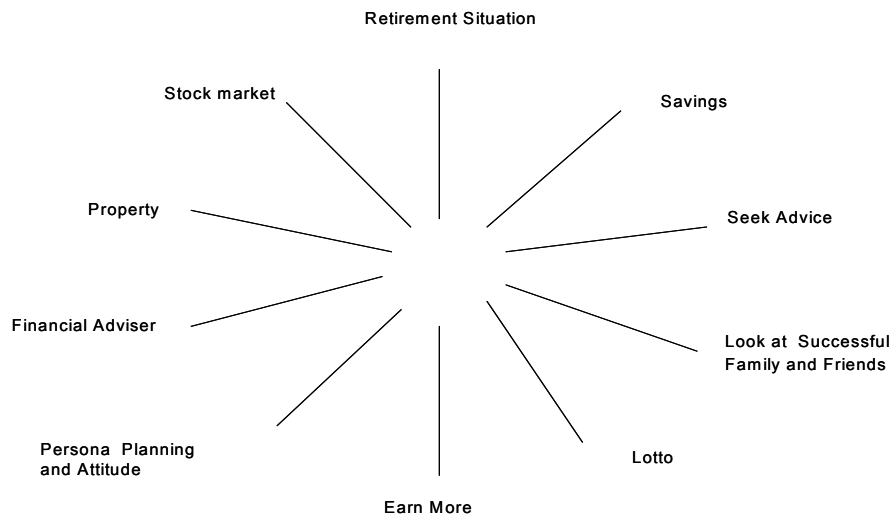**5.5.4   City 1 content analysis**

Individual data entry 1

Six categories of meaning were indexed from the Zing data entered by members in response to the prompt *before* the conversation These are presented as a concept map in Figure 5.7

Assistance

Save

Financial Adviser

Property

Superannuation

Planning
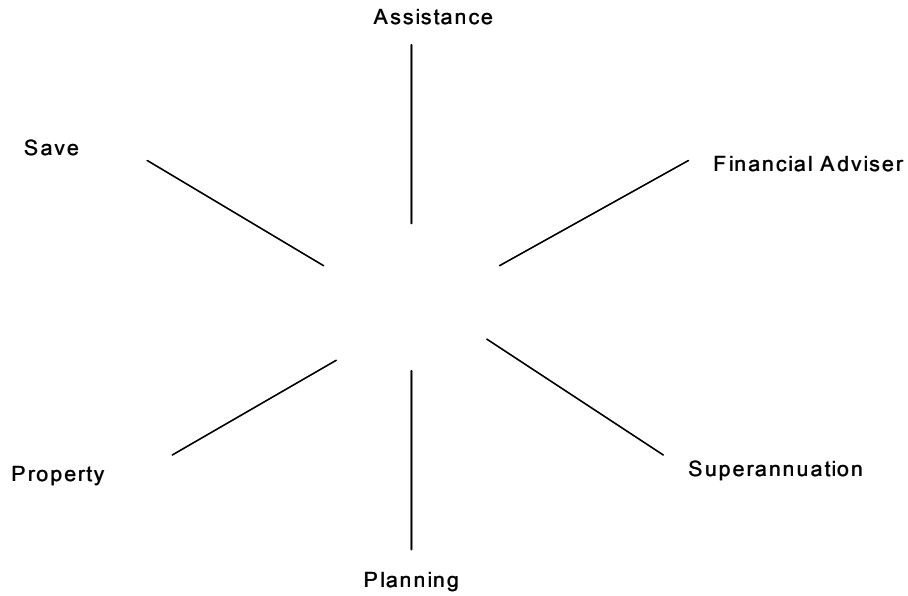
Figure 5.7: City 1 content analysis: individual input 1

The conversation

After data entry 1, members engaged in conversation in response to the prompt. The following are the 12 categories of meaning indexed from the audio-tape transcript of the conversation – Figure 5.8.

Saving

Superannuation

Property

Financial Adviser

Investment

Planning for Retirement

Get Rich Quick

Planning

Risk

Goals

Mentor

Attitude/ Life Style
Take Responsibility

Figure 5.8: City 1 content analysis conversation

Emergence in City 1

In Table 5.4 there are no emergent categories because individual data entry 2 was not retained on the Zing database. In the conversation, new meaning emerged into the categories that are underlined.

Table 5.4: Categories of meaning in City 1

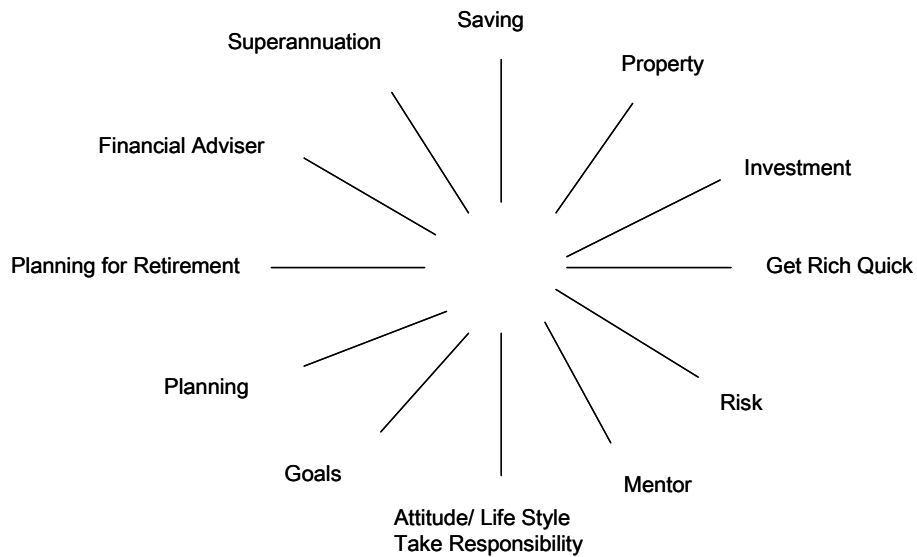| Data Entry 1	Conversation
Planning	Planning
Save	Saving
Property	Property
Financial adviser	Financial adviser
Superannuation	Superannuation
Assistance	
-	Attitude/lifestyle/take responsibility
-	Goals
-	Get rich quick
-	Risk
-	Investment
-	Shares
-	Mentor
-	Planning for retirement

The City 1 content analysis data is in Volume 2 (electronic) Appendix G 1.5 – 1.7.

Emergence and the environment

The three studies reported above as Finding 4.2 shared a common environment (meeting room, prompt and general procedures) but differed in the time devoted to the conversation, which was left to the members themselves. This resulted in variations, noted below, which may account for the variations in emergence.

In City 3, the total conversation ran to 36 minutes, although only the first 12 minutes — which was directly on the topic of Jason — was used for content analysis. This probably accounts for the comparatively small number of entries in individual data entry 2.

In City 6, such was not the case. The conversation on subject also ran 12 minutes and was followed by individual data entry 2, which produced more emergent categories.

City 1 was analysed last because, owing to a technical error, data entry 2 was not retained on the computer. This meant that no emergence categories could be observed; however, the conversation between prompts was lively for a full 20 minutes. This is reflected in the far greater emergence of meaning in comparison with the first individual data entry.

FINDING 4.3

> The potential for the use of the EGSS was not realised in this study because the requirements for a natural meeting in order to collect data for analysis by CA placed constraints on the software template and the way it was used.

During the planning of this study, EGSS seemed to offer a opportunity for capturing data on conversation in a group as a CAS because of its unique features. It had been proposed that the immediacy, authentiCity and contradictability of EGSS would allow spontaneous social construction. As Van der Heijden and Whiteley (2000:11) wrote:

> *Immediacy* is essential to match the fluidity of thinking of which people are capable. *AuthentiCity* is necessary so that contributions do not go through a double interpretation process as they are transcribed. *Contradictability* is necessary for social reconstruction activities as group members build, challenge and rebuild a story together. (italics added)

During the development of the theory of the methodology it became apparent that ethnomethodology and its associated data-collection method of CA would take primacy in arrangements for setting up a EGSS meeting. This required collecting audio-tape data from a natural group engaged in talk-in-interaction. It was found that this shift in emphasis placed constraints on the use of the EGSS technology.

A special template was written which prevented the EGSS from operating its powerful functions of brainstorm, discuss, organise. Using EGSS for sensemaking as advocated

by Weick (1993) was precluded because CA is concerned with the machinery of talk-in-interaction rather than the content of meaning involved in sensemaking. The ideal role of the facilitator envisaged for EGSS (Bostrom, Clawson, & Watson, 1966) is an interventionist role and opposite to the role of the conductor, described in Chapter 4.

This finding — that the potential of EGSS would not be realised — was suspected after the preliminary study and confirmed by the City studies.

5.5.5   Summary of findings for Objective 4

The fourth specific objective for this study was to investigate whether electronic group support systems technology in the meeting room environment enables the natural conversation necessary for the analysis of the group as complex adaptive system using content analysis to determine whether emergence was taking place.

Three findings were presented. It was found that:

1. The conversations that took place in the City data-collection sessions did not appear to be inhibited by the presence and the use of the EGSS technology (Finding 4.1).

2. Emergent suggestions for Jason's financial future, in the form of emergent categories and emergent meaning, were observable in the content analysis of three data-collection sessions (Finding 4.2)

3. The potential for the use of the EGSS technology was not realised in this study because the requirements for a natural meeting in order to collect data for analysis by CA placed constraints on the way the technology was used (Finding 4.3).

5.6   Summary of findings

5.6.1   Objective 1 : the P reliminary studies

The specific objective was to discover *key process issues* that would impact on the *design of CA* in the proposed CAS *research environment*.

Finding 1.1: transcription

- Transcription cannot be carried out by audio-typists because (a) standard orthography is used; (b) passages are omitted; and (c) elision to give meaning is common.

- The researcher requires skills in CA transcription and analysis techniques that can be acquired by study and practise.

- CA researchers must have patience to log and transcribe audio-tapes as it takes at least four times as long as transcribing in standard orthography.

Finding 1.2: the environment

- The three preliminary studies produced clear findings on the practical steps to be taken to simulate a "natural" conversation session. These were further validated in the City data-collection sessions.

Finding 1.3: electronic-group-support-systems (EGSS) templates

- The templates and structures embedded in EGSS software programmes in general could not be used in studies of this nature.

- The Zing software was found to have the ability to allow the writing of a custom-made template that is specific to the data collection needs of any study.

Finding 1.4

- Special procedures were required for this study, which had to be adjusted as the study progressed.

- Collecting data from small groups in conversation for analysis by CA required a special process to allow a natural conversation, as opposed to other qualitative data-collection methods which require respondents to talk about pre-formulated questions.

- The procedures for the conduct of the data collection were specific to this study.

5.6.2 Objective 2 : Forestville groups (CA)

The specific objective was to observe the machinery of talk-in-interaction employed by members to create shared knowledge.

Finding 2.1

- The Forestville data-collection sessions were groups without moderation or facilitation. The proposal that CA could be context-free and yet have valuable analytic qualities was borne out by the comments below.

Finding 2.2

- The following proposal by Psathas (1995:36) was upheld: "CA studies are 'context free', unlike ethnographic studies, as there is no interest in the particulars of persons, places, time or subject discussed ".

Finding 2.3

- There were two distinct speech-exchange systems that determined the ways in which the talk-in -interaction took place.

Finding 2.4

- The systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation, described by Sacks et al. (1974) were observable.

Finding 2.5

- The four types of interactional organisation — upon which this study focuses (described in Chapter 3) and chosen for their relevance to the observation of a CAS — were present and able to be observed.

Finding 2.6

- The CA transcription conventions do not provide notations for some of the phenomena of talk-in-interaction observed

Finding 2.7

- A phenomenon that was present on the audio-tapes of the three Forestville project group meetings was termed *linked sequence analysis* by the researcher. This phenomenon was unexpected, and at the time, there did not seem a reasonable explanation for it.

Finding 2.8

- The transcripts of the three project-group meetings showed how members handled, in their talk-in-interaction, the intangible product that was their reason for being present at Forestville and the meetings.

Finding 2.9

- Four of the theorised requirements for the existence of a CAS in a group engaged in talk-in-interaction (unpredictability, spontaneity, and self-organisation and co-creation) were evident in the Forestville Project groups.

Finding 2.10

- The Forestville data-collection sessions were found to contribute towards the reflective and iterative data collection process, by providing a bridge between the preliminary studies and the City studies

5.6.3   Objective 3: City CA (CAS)

Specific objectives for these City sessions were to:

1. design a setting where the environment allowed people to be spontaneous and unpredictable; and

2. conduct a conversation which would be recorded/analysed by CA to demonstrate self-organisation and co-creation

Finding 3.1: spontaneity and unpredictability: the effect of the environment

- In all City sessions, spontaneity and unpredictability were achieved.
- This did not mean that in all sessions there was full cooperation or participation.
- City 1, 3 and 6 sessions exhibited characteristics consistent with the theorised expectations of a CAS.
- This finding confirms Finding 1.2

Finding 3.2: systematics observable

- The systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation, described by Sacks et al. (1974) were observable.

Finding 3.3: self-organisation and co-creation: a collection of conversational episodes

- Audio-tapes from the City data-collection sessions 1, 2 and 6 — analysed as a collection of conversational episodes — showed clear evidence of four of the theorised characteristics of a CAS: spontaneity, unpredictability, self-organisation and co-creation.

Finding 3.4: co-creation of shared understanding: single case analysis

- The co-creation of shared understanding in a group engaged in talk-in-interaction can be observed using CA.

- The single case analysis of the co-creation of shared understanding confirms the analysis of this characteristic of a CAS by building a collection of conversational episodes that were reported in Finding 2.4.

5.6.4   Objective 4: City content (CA and CAS)

Specific objectives for these City sessions were to investigate whether electronic-group-support-systems technology in the meeting room environment enables the natural conversation necessary for the analysis of the group as a CAS using content analysis to determine whether emergence was taking place.

Finding 4.1

- The conversations that took place in the City study sessions did not appear to be inhibited by the presence and the use of the EGSS technology

Finding 4.2

- Emergent suggestions for Jason's financial future were observable in the content analysis of the City 3, City 6 and City 1 data-collection sessions.

Finding 4.3

- The potential for the use of the EGSS was not realised in this study because the requirements for a natural meeting in order to collect data for analysis by CA placed constraints on the software template and the way it was used.

5.7   Overview

This chapter reports on a series of cumulative findings. The preliminary studies were designed to explore and develop a process that is compatible with the theory of CA data collection and could be applied in the City studies. The central goal of these process findings was to ascertain whether the process in the meeting room environment was able to allow natural conversation in which spontaneity and unpredictably would be able to flourish. This was objective 1.

The Forestville studies were concerned with the internal workings of CA itself. They had the primary task of testing whether talk-in-interaction in organisations and especially in small groups could be recorded, transcribed and analysed using the conventions of CA. Additionally, a "new" phenomenon was observed in the group setting which was termed *linked sequence analysis*. This was objective 2.

The Forestville studies produced three findings that were not anticipated at the time when the objective was set. These were:

1. evidence in the project groups of the intangible product 'change in the organisation' being handled by talk-in-interaction;

2. evidence of three characteristics of a CAS which were surfaced by CA; and

3. confirmation of the ability to observe the 'machinery' of talk-in-interaction employed by members to create shared knowledge.

The City studies were concerned with data collection and analysis on the topic central to this research: whether and to what extent it was possible to observe a small group in conversation exhibiting the theorised characteristics of a complex adaptive system. The findings have been reported here in two parts:

1. The analysis of the conversation in six City data-collection sessions using CA to determine whether the machinery of conversation exhibits evidence for self-organisation and co-creation . This was objective 3.

2. The analysis of electronic data and text transcripts, using data indexing to determine whether the emergence of meaning was taking place in three data-collection sessions. This was objective 4.

Can concepts from complex-adaptive-systems theory and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour ?

This was the research question. The theory of the methodology and research methods presented in Chapters 3 and 4 narrowed this question down to the practical issue of determining whether it was possible to develop a research instrument that was capable of observing the operation of a CAS in a small group of four members discussing a topic of potential interest to themselves and consumer behaviour researchers.

The findings reported suggest the following which corresponds with Figure 5.9:

- The requirement of a research environment and procedures that would allow spontaneity and unpredictability were developed through the preliminary studies, which were implemented and confirmed in the City studies.

- Self-organisation and co-creation in natural group conversation at Forestville was able to be recorded, transcribed and analysed thus allowing confidence in the methods used in the City study.

- Emergence and movement into the space of the adjacent possible, the final element of a CAS, in the form of emergent suggestions for Jason's financial future, was evident, though not strongly, in the shift in categories of understanding analysed for three City sessions.

CAS Characteristic	Location First Tested
Spontaneous	Preliminary Studies to
Unpredictable	Establish Environment for City Studies
Self-organisation	Forestville and City Data (CA)
	to establish construction of
Co-creation	Shared Understanding
Emergent Properties	City Electronic Group Support Systems Data to show Emergence or not

Figure 6.9: Presentation of findings: complex adaptive systems are present in CA

5.8   An overriding finding

A final finding emerging from the pre- and post-fieldwork literature and the findings reported above overrides all findings that were in direct response to the research question. This finding is the power of conversation analysis to provide insight into how people — and consumers in particular — create their realities from talk-in-interaction. The corollary of this finding is that consumer research, by re-thinking its paradigms to include more than one starting point for the conduct of research into individual consumer behaviour, would open a rich field of investigation for understanding how consumers actually go about accomplishing their activities of daily consumption. The overriding finding is fully discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6. Literature review two: the journey back

6.1   Introduction

The contribution of this chapter to the conceptual development in this thesis is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

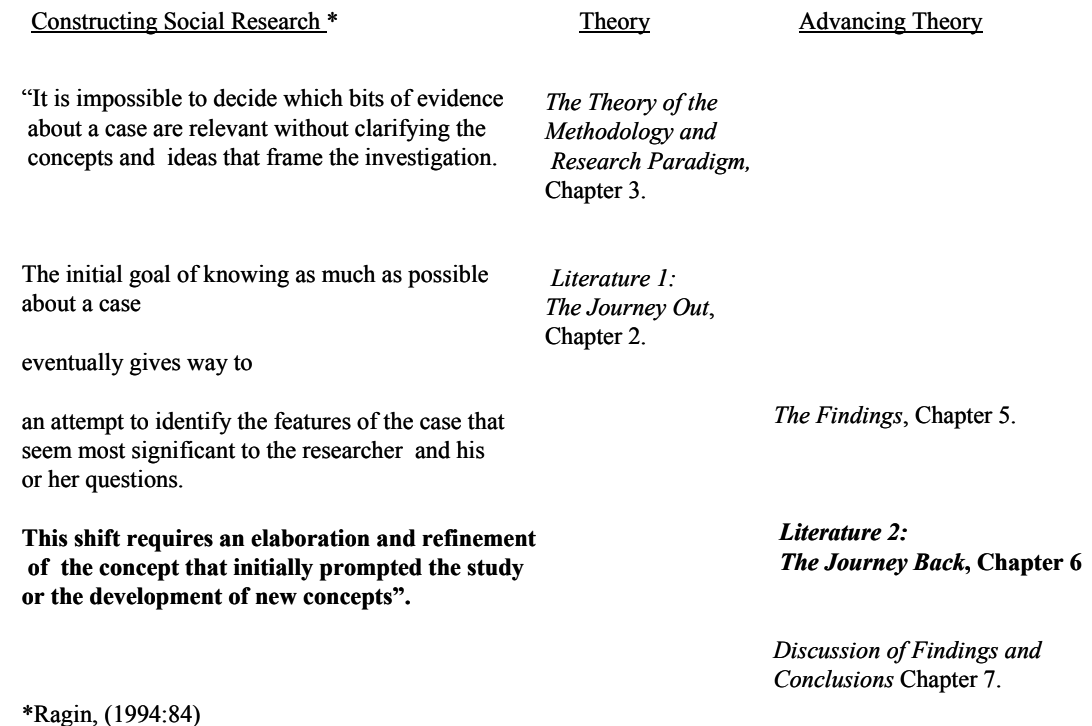| Constructing Social Research *	Theory	Advancing Theory
"It is impossible to decide which bits of evidence about a case are relevant without clarifying the concepts and ideas that frame the investigation.	*The Theory of the Methodology and Research Paradigm,* Chapter 3.	
The initial goal of knowing as much as possible about a case	*Literature 1: The Journey Out*, Chapter 2.	
eventually gives way to		
an attempt to identify the features of the case that seem most significant to the researcher and his or her questions.		*The Findings*, Chapter 5.
This shift requires an elaboration and refinement of the concept that initially prompted the study or the development of new concepts".		*Literature 2: The Journey Back*, **Chapter 6**
		Discussion of Findings and Conclusions Chapter 7.
*Ragin, (1994:84)		

Figure 6.1: Conceptual development

The findings in Chapter 5 were the end of the journey out: the journey from an idea to a research question to a theory to a methodology to research methods and, finally, data that were analysed.

The journey back was a similar journey, but the journey was directed by the findings. The process of producing the findings to meet the goal of advancing theory demanded a re-evaluation of the concepts that prompted the study. The findings can never be described in their totality because the on-going social process, the day-by-day experience of the data collection, results in adjustments to the analytic frame (Vidich & Stanford, 2000).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss issues arising from the fieldwork and its research process in the light of a second literature review. The journey back is completed in Chapter 7 with a discussion of the specific fieldwork findings, a discussion on the research question and conclusions.

This literature review is very different from the one in Chapter 2. For a start, it is more selective and purposive and, most essentially, directed by research-process findings, rather than the outcomes analysed in Chapter 5 and the fieldwork experience. For example, the ability of CA to make observable, in talk-in-interaction, four out of the five theorised characteristics of a CAS in a small group was a promising start for further research on CAS and the consumer. The potential of CA for consumer research on its own opened new horizons.

This chapter seeks to fill in the gaps in the literature. There were gaps in the first literature review arising from not being able to appreciate the importance of perspectives or points of view until the findings illuminated them. Then there were gaps that are inevitable with the current proliferation of publications and the variety of research approaches, both pure and mixed, that have become the staple of the scholarly world.

The literature reviewed in this chapter all has one characteristic in common. Whether they were read before the fieldwork with its attendant thinking or were sought as a direct result of it, they fulfilled the post-research "making sense" activity. This making sense applies both to reflections on consumer research theory, such as Boden (1994) —who contributes the idea that the prime organising quality of consumption may well be talk-in-interaction — and additional reflections of those contributing towards theory and methodology such as Harré (1994) and Shotter (1993a).

This chapter is presented under headings that reflect three issues that have arisen during the field execution of this study and those that have emerged as relevant to the issues for discussion in Chapter 7. These headings are:

1. Data collection: comparative methods. This compares conversation analysis with focus groups.

2. Conversation analysis for qualitative consumer research. This considers future directions that appear to have never really materialised.

3. Constructing worlds through talk and text. This covers the literature advocating a discursive psychology, which leads to a compelling justification for the notion that consumers create their reality — including the reality behind their perceptions of product. This literature follows on directly from the discussion in section 2.2.

6.2   Data collection: comparative methods

During the development of data-collection methods for this study, which was something of a research project in itself, the emphasis was totally on developing a method that would meet the theoretical and practical requirements of conversation analysis. Consequently, the first literature review concentrated on the publications — scholarly articles, books and websites — from which the theory (ethnomethodology) and practice of CA were derived.

During the study, attention was drawn to the desirability of providing an argument for using CA data-collection methods, rather than an alternative method such as the focus group. At the time of writing the literature review in Chapter 2, a provisional justification for the research methods was the only one that could be made. The experience of the fieldwork allowed the argument to be conducted more comprehensively and with more insight into the operation of how small group research was conducted. Additionally, the differences between the data-collection methods — CA and focus groups — could only be conjectured at this stage. The use of an additional data collection and analysis technique in the City studies (i.e. electronic data capture with content analysis) seemed to add to this problem. Experience in the field has led to some interesting insights into small-group research such as the focus group.

Psychologists and sociologists have used focus groups for fifty years. They have been widely adopted by market researchers and political pollsters, but only in the last decade have social scientists begun to take an academic interest in their methodology (Wilkinson, 1998:181). The very definition of a focus group raises problems for this

study. Two immediate problems are those of naturalness and the subjective–interactive role of the moderator or facilitator. For example the focus group has been described as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (Krueger, 1994:18). A planned discussion is a controlled discussion, so is it possible for it to be natural (permissive) as is required by CA? And, when it is controlled by a moderator or facilitator whose perceptions are being surfaced in addition to those of the participants, can it still be counted as natural?

Methodological issues like these are of particular interest to this study because, during the course of the development of the data-collection process, practical decisions had to be made that threw assumptions into bold relief. The recent literature debating the methodological problems of focus groups provides a developing body of knowledge against which the data-collection methods in this study may be compared and tested.

Two sources proved particularly informative: *Focus Group Methodology: A Review* (Wilkinson, 1998) and *Developing Focus Group Research* (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999a). The first chapter in Kitzinger and Barbour (1999*), Introduction: the Challenge and Promise of Focus Groups*, raised a range of methodological issues, and subsequent chapters explored specific issues such as Frankland and Bloor's (1999) discussion of the systematic analysis of focus-group material, which proved valuable in this study. Of particular interest were Myers and Macnaughten (1999) who discussed whether focus groups can be analysed using conversation analysis. This paper is only partially an account of the practical difficulties of reconciling focus group data-collection practices with those of CA. For example, focus-group transcription in standard orthography idealises the flow of talk, while CA transcription seeks to reproduce every auditory aspect of the talk-in-interaction on the transcript. The impetus for using CA transcription of focus-group interviews lies in on-going research based on the belief that expressions of attitude are situated in a particular context of discourse, rather than objects "out there" to be discovered by survey (Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Frith and Kitzinger (1998) was another work that challenged the boundaries of conventional focus-group practice. They state that focus-group data are usually

described using a "transparent" analytical approach, which assumes that participants behaviour can be assessed "more or less adequately" from participants' self-reports. They argue that adopting an ethnomethodological stance that views discussions as a participant resource to achieve interactional goals (such as "constructing themselves as active agents") and using conversation analysis leads to greater sensitivity in analysis. The authors saw this as "major analytical shift" in focus-group analysis, which helped to avoid "crushing participant's own delicately meshed constructions under the weight of our own interpretations" (Frith & Kitzinger, 1998:320).

These recent publications provide evidence of two trends in the literature. The first is the attention being given to examining the methodology of the focus-group data-collection method. The second is the application of ethnomethodological concepts to focus group analysis and the interest in using CA.

A practical comparison between focus groups and CA (used in the field) is presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1:   Data-collection methods compared

Conventional focus groups	This study using conversation analysis
Objectives	**Objectives**
To collect data from group participants interacting with each other and with a moderator (Wilkinson, 1998)	To analyse everyday action and speech in a group context from the perspective of the members in order to determine whether, or not, the characteristics of a CAS were present.
Theoretical perspective	**Theoretical perspective**
None apparent a qualitative methodology.	Ethnomethodology
Origins	**Origins**
Market research mundane models	CA research from Sacks et al. in 1960's
Uses of focus groups	**Use of conversation analysis**
1. As a adjunct to other research methods, especially as exploratory research prior to a quantitative study,	1. To study the "order/organization/ orderliness of social action (Psathas, 1995a:2)
2. As a primary research method, using 'phenomenological' research on people's experiences, meanings, understandings,	2. In particular, to discover the 'machinery' of talk-in-interaction in a small group. (Sacks et al., 1974)

Conventional focus groups	This study using conversation analysis

viewpoints.
3. In participatory action research.
(Wilkinson, 1998:185)

Group size	**Group size**
8 –12 as norm, but ranges from 3 – 50.	Limited to 4 to enable all conversation to be transcribed/analysed.
Participant selection	**Member selection**
Purposive and theoretical sampling.	Contextual parameters.
Pre-existing groups often knowing each other.	No defined group; strangers.
Recruitment of participants	**Recruitment of members**
Market research agency	Market research agency.
Stimulus material	**Stimulus material**
Verbal story	Verbal story
Flip charts	Visual Prompt
Prompt cards	
Games	
Video tape	
Moderator/facilitator's role	**Conductor's role**
Trained to 'manage' group dynamics,	Removed from group dynamics.
Uses 'key' questions and participation.	Prompt replaces key questions.
	Sets the scene for the conversation.
Facilitator persona is important and admissible (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:14)	Conductor is self-effacing.
	No intervention in the conversation.
Tape recording	**Tape recording**
All speakers simultaneously recorded.	All speakers simultaneously recorded.
Problems identifying individual speakers.	All speakers identified
Data	**Data**
No empirical data	Empirical conversational data in real time.
Conclusions are drawn from:	Conclusions are drawn from:
Observer's reports	Transcription
Moderator/facilitator reports	Tapes are data and used as primary evidence.
Transcription	
Tapes often used only as an aide-memoir. (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:15)	

Conventional focus groups	This study using conversation analysis
Transcription	**Transcription**
Partial transcription the norm.	Full transcription of spoken dialogue is essential.
Transcription usually by audio copy typist	
Transcription in standard orthography.	Transcription by researcher only.
Back-channel utterances (i.e. moderator/ facilitator's interventions) are not transcribed or reported.	Transcription strictly follows CA conventions used for transcriptions.
	Conductor utterances should not occur. If they do, they are fully transcribed.
Analysis	**Analysis**
Analysis of themes and how they relate to individuals. There are two methods:	Conversational episodes (unit of analysis) are selected from the tape recording/transcript. Instances, such as an utterance or sequence, are the locus of analysis. The instance describes how the talk-in-interaction happened.
Content analysis, with inductive selection of themes. Quantitative analysis can follow.	
Ethnographic accounts. (Wilkinson, 1998:196).	Quantitative analysis cannot follow.
	Analytical method used in micro-ethnography (Moerman, 1988:68).
Reporting	**Reporting**
Based on observer's and moderator/facilitator's notes, partial transcription and tapes.	Based on analysis of whole transcript with all transcripts and tapes available for inter-rater reliability.
Moderator's interventions are not reported.	

6.3   Conversation analysis for qualitative consumer research

The article *Conversational Interactions: Directions for Qualitative Marketing and Consumer Research* (Parker, 1988) was set aside from the first review of the literature until CA could be evaluated in the light of actual research experience. At the time, Parker's article seemed to be yet another call for the application of interpretative approaches to consumer research. As Parker (1988:212) notes, when he was writing, the study of interaction in consumer research would only be published if it was "consistent with the dominant, positivist paradigm [which] transforms qualitative data into forms amenable for quantitative analysis".

Parker's (1988) call for a new direction in consumer research was a very different call from those discussed in Chapter 2. For example, the call for a shift from the "micro perspective" of current research towards a "macro" perspective that would examine the place of consumption in society led to a flourishing literature (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Belk, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1996; McCracken, 1988a) and the *Journal of MacroMarketing.* Similarly Sherry (1991) was an early advocate for the "interpretative turn in consumer research". Sherry (1995a) also followed new directions applying anthropology to consumer research while Holbrook pursued the "postmodern turn" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1992).

Parker's call was for the "study of discourse, such as *conversation analysis* [to improve] our understanding of word-of-mouth communication, focus group behavior, seller-buyer interaction, and advertising copy strategies" (Parker, 1988:239) (author's italics). There appears to have been little response to the call in the form of actual publications. Myers (1994) did incorporate concepts from CA in his book *Words in Ads.* For example, "Ads are not consumed alone: they depend on interactions with others (Myers, 1994:8). CA has been used to a limited extent in scholarly applications of consumer research such as Simmel's (1999) DBA thesis on *The Art of Asking: Interpersonal Communication in Telefundraising* and Lamoureux's (1985) doctoral thesis on *The Analysis of Conversation in Service Encounters.*

Word-of-mouth articles in scholarly journals, which are reviewed as a part of consumer behaviour literature in Chapter 2, show no evidence of an interest in CA, however. Focus groups have only come under critical scrutiny from the academic community of social scientists during the last decade (reviewed above), and only recently has the use of CA in a focus-group setting been explored (Agar & MacDonald, 1995; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999).

Whatever the reasons for lack of interest, with hindsight the case made by Parker (1988) for the use of CA in consumer research could certainly have been stronger. In some ways Parker (1988) was ahead of his time but appeared to lack an understanding of the ethnomethodological perspective on which CA is based. For example, he saw CA as a part of the analysis of discourse to be used for triangulation with other methods (Parker, 1988:239), rather than as a discipline in its own right. Furthermore,

his idea of interaction is closely related to semiotic analysis (Mick, 1986). The problem is that semiotic analysis is concerned with encoding and decoding meaning through symbols (Blyth, 2001:183), while CA is fundamentally concerned with the meaning that emerges from the machinery of interaction in conversations. The two are very different and belong to different research traditions. The subsequent development of this line of thought (semiotics) was discussed in section 0.

There is no doubt that Parker (1988) had vision. For example:

> Researchers [in CA] tend to be concerned more with the process of conversational interaction than its content. However, conversation analysis (either alone or in conjunction with semiotic interpretation) can be applied to the study of verbal interactions which occur in spontaneous consumer behavior, in focus groups, in seller-buyer contacts, and in many marketing communications (Parker, 1988:216).

Unfortunately, he does not tell us how this is to be done. As Potter (1996:102) observes, contrasting semiology to CA, "The story of linguistic construction left little to explain; whenever words are uttered construction gets done".

The presentation, at that time, of conversation analysis as little more than an alternative method of data collection with potential (Parker, 1988) is understandable. "Most practitioners of CA tend to refrain, in their research reports, from extensive theoretical and methodological discussion", writes Have (2000:1). He goes on to point out that research using CA leaves out the frames of reference, literature reviews, hypotheses and so on that are a necessary feature of consumer research at present. Instead, the reader is confronted with a detailed discussion of transcriptions of recordings. There is little wonder that the established consumer research community appears to have not became aware of CA's potential. While explanations of what CA was doing were available (Sacks et al. 1974; Sacks, 1992/2000a; Sacks, 1992/2000b). it was left to two comparatively recent writers to develop a full justification for what has been termed "the analytic mentality of CA". Potter (1996) and Edwards (1997) are introduced in section 6.5, and their arguments make a significant contribution to the conclusions in Chapter 7.

6.4 Constructing worlds through talk and text

A cluster of publications, whose relevance and importance could not have been recognised without the findings, are introduced in this section. They proved to be particularly informative and instructional in the sense of offering plausible theoretical interpretations of the findings that emerged as a result of using CA for data collection. The power of CA to record and analyse talk-in-interaction was an indicator of the possibility for an alternative research perspective that consumer research may consider. This literature search has provided the theoretical underpinning that is essential if CA is to be seen as anything more than one data-collection method among many.

These publications are presented in chronological order to illustrate the development of an understanding of CA among its theorists, which broadened from its inception as a empirical outcome of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967/1999) to the recognition that "conversation analysis provides the final story of how fact construction gets done" (Potter, 1996:102). The construction of factual accounts represents one of the ways in which people organise their everyday life through conversation. In this way, they pass on to each other opinions, attitudes and judgments about products and services.

What Garfinkel (1967/1999) did not explore in any depth in his theory of ethnomethodology was the problem of common understanding. The findings showed that CAS groups co-create a shared understanding. As a result of this finding, the work of Zimmerman (1970) and Pollner (1974), which does not appear in the mainstream of the ethnomethodology/CA literature, was sought. They have produced seminal work on the existence within the mundane or everyday world of the way in which we all share conceptions of social facts. They call this mundane reasoning.

Mundane reasoners share local contexts. These contexts allow some intersubjective agreement about reality. The reasoner accesses the local context as an experienced member. The foundations for agreement allow members to construct similar realities. The machinery of talk-in-interaction can occur because, in the everyday or mundane life, an order has been constructed about the way that facts, statements and other conversational devices, such as turn-taking, can or should take place.

Marketers may assume logical or rational ways that consumers represent their everyday worlds to themselves. Mundane reasoning is not rational in an overall sense. It is a rationality produced by a group in accordance with its own, contrived reasoning. The reasoning will be defended against traditional rational argument as the mundane reasoning is a mixture of local imperatives and logical imperatives.

The theory of mundane reasoning throws the consumers' world of everyday life into sharp focus. Groups — such as judges, lawyers and marketing managers — protect their versions of reality through their specialised machinery of talk-in-interaction. Similarly, members of academic groups, such as social scientists and consumer researchers, share their conceptions of social facts based on the mundane reasoning of their academic disciplines. Every group presupposes the existence of "objective structures of activity which remain impervious to the procedures through which these features are made observable" (Zimmerman & Pollner, 1970:119). The topics of interest to all groups overlap and arise from their everyday concerns. Their attitudes on everyday life are both entrenched in and constitute the resources and topics of professional interest.

The theory of *mundane reasoning* then is the assumption held by members of a group, which may be a society on the one hand or a family on the other, that we inter-subjectively share the same reality. "A well-socialized mundane reasoner … assumes a world which is not only objectively present but a world to which he has continued experiential access and further which others experience in more or less identical ways" (Pollner, 1974:139). Mundane reasoners do not allow the fundamental intersubjectivity of the world to be challenged. They will protect themselves against contradiction. They develop methods of resolving contradictions that are ingenious and complex. They are also powerful as the methods protect mundane reasoners from the potentially subversive and threatening effects of challenge to a common world of meaning.

Where challenge to the assumed shared reality and understanding occurs, it is never the existence of the reality itself that is doubted. Any challenge is always ascribed to the "exceptional character of the *methods, motives or circumstances*" of one or the other of the parties involved in the challenge (Pollner, 1974:157) (Italics added).

These ideas of Zimmerman (1970) and Pollner (1974) became more and more relevant as the findings emerged. They proved to be important milestones in several respects. They underpinned and broadened the arguments already made by Garfinkel (1967/1999), Sacks (1992/2000a) and other colleagues for a study of the talk-in-interaction which creates individual reality (See section 2.4.)

Going into the study, members of consumer groups were a potential CAS. During the group conversation, self-organisation, co-creation and some emergence were observed. It was apparent from the talk-in-interaction, that members intersubjectively shared the same understanding. As well as being engaged in talk, members were engaged in building and protecting their mundane realities. This means that it is imperative for those researching consumers to be aware of and familiar with the concept of mundane reasoning.

The following example from the fieldwork illustrates mundane reasoning as a shared construction of reality. In the first line C asks "What you gonna do for him?" In lines 2 and 3, F1 gives her answer, but D gives a sceptical "mm". In line 5, F1 rounds on D stating in effect that her solution (reality) is obvious. In line 7, F2 offers an alternative: "can have a super". In line 8, F1 concedes this but adds "you need to get good advice", which is an example of the "exception" to the obvious (reality) as stated by Pollner (1974) in the quote above.

C   you gonna do <u>for</u> him, and what are you gonna do <u>with</u> him, so just discuss

F1   °< I think I'd run with all the same lines with a managed fund and putting
     more money into your super fuckin real, sort of start along that lines [(.)]=

D   [umm]

F1   =I <u>mean</u> <u>obviously</u> that's very much, I think, standard, <u>being</u> (.) a human
    <u>being</u> that, the way we everyone's travelling, [(.)]

F2   [(<u>can</u> <u>have</u> <u>super</u>][( )]

D   [<u>yea::</u> <u>well],</u> <u>gonna</u> <u>say,</u> you
    need to get good advice to that becos I mean, I've bin

                   (City 5, Transcript, App. 5.4, lines 8 –16)

Zimmerman (1970) and Pollner (1974) also drew specific attention to the fact that both lay sociologists (such as judges, lawyers, marketing managers) and professional sociologists (such as marketing and consumer researchers in the conventional mainstream) work with mundane reasoning in their respective groups. Finally, they provide a remarkable insight into two phenomena that have arisen in this study and will be pursued in Chapter 7. The first is the phenomenon of mundane reasoning as it applies to one's own and to other groups. The second phenomenon is that the latency of mundane reasoning of consumer behaviour research groups is preventing the adoption of methods that surface the mundane reasoning of consumer groups.

In summary, mundane reasoning is at the centre of a web of beliefs about reality, self and other people developed by members of a social group. This is one of the most important developments in the study of ethnomethodology and CA with respect to the understanding fact production (Potter, 1996:54).

The study of the construction of factual accounts is a central concern of both ethnomethodology and CA. In a practical sense, the fieldwork and the findings highlighted the importance of a deeper understanding of the psychology of the factual accounts that were being constructed, recorded and subsequently analysed. This in turn led to a search for the literature of discursive psychology, which is introduced here.

Harré (1983) has spent a research lifetime exploring the nature of individual subjectivity. His arguments on conversational involvement are one of the sources drawn on by Shotter (1993b:100) for his theories, modelled in Chapter 3, on the operation of social constructionism between and within individuals in interaction. In Harré and Gillett (1994), the deficiencies of cognitive models of consciousness and perception are laid bare. He concludes: "We need to leave behind the idea that the structure of subjectivity is a multilayered psychic architecture in which self-contained psychological entities such as desires, beliefs, attitudes, intentions character traits, and so on fight it out on the background of mental life" (Harré & Gillett, 1994:178). Instead, they propose the discursive view of psychology, which has two aims: one is to find out what resources people have to accomplish their plans, projects and intentions. The other is to study how these resources are "put to work in the co-ordinated actions of the episodes of everyday life" (Harré & Gillett, 1994:100).

Harré and Gillett (1994) show no interest in the research findings or theory within the sociology of knowledge that have shown that those engaged in the physical sciences are just as subjective as those engaged in the social sciences. Their focus is the dual context of the human sciences. People live in two worlds according to Harré and Gillett (1994). There is the discursive world of signs and symbols subject to normative constraints, and there is the physical or material world. Language is the principal way of managing the discursive world; our hands and brains the way of managing the material world. Mental life, for Harré and Gillett (1994:178) is a "dynamic activity, engaged in by people, who are located in a range of interacting discourses … and who, from the possibilities they make available, attempt to fashion relatively integrated and coherent subjectivities for themselves".

The initial literature search, reported in Chapter 2, trawled the disciplines that were sensibly related to this study. These included complex adaptive systems, marketing and consumer research, ethnomethodology and CA and, on a wider scale, organisational behaviour and management. The process of analysing the findings produced a realisation that some of what had been considered as peripheral reading, such as constructing worlds through talk and text, deserved centre stage in the theoretical contribution.

The argument developed by Potter (1996) and Edwards (1997), briefly described below and discussed further in Chapter 7, was that language works as a kind of activity, as discourse. This discourse, discussed as the *discursive turn*, refers to the activity of the construction of factual accounts. Potter (1996:ix) asks how "people construct their world in their talk and text and what is done with these constructions". Edwards' (1997:1) aim is to "outline and illustrate an approach to the relations between language and cognition in which the primary and defining thing about language is how it works as a kind of activity, as discourse".

The contribution of Potter (1996) can best be understood by looking at the structure of his book, which is modelled here in Figure 6.2.

Precursors	Traditions	Metaphors of Construction	Procedures

Philosophy:
Austin (1962)

Ethnomethodology

Discourse

Constructing or
Undermining
Factual Accounts

Postmodernism

Semiology,
Post-structuralism

Mental
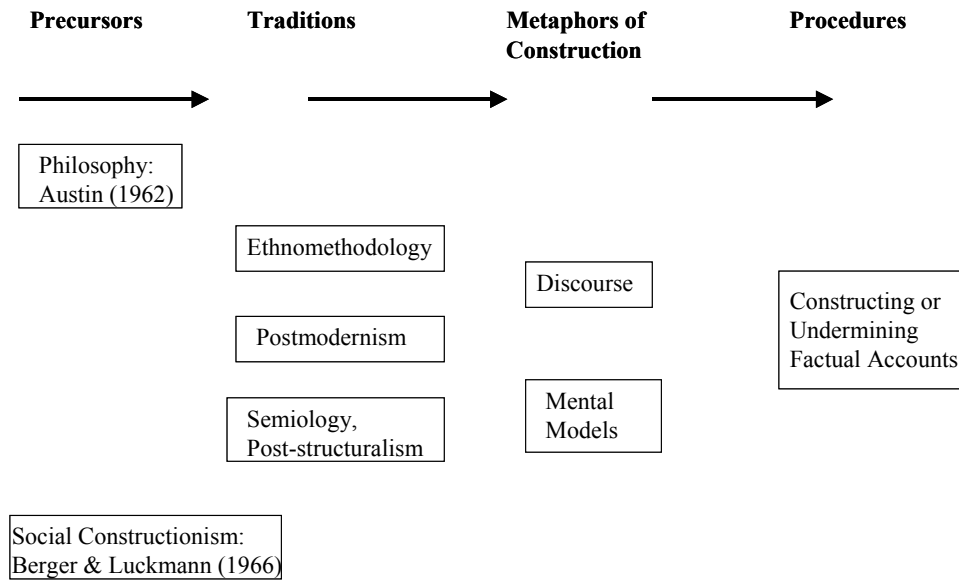Models

Social Constructionism:
Berger & Luckmann (1966)

Figure 6.2: *Representing Reality,* Potter (1996)

Potter reviewed three traditions of work involved in the construction of factual accounts: ethnomethodology, postmodernism and semiology. These provided the theoretical perspectives for considering the construction of factual accounts. Of these three traditions, only conversation analysis had "tried to convert theoretical or philosophical issues of fact and description into questions that can be addressed analytically through studies of records of interaction" (Potter, 1996:67). Moving to considerations that need to be taken into account in research on fact construction, Potter (1996:97-121) advocated an approach to the construction of factual accounts that analysed text and talk-in-action (discourse), rather than mental models, representations and ideas (cognition) (Potter, 1996:15).

The work of Potter (1996) and Edwards (1997) has elevated CA theory to a higher and more comprehensive plane. Understandably, at the outset of this study, the intention to conduct research using CA entailed very deep and comprehensive theorising on CA. The conjunction of CA, CAS and the broader consumer research context led to adventuring into fields such as discursive psychology, as well as others described in this chapter. The model depicted in Figure 6.2 encapsulates the diversity and interconnectedness necessary to arrive at such seminal procedures as the constructing of factual accounts. In the case of this study, the factual accounts in question are those concerned with describing the answer to the prompt in the City studies: "Look thirty

years ahead, and suggest what Jason should do to ensure a comfortable financial future".

Establishing the intellectual foundations for a discursive psychology is the main theme of Edwards (1997). "Discursive psychology" is more of a convenient label to contrast with the prevailing perspectives of cultural psychology. It is not an attempt to establish an academic discipline, but it is intended to explore the relationship between discourse and cognition, as the title suggests.

"Professional" psychologists attribute psychological categories — such as motivation, attitude and belief — *before* research is designed and undertaken. Their assumption is that there is a distinction between the researcher (observer) and psychological categories attributed to those being observed. In contrast, the analysis of everyday discourse generally assumes that participants, analysts and readers are all members of an essentially common culture. Edwards (1997) argues for a dissolving of these categories: object and attributers.

> Attributions of agency, intelligence, mental states, and their attendant problems are *in the first place* participants' categories and concerns (manifested in descriptions, accusations, claims, error accounts, membership disputes etc.) just as much as reality, imitation, and authentiCity are. The first analytical task in the study of discourse and cognition is to study those attributions, *before* disputing them (Edwards, 1997:319). (Author's italics)

This theoretical statement brings to mind the practice of conversation analysis, in which "the central goal of conversation analytic research is the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction" (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984:1)

Thus Edwards (1997) is both complementary to Potter (1966) and supportive in that it examines theoretical issues raised by Potter (1996) in greater depth and provides "proof" that CA is working. This work will not be described any further here because arguments from Edwards (1997) will be presented in the discussion in Chapter 7.

The Forestville findings and the discovery of the relevance of the discursive turn to the methodology alerted the researcher to the importance of a further search of cognate disciplines. Two contributions to the discussion in Chapter 7 will be briefly introduced.

The Business of Talk: Organizations in Action (Boden, 1994:215) is devoted solely to arguing and developing the notion that the lifeblood of organisations flows through talk, and talk is the prime "organizing quality of organizations". Its not that Boden (1994) was necessarily the first to use the analytical techniques of CA in organisations. Drew (1992) actually pre-dated her, but she was the first to argue the broader picture. Building on Weick's (1979) work on sensemaking and others, she blends theories of organisation with ethnomethodology and CA (Boden, 1994:2).

In doing so, Boden (1994) argues that the study of the structure of organisations does not take precedence over the study of process (talk). She asserts that sociologists have overemphasised structure, and act as if process is a different social order. "When people talk they are simultaneously and reflexively talking their relationships, their organizations, and whole institutions into action, or into 'being'. Structure is thus realized *as action*" (Boden, 1994:14) (Author's italics). Action and structure are not separate, they enrich each other; they are one. Furthermore — in this interplay between structure and talk, which characterises organisations as people work together on a daily basis — "reality is a seamless web of actions, reactions and inactions" in a continuous stream of social relations taking place in a historical context (Boden, 1994:214).

Boden (1994) is alive with the potential, through analogy, for placing marketing and consumer activities in a fresh light. For example, everyday interaction among consumers may be seen as a constituent feature of the setting of which it is part — say, a shopping centre — which is to say, talk is a prime mover in making sales of specific products and brands happen. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Finally, there is the relationship between CA and ethnography, which emerged from the findings. It was discovered that before the late 1980s ethnographers had shown

little interest in CA for a variety of reasons, even though the focus of ethnography is understanding and explaining how people make sense of their lives. While ethnography is concerned with context, meaning, history and intention, CA provides the technique for "locating culture *in situ"* (Moerman, 1988:xi).

The contribution of Moerman (1988) to this study lies in his use of CA analytical techniques. Overlap is emphasised as a place where social, purposeful and intensely personal meanings meet. Moerman (1988:40) uses the "sequential organization of references to persons for exploring issues of meaning, intention and the nature of the social act". The use of CA in ethnographical studies is outside the research question in this study; however, the finding, discussed in Chapter 7, that CA has the potential for an important contribution to consumer research raises the questions of "How?" and "In what away?". Moerman (1988) suggests some answers.

6.5   Summary

This chapter is a review of literature that was selected to make sense of the findings from the field study and to provide background for the discussion and conclusions in the next chapter. Three issues not already covered in the first literature review or emerging as important were presented. These are:

- a comparison between CA and focus groups;

- a previous call for adopting CA in consumer research; and

- an introduction to the literature on the construction of factual accounts and discursive psychology.

This chapter provides an important backdrop to Chapter 7, which completes the journey back with a discussion of specific findings, the research question, implications and conclusions.

Chapter 7. Discussion and conclusions

7.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss why and in what way the theory that was developed for the field research is different as a result of the research experience. The chapter starts with the empirical findings, develops questions from them, proceeds to a discussion of theory and concludes with a range of implications. To achieve the aim of this chapter, the discussion is presented in four parts:

Section 7.2 is a discussion of the specific findings from the data analysed in Chapter 5. This is presented in three sections:

1. the preliminary research process;

2. the research process in the field; and

3. the consumer connection in the Forestville studies.

Section 7.3 returns to the original research question. The discussion is also presented in three sections:

1. *Conceptualising social constructionism* reviews the research question and the methodology adopted in the light of previous work discussed and the research experience.

2. An alternative research perspective is proposed that emerged from the research experience and the literature it brought to the forefront.

3. *Completing the journey back* presents a conceptual model of the research process achieved.

Section 7.4 discusses the limitations of this study. Section 7.5 reviews implications and directions for future research. These are presented in two sections:

1. the implications for consumer behaviour research of an alternative research perspective; and

2. future directions for research on CAS in consumer behaviour research.

The chapter ends with the section 7.6: Conclusions.

7.2   Discussion of the specific findings

7.2.1/2 The preliminary research process

The preliminary research process was innovatory, with no exact precedent to follow. The process was developed experimentally. First, a model was conceived then operational notes were developed to guide the process. After each session, a review took place that modified the procedure for the following session. This process was iterative and reflexive reflecting the interpretivist view of practical hermeneutics as a technique of understanding that can construct a methodological foundation for enquiry (Schwandt, 2000:194).

The findings showed the outcome of this process. The most important of these are:

- An environment was developed for the City studies that allowed "ordinary" conversation at the same time as EGSS data collection (F.1.2, 1.3, 1.4). The analogy was drawn between the meeting room environment of this study and the classroom environment of Markee's (2000:97) study.

- CA was tested in the field. (F 1.1, 1.4).

- Confirmation of the reflexive process in the Forestville studies (F 2.10) was obtained.

- The process was established as distinctly different from the familiar focus group practice, which was discussed in Chapter 6.

Moerman (1988), an ethnographer, recounts how he became convinced that asking questions and even announcing his professional interest "distorted the native relevancies that it was [his] task to uncover". Mastering CA was "difficult, exacting, time-consuming but intellectually rewarding" (Moerman, 1988:x). Nevertheless, CA was considered by Sacks as being accessible to ordinary people, rather than nominated experts (Silverman, 1998:viii). Indeed, Sacks (1992/2000a:316) emphasised that the machinery of analysis was not omnirelevant.

Now what happens in many cases. It means that you often have to wait for some data to strike you, or to occur in some sequence for you to be able to solve some ongoing problem. Or you may have solutions sitting around to problems that you haven't been able to pose.

Sacks (1992/2000a) never loses sight of the fact that CA is trying to identify a machinery built *in situ* to produce a particular data set.

This study followed closely the original approach to research of Sacks (1992/2000a). The preliminary studies served as an experimental arena for the transcription and of talk-in-interaction using the conventions of CA, while the analytical techniques were adapted from pure CA, as is common in research of applications such as Heritage (1997) and Boden (1994).

The research process in the field

Two aspects of the research in the field are the subject of this discussion: the recording of data and subsequent transcription and analysis using CA, and the observation of the machinery of talk-in-interaction behaving according to the theorised characteristics of a CAS.

The findings showed CA — as a method of data collection, transcription and analysis — to be effective and able to be mastered with due diligence in both the Forestville study (F 2.1 – 2.5) and the City studies (F.3.3). Reflecting upon this experience, the researcher is inclined to believe that the reservations about using CA more widely are over-rated. These reservations are:

- CA requires extensive training (Markee, 2000:50). Sacks' contention that CA is easily accessible was proved.

- CA Requires researcher to transcribe audio tape, which is too time consuming (Myers & Macnaughten, 1999:184): Researchers do need to transcribe data themselves, particularly as initial analysis takes place simultaneously. The time was appropriate for the research task.

- CA requires longer quotations for verification (Myers & Macnaughten, 1999:184). As in all qualitative research, data can emerge in either long or short quotations.

- CA emphasises the discovery of the machinery of interaction by pure CA researchers, which has inhibited, until recently, the exploration of analysing meaning from CA transcripts (Myers & Macnaughten, 1999:185). This is despite that fact that Moerman (1988), Boden (1994), Knorr-Cetina (1999) and others have used CA transcription and analysis for just this purpose. This study confirmed their applied use of CA.

Even more surprising, given the powerful arguments for CA as a new perspective for marketing research (Parker, 1988), is the fact that consumer behaviour researchers have not responded. The reason may be that Parker (1988:240) linked CA with semiotics, which both obscured the power of CA and offered an alternative ("treating texts as systems of signs") but — at the same time — rival method of analysis (Silverman, 2000a:826).

The second aspect from the field that appeared in the findings is the fact that the audio-tape recordings, when transcribed and analysed by CA, clearly show four of the theorised characteristics of a CAS. These are ;
- spontaneity and unpredictability (Forestville F 2.9 and City F 3.1 and 3.2);
- self-organisation (City F 3.4); and
- co-creation (City F 3.4 and 3.5).

This leaves the question of emergence, the fifth theorised characteristic of a CAS. EGSS data entries in the City studies were used in combination with content analysis of conversations to attempt to track emergence. It did appear that some emergence took place (F 4.2), but it hardly justified the effort of setting up the EGSS meeting room to record it. As analysis and reflection on the audio-tapes proceeded the notion grew that emergence was not only happening in the talk-in-interaction, however, but was probably observable and able to be analysed.

Sacks' (1992/2000:316) words "You often have to wait for some data to strike you …" come to mind. The ongoing problem is whether emergence is observable from the talk-in-interaction on the tapes. The solution may lie in a better understanding of emergence itself. It is promising that emergence in complex adaptive systems has

already been described as "patterns, structures, or properties that are exhibited at a macro-level" (Goldstein, 1999a:58).

The solution may also lie in a deeper study of the data waiting for emergence to reveal itself. As Moerman (1988:46) observed "Fixedness on the page and in collections [of data] must not make us forget the *emergent and prospective* character of talk, in which nothing appears until it is said and each utterance can only invite or try to avoid — but never require or guarantee — some next utterance". (italics added)

It could, of course, lie in both approaches, so this is a recommendation for future research.

7.2.3 The consumer connection in the Forestville studies

At first glance, the Forestville data may seem to be lacking in relevance to consumer behaviour research. This is not so and the following section examines the consumer connection of the Forestville studies.

In Forestville tape 5B, data segment 3, the concept being discussed by the group is autonomy. This is a concept that is comparatively new to the workers in the steel rolling mill who, previously, have accepted a culture where individual initiative on the job was not encouraged. Autonomy is an intangible product.

The concept of autonomy — taking responsibility for one's self and making appropriate decisions on the job — is one of the products that the consultant is using to "sell" workplace change to the workers. The concept exists only in the mind until made operational through talk. I, the researcher, do not know nor need to know, how the consultant is attempting to sell this concept to the members of the group. I do know that the consultant's goal is that these factory workers should adopt this concept. By "adoption" I mean internalise, so that the concept becomes one of the beliefs that guide their actions and behaviour in the workplace.

The consultant believes that this process of internalisation is achieved in part through group discussion — talking about things the concept is designed to identify. His rationale is derived from theory and practice in education and organisational

behaviour. The consultant's theory is not directly relevant to this research, which looks at the issue through a different lens.

The lens adopted by this research is defined by the theoretical perspective of ethnomethodology and the data-collection method of conversation analysis. The fundamental insight of ethnomethodology, according to (Boden & Zimmerman, 1991:6) 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 …" Conversation analysis, the study of talk-in-interaction, has achieved a record of academically rigorous, replicable and cumulative research studies (Psathas, 1995a). Thus, ethnomethodology provides a theory of how consumers in interaction create their realities of products, and this is able to be researched with conversation analysis.

The influence of word-of mouth is recognised in marketing textbooks (Kotler et al. 1998:476); however, it is treated superficially. It focuses on the diffusion of ideas, experience and knowledge on the assumption that marketing communications can make use of this process. It does not appear to consider the way in which consumers, through talk-in-interaction, create opinions, beliefs and attitudes about products.

The discussion returns to this Forestville tape with a marketing lens that defines the intangible product that the consultant seeks to sell to his consumers; that is, all those attending the workshop, but specifically for this research, those who were in the project group on the afternoon in February. The tape recording was treated as data. It captured verbatim the interaction process between members, which made the product — the concept of autonomy — real, relevant, able to be talked about and able to be written about. The audio recording freezes this process in time in exactly the same way as, for example, a historical document freezes an event from the past and becomes regarded today as hard evidence for the analysis of the event.

From the analysis of this recording, and others from the Forestville series, the anticipated patterning of turn taking and its many variations, which have been established over the last thirty years by pure researchers in CA, can be observed. The specific goal of this research is something more. It is to see whether within the data

there is another type of patterning, specifically the patterning suggested by the characteristics of CAS.

In this tape, 5B DS3, seven members interact through talk. Four interact regularly, two interact occasionally, and one only interacts by reaction, usually shouting. In terms of CAS theory one may make these statements:

- Four members successfully survived by being open to or adopting the concept of autonomy in the workplace.

- Two members partially survived.

- One member opted out, and did not survive.

The implications for consumer behaviour research are, first, that the analysis of the tape shows members talking about change and actually using the intangible product (autonomy) that the consultant has offered them. One can see the way in which it is used: the local creation of socially constructed reality as a practical achievement: interactionally and collaboratively. Second, one can assert that four members bought the intangible product to the extent that they were willing to engage with it; two members would try it, but one member was unlikely to engage with the concept, nor "buy" this product.

In education marketing, such as the Forestville situation, it is comparatively straightforward to identify the intangible product and the target group. The Forestville research is more than just a specific speech-exchange system. It meets the requirement for rigour in CA research, but owing to the difficulty of access, a clear sense of closure was lacking. Did the groups emerge their thinking into what Kauffman (1995) calls the space of the adjacent possible? That is, a space where all the potentials are materialised. All the other CAS characteristics were present. This one, emergence, is more difficult to observe.

7.3 The research question

The research question was "Can concepts from complex adaptive systems and conversation analysis be used to research consumer behaviour?" Early in the study it

became apparent that, embedded in the research question, there were two major theories: CAS and CA. The empirical work was designed to accept or reject each theory, on the basis of usefulness to consumer research.

This part of the discussion begins with some methodological issues that emerged from the Forestville and the City studies. An important issue is *social constructionism*, located within the constructivist paradigm. The paradigm, epistemology and research methodology are reconsidered and further discussed in the light of the actual research experience. This is followed by a discussion that explores an alternative research perspective that became apparent after the fieldwork.

7.3.1   Conceptualising social constructionism

This discussion responds to the finding that the empirical experience of the Forestville and City studies raised many questions, starting with the theory of the methodology. The paradigm that was proposed initially, not unproblematically, was constructivist. The question that needs to be asked, now that the fieldwork is complete, was "Did the evidence of the research process and the findings support the paradigm?"

A reminder

The implications of a traditional view of a constructivist paradigm initiate this discussion with this quote from Lincoln (1990)

> Constructivism demands that the inquiry be moved out of the laboratory and into natural contexts, where organizational processes create naturally occurring experiments, dictates that methods designed to capture realities holistically, to discern meaning implicit in human activity, and to be congenial to the human-as-instrument be employed.

> Constructivism demands that such methods are typically, though not exclusively, qualitative rather than quantitative; that designs for such inquiries can never be fully articulated until after the inquiry has been declared complete, because the design must emerge as salient issues emerge from research respondents and co-participants; that theory must arise from the data rather than preceding them; and that the method must

be hermeneutic and dialectic, focussing on the social processes of construction, reconstruction , and elaboration, and must be concerned with conflict as well as consensus.

These requirements of the constructivist paradigm have been met by the following:

- The natural context was achieved.
- A method (CA) was adopted to capture the "realities" of talk-in-interaction.
- The way in which members created meaning (the machinery) was recorded and analysed.
- The research design and execution was reflexive and iterative, emerging during the research process.
- The theory that provided the frame for the research process is being reviewed here in Chapter 7.
- The research methods were hermeneutic and dialectic.

The paradigm is now addressed at the levels of ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Ontology and epistemology

A second post-fieldwork methodological question was: "Does the evidence of the research process adopted and of the findings support the theorised epistemological stance?"

As the enquiry's aim was clearly understanding (rather than prediction or control as in positivism), the theorised epistemological stance was constructivism; however, CA claims an epistemological affinity with positivism. The following discussion recounts how these problems were resolved.

In Chapter 3, it was recognised that this study does not fall exclusively into the "transactional/subjectivist" epistemology of the traditional constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The loss of the transactional/subjective might invoke assumptions of realist representation: the belief that knowledge represents the world as it is. One of the ways that social constructionist epistemologies try to "overcome"

representational assumptions is by claiming that in everyday constructivism we proactively construct knowledge, rather than passively finding it (Schwandt, 2000:197). The primary data in this study, the talk-in-interaction, was captured by tape recordings that appeared, at the time, to be knowledge that belonged more to the epistemology of positivism than to constructivism. This paradox was subsequently overcome by the argument that social constructionism and the discoveries of the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) were a theoretical bridge between CA and CAS.

An interpretation of the findings of this study, supported by the additional theoretical reading reviewed in Chapter 6 allows a discussion on the epistemology that is believed to be both more mature, more complete and far more challenging than the position set out in Chapter 3.

The classic contemporary advocates of a social constructionist epistemology were revisited. These were Gergen (1994), Giddens (1984), Denzin (1997), and Schwandt (2000). Additionally the advocates of philosophical hermeneutics as a perspective for consumer research (Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson et al., 1989; Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994) and ethnography (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994) were searched for their ability to accommodate the apparent positivist nature of knowledge collected by CA. All had many ideas in common. None could account for the nature of the understanding that CA produced.

What was required was an explication of constructionism in the tradition of ethnomethodology and CA; however, it was pointed out earlier that Sacks (1992/2000a) was concerned more with practise than theory, and his successors concentrated on methodological issues caused by the analysis of CA transcripts (Have, 2000; Lynch & Bogen, 1994). For example, Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) provide and illustrate a set of tools to analyse the understandings ("sense making practices") that are relevant for participants. Only comparatively recently have scholars consolidated a comprehensive argument for a social constructionism based on the theoretical traditions of ethnomethodology and CA.

Starting with the point that the sciences are a "cultural-discursive practice" Edwards (1997:47) draws a distinction between ways in which social construction may be used: he terms one way *ontological*, the other way *epistemic*. Both are relativist (i.e. the denial that there are certain kinds of universal truth), so Edwards (1997) is looking for the shades of difference.

Ontological social construction, also known as *perspectivism*, is depicted as the ordinary constructionism in which "all knowledge claims and their evaluation take place within a conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained" (Schwandt, 2000:197). Many cultural psychologists overcome the problem by socially constructing the mind ontologically. The mind "is constructed through the internalization of actions. In other words, mind is real for the theorist and analyst, and the analytical task is to explain how it is built within a real world of cultural settings and practice" (Edwards, 1997:47-48).

A good example in consumer research is Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) who put the case for a modernist market-oriented ethnography. They assume an external and stable social reality which, through appropriate methods of data collection, can be recorded by participant observation and verbal reports. They argue, implicitly, that multiple sources of data are indicators of how this stable reality is constructed, while the researcher assembles them into a text that reorders reality according to the logic that shows "patterns of action that are social rather than cognitive" (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994:485) This sounds very close to mundane reasoning as a method of sense-making (Pollner, 1974) as introduced in Chapter 6.

In contrast to ontological constructionism, epistemic constructionism is more radical. Discourse is given priority. "Mind and reality are treated analytically, as discourse's topic —the stuff that talk is about — and the analytical task is to examine how participants *descriptively* construct them" (Edwards, 1997:48). (author's italics) In other words, cognitive categories are treated as discursive ones, and the study of cognition is what members deal with and make relevant during talk-in-interaction. Table 7.1 models the two types of contemporary social constructionism.

Table 7.1:   The continuum of relativism

Ontological constructionism	Epistemic constructionism
More realist ⟵————————————⟶ More relativist	
"Social theorists should concern themselves with ontological matters" (Shotter, 1993:34)	"The ontological question of being is reformulated in terms of our knowledge of being".
The many voices heard in the field setting are indicators of the construction of a stable reality. The researcher mediates these voices and assembles them into a text that reorders reality (Denzin, 1997:31)	"There are no ontological guarantees, no non-epistemic, non-social, non-constructionist ways of underwriting knowledge claims…no irrefutable, just-so, non-descriptive description of reality"
People live in two worlds: the mental world which is managed by discourse and the physical world which is managed by hands and brains (Harré & Gillett, 1994:101).	There are no other ways of describing reality apart from social practices. (Edwards, 1997:52)

(Source: adapted from Edwards (1997: 52–4).

Constructionist research in general, according to Potter (1996:205), seldom addresses the topic of "the process of construction *per se*". The procedures through which descriptions are constructed as factual is the focus of his book. The starting point is the descriptions used by people to perform actions. This perspective treats "epistemological orientation of accounts as *itself* a form of action; it is something built by speakers and writers … This quality is a *constructed* element to descriptions rather than something they either possess or not". The study of the epistemology arising from accounts of discourse is the study of a building process. (Potter, 1996:108) (author's italics)

Potter (1996:98) argues that the world is "not ready categorized by God or nature in ways that we are all forced to accept. It is constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it". Social constructionism is not, for Potter an ontological doctrine at all. He is primarily concerned, in the CA tradition, with "how it is that a descriptive utterance is socially (i.e. interactionally) made to appear stable, factual,

neutral, independent of the speaker, and merely mirroring some aspect of the world" (Schwandt, 2000:197).

Thus, both Edwards (1997) and Potter (1996) have no interest in an ontology of the real. They ground their views on a critique of representationalism. Curiously, a similar critique was made about management researchers (Tsoukas, 1998). No consumer researcher has apparently addressed this issue.

Methodology

The third post-fieldwork question in this discussion of the paradigm concerned methodology. A hermeneutic and dialectic methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:109) was adopted for this study. What was particularly evident during the course of this study was the recurrence of an approach which was labelled "both–and" thinking. This both–and perspective straddled the traditional polarity of paradigms that represent positivism on the one hand and constructivism on the other. It set up a hermeneutic dialogue between positivism and constructivism that is illustrated in Figure 7.1.
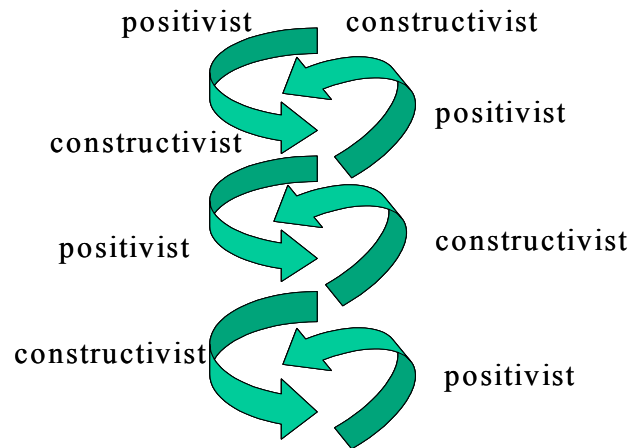
Figure 7.1: The hermeneutic dialogue

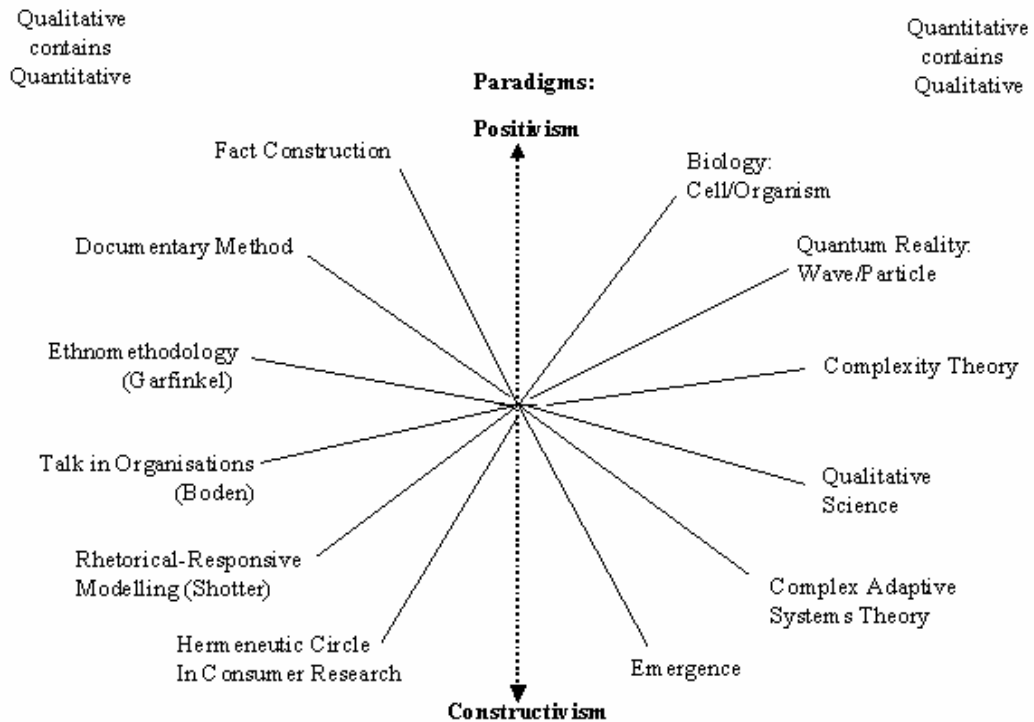To illustrate both-and-thinking, Figure 7.2 maps the occurrences that were encountered.

Qualitative
contains
Quantitative

Quantitative
contains
Qualitative

Paradigms:

Positivism

Fact Construction

Biology:
Cell/Organism

Documentary Method

Quantum Reality:
Wave/Particle

Ethnomethodology
(Garfinkel)

Complexity Theory

Talk in Organisations
(Boden)

Qualitative
Science

Rhetorical-Responsive
Modelling (Shotter)

Complex Adaptive
Systems Theory

Hermeneutic Circle
In Consumer Research

Emergence

Constructivism

Figure7.2:   The ubiquity of both–and thinking

Every reference on this map is committed to both–and thinking, and it is not suggested that in practice any reference is totally positivist or totally constructivist as suggested by traditional presentations of paradigms such as (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study joins the ranks of those "practitioners of new-paradigm inquiry [that is] growing daily" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:164), rather than those following traditionally separatist paradigms.

In this model (Figure 7.2) the sources of both–and thinking are grouped approximately as they range from a positivist standpoint to a constructivist one. On the left are those that are qualitative but recognise that we live in a quantitative world that is factually constructed. On the right there are those which are quantitative but recognise that we live in a world that is socially constructed.

The evidence of both–and thinking encountered in this study are noted below with a single illustrative acknowledgement for each.

- Biology: Cell $\longleftrightarrow$ Organism. Goodwin (1997) argues that biology has suffered by concentrating research on the cell at the expense of the organism.

- Quantum reality: Wave $\longleftrightarrow$ Particle. Quantum physics has shown that although we can never focus on both wave and particle at once, both are necessary for a complete picture of reality (Zohar, 1991).

- Complexity theory. The concept of complexity remains elusive at both the qualitative and quantitative level. Complexity shows itself at the level of the system itself, and there are no levels below or above (Cilliers, 1998)

- Complex adaptive systems (CAS). "We may find regularities, predict that similar regularities will occur elsewhere, discover that the prediction is confirmed, and thus identify a robust pattern: however it may be a pattern for which the explanation eludes us. In such a case we speak of an 'empirical' or 'phenomenological' theory, using fancy words to mean basically that we see what is going on but do not yet understand it." (Gell-Mann, 1995:93)

- Qualitative science. Physical reality is well tested. There is no substantive account of social reality. To find out about social reality methodology is more important than findings; process is more important than content. (Checkland, 1984/1999:285)

- Emergence. When the dynamics of a complex system cannot be explained by the parts of the system, a new, higher *emergent* level of explanation is sought. CAS is "developing the necessary tools, methods, and *constructs* that render the process of emergence less opaque" (Goldstein, 1999a:58)

- Hermeneutic circle. This is has been described as a "sort of intellectual perpetual motion" in which continuous dialectic (testing of the truth) is accomplished by oscillating between local detail and the big picture, which brings both into view simultaneously. (Schwandt, 2000:193)

- Hermeneutic circle used by consumer researchers. Thompson et al. (1994) make the hermeneutic circle operational in a methodology that uses intertextual interpretations to gain insights into the cultural viewpoints that underlie meanings expressed by consumers.

- Rhetorical–responsive modelling. Intertextuality (the fact that we draw on already formulated meaning to make meaning) is the essence of Shotter's (1993a) rhetorical-responsive model which was introduced in Chapter 3.

- Structure ⟵⟶ Process. "Talk is not 'micro' nor are organizations 'macro'… Reality is a seamless web of actions, reactions and inactions...all actions are embedded in a continuous stream of social relationships" (Boden, 1994:214)

- Ethnomethodology. Common understanding is a complex process of negotiation between speaker and hearer, between what has been said and what is being said at the moment, between assumptions about the present context and waiting to see what will be said. It's a back-and-forth process. (Garfinkel, 1967/1999: 36/40)

- Documentary method. Garfinkel (1967/1999:78) claims that all people in their daily lives use a "documentary method of interpretation". This is a "circular process continually taking place where a particular utterance is seen as evidence of an underlying pattern, and in turn, the fact that the utterance is a part of this underlying pattern is used to make sense of it " (Potter, 1996:49)

- Construction of factual accounts. Theory ⟵⟶ CA Method. Conversation analysis makes operational the basic concepts of ethnomethodology. It tries to convert theoretical issues of fact and description into the transcription of what was actually said for analysis as the machinery of interaction that took place on a specific occasion. (Potter, 1996:66).

In summary, this evidence of both–and thinking challenges paradigmatic orthodoxy. At the same time it emphasises the central role of the hermeneutic process in qualitative research. This role is particularly emphasised in this study that combines CAS theories from qualitative science (Checkland, 1984/1999) with the research perspective of ethnomethodologyy with its goal of capturing mundane social action through CA.

7.3.2 An alternative research perspective for consumer research

The research experience revealed the power of CA to analyse the details of how talk-in-interaction is managed. This contrasted with the methods being used to understand

certain aspects of consumer behaviour such as textual interpretation (Arnold & Fischer, 1994), phenomenological interviewing (Thompson et al., 1994) and ethnography (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994).

There is a research perspective available, hitherto unrecognised among consumer researchers, that will allow the appropriate application of CA by consumer researchers. This research perspective has been brought together under the theoretical tenets of discursive psychology.

The dawning realisation during fieldwork that the search for evidence of a CAS lay partially in the process of CA led to the literature search being cast forward in time from the practicalities of data collection to contemporary interpretations of what was really happening. It was clear from the outset that CA was different from traditional data-collection methods such as interviewing and surveys by questionnaire. It was also different from the more recent interpretive perspectives, reviewed in Chapter 2, that were being adopted by consumer researchers such as the phenomenological interview (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). The differences in the literature of CA tend to focus on the methods of application, which are governed by the conventions of rigour established by the CA academic community and set out here in Chapter 3. None of this previous literature seemed capable of explaining what was going on except in a strictly material sense as is reported in the findings. The breakthrough came with the discovery of discursive psychology.

The "discovery" of discursive psychology in this study

Discursive psychology is used as an example of thinking that has proven to be "outside the box" of traditional consumer research. Several research perspectives support the conclusion that establishment thinking has been restrictive in this study of CA and CAS. The perspective of discursive psychology does not stand alone. Over the last two decades, a variety of scholars, many of whom have been quoted in this study, have contributed their evolving ideas towards this perspective. Discursive psychology is used here as the most recent and complete presentation of their ideas.

The "discovery" of discursive psychology as an expression of a research perspective was a struggle. The struggle existed because the accepted way of tackling research is

to start with the body of knowledge known in a field and gained through a review of literature then build on it. It was subsequently discovered that this "traditional" approach to qualitative social research — adopted on the "journey out" in this study and exemplified by Ragin (1994) — is essentially cognitive, in that it is assumed from the outset that words and ideas represent the world in some way (Edwards, 1997; Tsoukas, 1998). The struggle is described in the justification that follows.

The existence of the case for a discursive psychology came to the fore during the wider reading for the post-findings literature review, with the intention of pursuing further the problematic notions of representation and reality. This intention was well rewarded by Potter (1996) with the bonus from his colleague Edwards (1997) of a closely argued and well documented case for a discursive psychology expanding the work of Harré and Gillett (1994) and Harré and Stearns (1995). Their theories have been briefly summarised in Chapter 6.

At this point, the review of consumer behaviour research perspectives by Marsden and Littler (1998) was revisited. They identified five current research perspectives, which are summarised here:

1. *The cognitive perspective,* in which "the study of consumer behaviour basically becomes the investigation of consumers' information processing mechanisms", leads to "elaborate computer flow diagrams depicting the different stages in the decision making process" (Marsden & Littler, 1996). Although this perspective assumes that consumers are complex, rational decision makers, it is the dominant perspective in consumer research.

2. *The behavioural perspective***,** based on experimental psychology, assumes the human mind is not a source of data, and uses the statistical relations between external stimuli as the subject matter of a psychological science (Harré & Gillett, 1994:16).

3. *The trait theory perspective* focuses on personality characteristics, which are the data for personality inventories to be analysed by statistical techniques for identifying psychographic lifestyles, market segments and consumer decision making. (Marsden and Littler, 1997:8).This perspective is also *cognitivist* and has an emphasis on positivist techniques.

4. *The interpretative perspective* "draws its inspiration from the humanistic and phenomenological movements in the social sciences … [and] is concerned with understanding consumer behaviour at the individual level within the realm of consumers' subjective consciousness and meaning systems ..." (Marsden and Littler, 1997:9).

5. *The postmodern perspective* emerged in the late 1980s and, along with the interpretative paradigm, provides the predominant form of criticism of the first three perspectives. The postmodern perspective is based on a philosophy that:

   (a) rejects a "pre-given subject" (e.g. the cognitive consumer, the interpretative consumer);

   (b) is sceptical about rational methods of inquiry and "grand narrative" (e.g. quantitative, qualitative); and

   (c) denies that consumer behaviour can be objectively known.

   "The main concern of postmodern inquiry is to explore how consumers are constituted by different discourses ... and to examine the emergence, form and transition of different 'regimes of truth' in consumer behaviour research." (Marsden & Littler, 1998:7).

In the pre-findings literature review (Chapter 2), postmodernism was explored together with the literature on the interpretive turn in consumer research (Sherry, 1991). *Nowhere is there a mention of a research perspective based on the approach of discursive psychology*. This is surprising, for in the Marsden and Littler' (1998) account quoted above, basic characteristics of postmodernism are identified and the centrality of discourse noted. On the other hand, it may not be so surprising as "too often consumer research … relies on past research as a precedent, rather than looking outside the laboratory" (Kover, 1995:605). The consumer researchers who have pursued postmodernism have tried either to describe (and even measure) its characteristics (Firat & Shultz, 2001) or have adopted a literary approach to discourse (Brown, 1998; Holbrook, 1999). Similarly, consumer researchers applying innovatory interpretivist approaches (reviewed in section 2.3) are seen to adopt the postmodern

perspectives referred to above, but no one breaks the boundary into an alternative approach such as that adopted by discursive psychology.

One might expect the literature of qualitative research methods to introduce the foundational theories on which discursive psychology rests. After all, behaviourism is supported by the positivist paradigm, cognitivism by the post-positivist paradigm and interpretivism by the constructivist paradigm. In the first edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, major contributors — such as Guba (1994) on paradigms in qualitative research and Schwandt (1994) on constructivism and interpretivism do not — introduce the foundation theories on which discursive psychology rests. It took a search into the context of cultural studies (Fiske, 1994) to uncover one of the basic notions of a discursive psychology. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> The structure of language, [in systematic models of structure as opposed to positivist models], has a mutually informing relationship with the utterances that are its practices. The system is produced, in part, at least, by its practices, as the practices are produced in part, at least, by the system. Systems and practices both structure each other. And are structured by each other; structuration is a two-way process, though not an equal one. Because positivism does not theorize structures in relationship to practice, it does not have a theory of either how they change or how they can act as agents of change" (Fiske, 1994:195).

Lincoln and Guba's (2000) *Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences* did not revise their treatment of constructivism that cited hermeneutic and dialectic as the sole methodologies. Schwandt (2000) on the other hand has revised his account of the three epistemological stances of qualitative inquiry to include Potter's (1996) work on representation as an exemplar. He writes:

> Potter's (1996) recent work explicating constructionism in the tradition of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis [is grounded in] a critique of representational theory in language (Schwandt, 2000:197).

Developing the theory of the research methodology for Chapter 3 led to deeper readings on the sociology of scientific knowledge and Shotter's rhetorical-responsive version of social constructionism (Shotter, 1993a; Shotter, 1993b). *The notion of a discursive psychology as a discipline does not appear in any of this literature.* This is surprising because the sources upon which Shotter builds his argument (for example Harré (1983) and Vygotsky (1934/62), Lynch (1993) and Rorty (1991) address similar issues but focus on a theory of individual psychology. Shotter (1993:10) himself sets out to "reground the academic discipline of psychology within the formative social activities at work in the everyday, conversational background of our lives".

It was against this background of deep reading that the theory of the methodology was developed and field work carried out. The nature of a discursive psychology and the implications of this discovery for consumer research are discussed below.

7.3.3   Completing the journey back

The conceptual model in Figure 7.3, serves both as an summation of the research process and as an illustration of the finding that really overrides all others.

	Theory	Research Question	Theoretical Perspective	Data Collection
Consumer Research Majority View	Scientific Method	Behaviour Cognition	Positivism/ Post-positivism	Interview Observation
		The Journey Out		⟶
Tentative Research Ideas	*CAS*	"Can *CAS* be be used to research consumer behaviour?"	Ethnomethodology	Conversation Analysis

Field   Research

Discursive Psychology ⟵ Fact Construction ⟵ Conversation Analysis ⟵
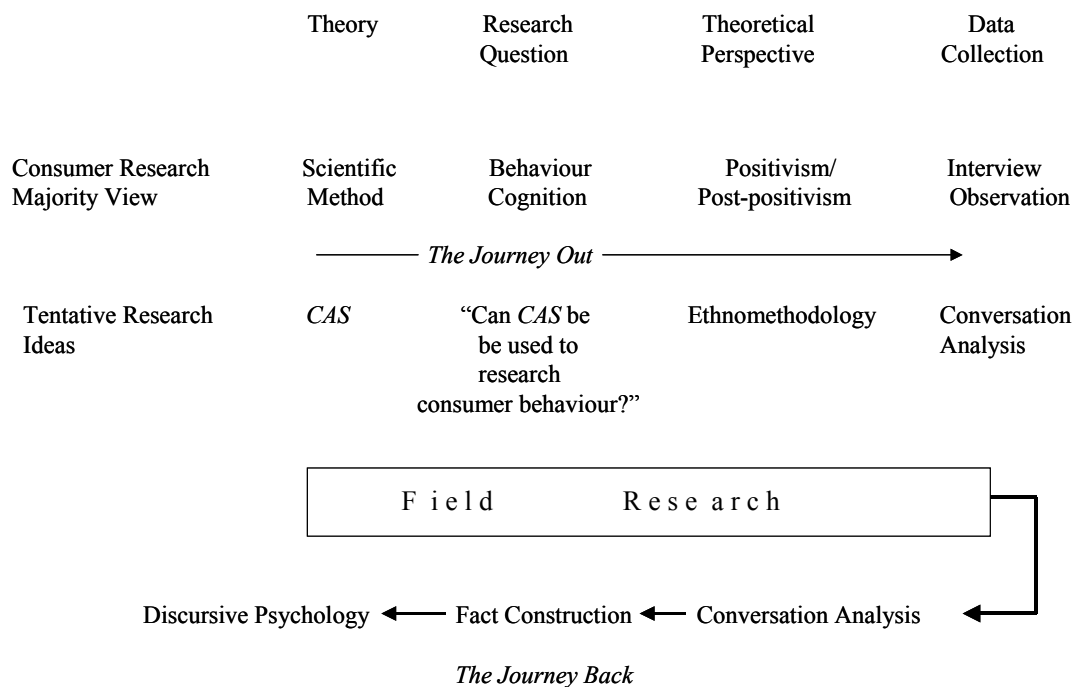
The Journey Back

Figure 7.3: A conceptual model of the research process

The research set out to determine whether CAS could be used in consumer behaviour research. As the CAS to be researched was defined as a group discussing a product, ethnomethodology was chosen for the research perspective because its focuses on the construction of mundane sense through talk-in-interaction. CA was the obvious data-collection method, with the added attraction that it seeks to observe objectified sense-making as found in the sciences.

These tentative ideas dominated the journey out. The conceptual model compares the tentative ideas with the majority view in academic consumer research.

During the fieldwork and after the findings the discovery was made of the literature of discursive psychology, which does not appear in the mainstream literature of ethnomethodology and CA. Pursuing this discovery became the goal of the second literature review. It became apparent that the theoretical underpinning of discursive psychology would appear to provide a robust platform for any future research on CAS in consumer behaviour. This theoretical underpinning should certainly provide the necessary justification for adopting CA as an alternative perspective for consumer behaviour research.

7.4   Limitations of the study

This study contains substantial limitations when viewed from the security of the positivist or post-positivist perspectives that are the foundational base of conventional methodologies in consumer behaviour research. The research question challenged these methodologies by initially adopting a research perspective that is typical of sociology (Silverman, 2000b). The critical discussion that follows sets out to identify and discuss the perceived limitations of this study.

7.4.1   External limitations

- CAS is in a pre-paradigmatic state for use in business research, so there was no precedent or previous research procedure on which to build. Compared with quantitative research, this qualitative study contains a far higher proportion of process findings to outcome findings, which may be seen as a limitation; however,

qualitative research theorists do consider that this is to be expected when the aim is to advance theory (Ragin, 1994; Silverman, 2000b).

- CAS theory itself is under constant development, and there does not exist, among complexity scientists, a universally agreed definition of characteristics. This was stressed in Chapter 4. The limitation is that the theorised characteristics are likely to be adjusted as knowledge develops and moves towards a consensus. Nevertheless, this study takes the first step in attempting to research them.

- The complexity of scientific definitions of the theorised characteristics of a CAS, such as emergence, places a heavy responsibility on researcher and reader to constantly remember that a single word — such as *emergence* — has a specific definition and is inexorably linked to other characteristics and above all to the whole CAS itself. This raises the fundamental difficulty of qualitative research, where the process of data collection and analysis can never be described in its totality. The thesis does attempt to present a balance between the act of observation and the act of communication.

- The conjunction of CA with CAS to understand consumer behaviour better is a pioneering concept. There was nothing to build on in the consumer behaviour literature. This study forms the first element in the development of a substantive theory of how consumers actually construct their realities from talk-in-interaction.

- The fact that CA is not yet being used in consumer behaviour research is an external limitation. If other researchers had taken up Parker's (1988) call for engaging outside the orthodox discipline of consumer behaviour then discursive psychology could undoubtedly have been discovered earlier and used as a foundational base for substantive theory.

7.4.2   Internal limitations

- Sacks (1984) claimed that CA provided empirical evidence of the machinery of talk-in-interaction. This is certainly true in comparison with data collected by conventional interviewing techniques; however, it is apparent that while CA gets closer to "empirical" data capture, it is not a science as Sacks claimed.

- Physical data capture equipment places a perennial limitation on CA researchers. In this study accurate audio tapes were obtained for the Forestville and City

sessions, but there were other physical limitations First, there was no secondary check, such as video tape, which might have amplified the interpretation of the construction of talk with visual evidence. Second, overlap could not always be transcribed.

- CA suffers — although, it was argued, less than other qualitative data-collection methods — from the problem of "other minds" in interpretation. Hopefully the problem was minimised in this study. The researcher distanced himself from the members. on the one hand. but had the ability and cultural compatibility necessary for the interpretation of the transcripts.

- The meeting room in the City studies is seen as a limitation. It was argued that "natural" conversation was achieved, and certainly the meeting room sessions were not tainted by intervention practices such as those employed in focus groups or conventional EGSS meetings. The data from Forestville, however, proved to make a substantial contribution to both process and empirical findings. It may be said that the Forestville data was totally natural and revealed the anticipated characteristics of organisational speech-exchange systems.

- The original plan to use EGSS technology, which looked promising in theory, proved to be less successful, as was discussed in finding 1.3.

Some of these limitations were foreseen. For example, the difficulty of creating a situation for natural talk in the meeting room led to progressive adjustments to the procedures to get closer to this ideal. Some limitations were mitigated. For example, the absence of a concrete definition of a CAS demanded extensive reading to reach a consensus definition based on the literature, and some limitations are recognised as being inherent in qualitative research itself. Despite the limitations, the evidence for a consumer group as a CAS defined by the theorised characteristics was convincing.

7.5   Implications and directions for future research

7.5.1   Contribution to the existing body of knowledge on consumer research

A major contribution of this study to the existing traditional, well-researched issues in consumer behaviour research is that it 'opens new doors' and presents hitherto unexplored disciplines for attention by future consumer behaviour researchers.

It is proposed that the construction of factual accounts presents an alternative to mental models as a starting point in certain areas of consumer behaviour research.

One of the most important implications of the idea that discursive psychology has a place in consumer research is the alternative it offers to a particular way of thinking. The traditional way of thinking was reviewed earlier in this study. In summary, consumer research is generally acculturated to adopt a cognitivist perspective (Harré, 1983). This is not necessarily in the limited sense of assuming that the human mind is an information processing unit (Marsden & Littler, 1998) but in the broader sense that research methodology, both quantitative (Sekaran, 1992:63) and qualitative (Ragin, 1994:57), starts with the mental-model concept. As Senge (1992:5) points out: "The problems with mental models arise when the models are tacit — when they exist below the level of awareness". A second problem is where, in general, mental models are used as a starting point for research.

The literature supports the idea that many consumer researchers take mental models of scientific activity for granted as a starting point for their research. They adopt the "modernist perspective of privileging theory as prior to action" (Griffin et al., 1998:323). This approach, this starting point, this assumption of a measurable external reality beyond the mental model has served society, business and consumer research well, providing the stream of factual information on which marketing decisions are made. This approach, exemplified by cognitivism in consumer research (Marsden & Littler, 1998:7), is less appropriate, however, for those aspects of consumer research that seek knowledge of how consumers construct local *understanding*.

Consumer behaviour and communication models, such as the Schramm communications model (Pickton & Broderick, 2001) and the AIDA model (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:48; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999), reviewed in Chapter 2, serve as examples of mental models. These mental models, which *provide a starting point for field research*, are based on the questionable *implicit* assumption that researchers and consumers share the same mundane reasoning. (Pollner, 1974; Zimmerman & Pollner, 1970). They assume that the researcher and the consumer being researched have similar experience of an objective world and more or less identical ways of seeing it.

For example, Edwards (1997) commenting on the traditional methods of collecting data through questionnaires, expresses the assumption of mundane reasoning succinctly: "we [researchers] more or less know how people talk, such that we can blithely invent examples of it and analyse those".

The use of discursive psychology would mean abandoning the convention of mental model *as a starting point* for research. The approach of discursive psychology is emergent in nature. It starts with the study of consumers to see how they construct local understanding on which they base their decision making or their perceptions of communications. The insistence on literal transcription is what makes this approach totally different from the cognitivist approach in consumer research and from interpretivist approaches such as market-oriented ethnography (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994). The discursive approach is known as "fact construction" or "the construction of factual accounts". This is a study of the basic procedures through which ordinary people build the factuality of descriptions and how these descriptions are involved in actions (Potter, 1996:1)

Studying the literature and arguments for an alternative research perspective (in this case discursive psychology) produces a strong sense of déjà vu. Garfinkel (1996) insisted that ethnomethodology was not a subset of the prevailing discipline of sociology. He argued, torturously at times, that ethnomethodology was an alternative way of doing sociology. The same could be said for the discursive approach to consumer behaviour research. Garfinkel (1966) wrote:

> Ethnomethodology's fundamental phenomenon … is to find, collect, specify, and make inscrutably observable the local endogenous production and natural accountability of immortal familiar society's most ordinary organizational things in the world, *and to provide for them both and simultaneously as objects and procedurally, as alternate methodologies*. (Garfinkel, 1996:6) (Author's italics)

It is significant that Potter (1996:43) focuses on three ethnomethodological concepts (indexicality, reflexivity and the documentary method of interpretation) that "are pivotal to [the] radically different understanding of the nature of facts". It is proposed

here that discursive psychology — a term adopted to embrace the approach to research that starts with the construction of factual accounts — offers an alternative way of doing research, which is particularly appropriate for that part of consumer research that is concerned with understanding individual consumer behaviour. Figure 7.4 contrasts the starting point of conventional research methodologies, both in psychology and consumer behaviour research, with the starting point of discursive psychology.
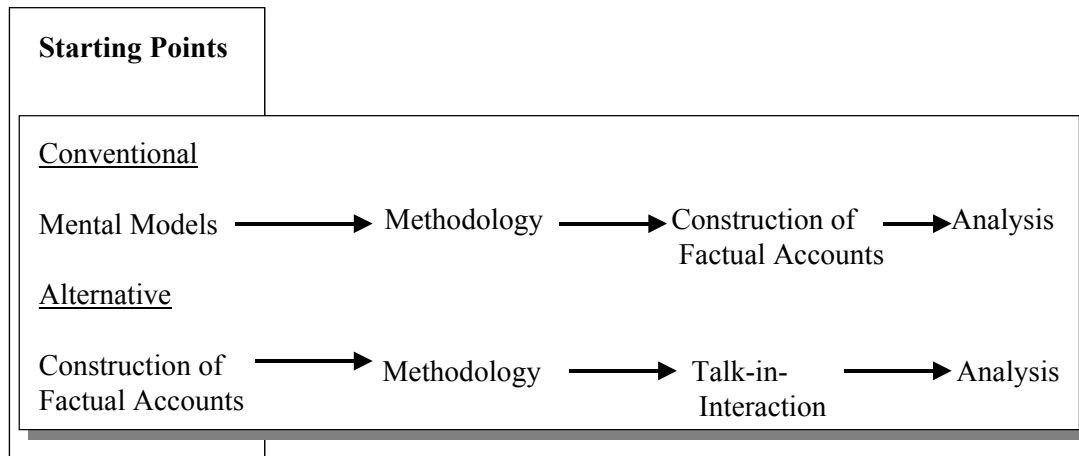
Starting Points

Conventional

Mental Models $\longrightarrow$ Methodology $\longrightarrow$ Construction of $\longrightarrow$ Analysis
Factual Accounts

Alternative

Construction of $\longrightarrow$ Methodology $\longrightarrow$ Talk-in- $\longrightarrow$ Analysis
Factual Accounts   Interaction

Figure 7.4: Discursive psychology as an alternate starting point for consumer behaviour research

Applications to academic consumer behaviour research

The discursive turn is conceptualised within the postmodern framework that affected the social sciences from the 1980s:

> The very assumption of academic disciplines — built around circumscribed or natural classes of phenomena, requiring specialized methods of study, and privileging their own logics and ontologies — has been thrown into critical relief. As many believe, this general ferment forms the basis for the *postmodern turn* in the scholarly world" (Gergen, 1994:44).

Consumer research has had it's interpretive turn from the early 1990s (Sherry, 1991). It has flourished since. Could it be time for a discursive turn to complement the interpretive turn?

The theoretical struggle and the reflections from the empirical fieldwork have built a sense of confidence in suggesting, not only that discursive psychology is a valuable approach for consumer research, but that it has practical applications.

The research approach of discursive psychology and the construction of factual accounts has the potential for application in academic consumer research in a wide variety of ways. Four particular areas for application are selected for illustration.

Advertising and marketing communications research

The AIDA and hierarchy-of-effects models have dominated the literature on how advertising works for a century (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999:26). The Schramm model of communication is the starting point for the understanding of marketing communications (Pickton & Broderick, 2001:13). An analysis of the shared worlds of reality evident in the literature leads one to assume that both the AIDA and Schramm models are examples of their own mundane reasoning in action.

A practical example appears in the work of Kover (1995, 1996). He contrasts the implicit communications model of academic advertising research with the model used by copywriter practitioners (Kover, 1996:3). The researchers' mundane reasoning can clearly be seen to be different from copywriters' mundane reasoning in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2:   Advertising models compared. Based on Kover (1996)

Advertising research model	Copywriter's model
Recall of advertisement	
Communication by showing participants 'concept' statements	Active watching
Belief change questionnaire	Emotional transfer
Attitude change questionnaire	

The purpose of Kover's (1995;1996) research was to surface the difference between implicit theories of communication (expressed in this study as mundane reasoning) used by advertising researchers and by copywriters. He proposes changes to advertising research "and by extension all consumer research" to bring the practice of research closer to behaviour in the market place *as understood by copywriters*. This is an example of classic mundane reasoning. Both advertising researchers and copywriters assume a world that is objectively present and which others experience in more or less identical ways (Pollner, 1974:139).

Kover's research, however, showed that "Copywriters don't like advertising research" (Kover, 1996). This suggests that, in practice, they each have a world of their own mundane reasoning. Copywriters believe that their mundane reasoning is closer to consumers' mundane reasoning than advertising researchers' mundane reasoning. Therefore, implies Kover (1996), advertising researchers should adopt copywriters' mundane reasoning; however, neither copywriters nor advertising researchers consider the consumers' everyday world of mundane reasoning as different from their own.

Advertising and communications offer a vast field of research potential that would seem to be a natural place for scholars to conduct research based on the perspective of discursive psychology, particularly as practitioners claim that — despite all their research endeavours since the 1930s — they do not really know how advertising works (Biel, 1996).

Interpersonal influences

Interpersonal influences are regarded as a key factor in many marketing applications, but research continues to adopt a cognitive and often quantitative approach. For example Lascu and Zinkhan (1999) writing on *Consumer Conformity: Review and Applications for Marketing Theory and Practice* propose a conformity model derived from previous literature and suggest future research using self-report questionnaires to measure conforming behaviour, a laboratory test or researching conformity-prone consumer segments *that their model identifies*.

The intention of the research by Lascu and Zinkhan (1999) and the research question implied could very easily be investigated from the discursive perspective. The major

difference from their published proposal would be the collection of data in a natural situation analysed through "unmotivated looking", which would require two skills: the adoption of the appropriate mindset from the outset and a disregard of the previous literature until after data analysis when it would be appropriate to make comparisons.

Word-of-mouth

Another promising area for applying the discursive methodology in consumer research is word-of-mouth (WOM). Currently, WOM research is an area dominated by hypothetico-deductive methods (Sekaran, 1992) and cognitivism. For example, Duham et al. (1997) *Influences on Consumer Use of Word-of-Mouth Recommendation Sources* is a case in point. Their choice of method is "the development and testing of a theoretical model of the initial stages of recommendation-based decision making by consumers" (Duham et al., 1997:293). Even though these authors are wedded to a "scientific" methodology, there is room for the more emergent discursive methodologies to be tried.

Culture and the movement of meaning

McCracken (1988), reviewed in Chapter 2, saw the movement of meaning from the culturally constituted world to the individual consumer as a system. Many consumer behaviour researchers have followed the McCracken model to research parts of the system. No researcher has attempted to examine the whole system, which would appear to be a CAS with the potential to be researched, especially as McCracken sees meaning as constantly emerging.

Consumer behaviour researchers continue to search for meaning and methodologies have become more sophisticated since 1988. For example, ethnographic methods have been enlisted "for apprehending a wide variety of consumption and use situations" (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994:484). Discourse is regarded as playing a central role in mediating between culture and personalised consumption meanings (Thompson & Haytko, 1997:17).

The Thompson and Haytko (1997) methodology of phenomenological interviewing followed by a hermeneutic process of interpretation seems to foreshadow the discursive analytic perspective but stops short of adopting it. As the primary focus of

this study was on the possibility of using CA to detect the operation of CAS in a small group, it has not been possible to look far into the researching of consumer culture. Nevertheless, there would appear to be the opportunity for research on meaning, which is complementary to the research methods being used by those following McCracken's lead. The following section discusses this opportunity.

Conversation analysis: applications for academic consumer behaviour research

While the previous section has proposed the adoption of a discursive turn; that is, an alternative research perspective for consumer behaviour research, this section proposes further research on interpreting the data from CA fieldwork.

The review of published consumer behaviour research in Chapter 2 revealed that researchers implicitly adopt classic attribution theory. In other words, it is assumed that data, in the form of verbal descriptions of events, shows how customers explain their actions and events to themselves. The data are subsequently interpreted according to the researcher's social and cognitive models.

Recognising that language is a part of method, rather than theory, linguistic researchers turned to their attention to this problem from the 1980s. As Edwards and Potter (1995:87) write:

> These studies make the important point that language is by no means a transparent or neutral system for conveying information; rather, the words that people use to describe simple, everyday actions and states carry with them powerful implications for the causal explanations of those events.

It is proposed (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1995) that causal attributions can fruitfully be studied as social acts performed in talk-in-interaction rather than theorised cognitions of social acts. This approach suggests a whole new area for consumer behaviour research which could illuminate the substantial gap in our knowledge of how consumers *organise* the construction of factual accounts, which this study demonstrates, to what consumers actually *mean*.

Conversation analysis: applications for practitioner consumer behaviour research

Clearly conversation analysis is appropriate in any situation where it is important to understand how consumers actually create their understanding of products through talk-in-interaction. In other words in "verbal interactions which occur in spontaneous consumer behavior, in focus groups, in seller-buyer contacts, and in many marketing communications" (Parker, 1988:216).

In the literature review (Chapter 2) practical applications were identified for service encounters (Lamoureux, 1985) and telefundraising (Simmel, 1999). In Chapter 6, attention was drawn to the work of Myers and Macnaughten (1999) in adapting conversation analysis to focus groups.

Conversation analysis is particularly appropriate in remote interpersonal situations, such as telephone selling and call centres, where recordings are to hand for analysis.

Usability research is a branch of ergonomics, the study of product design for human use. Established as a quantitative discipline for over 50 years usability research has particular relevance in marketing for enhancing the effectiveness of interactive TV and web sites (Hallahan, 2001). The problem of designing electronic programme guides (EPG's) for easy navigation is a field especially suitable for usability research (Daly-Jones & Carey, 2002). However, this research is limited to the interaction of one individual with the EPG. The current competition for the development of interactive TV (Henderson, 2001; "Survey: Entertain Me", 2002) has now placed an emphasis on determing how a group of viewers use the EPG to make a selection between a wide range of channels. This qualitative aspects of decision making lends itself to analysis using the techniques of conversation analysis (A.Kearney, Strategy Director, Carlton Active, UK, personal communication, July 5, 2002)

Complexity theory: applications to thinking of marketing management

Marketing managers think about consumers as if they have a mechanical existence which can be quantified. Qualitative research is regarded as exploratory, indicating a research activity which is designed to precede the quantitative studies on which decisions are made.

The way in which consumers talk their views (attitudes, opinions, culture) into existence is not an issue either for marketing strategists or creative people. The emphasis today is on managing consumer culture which is the product of conversations. As Holt (2002) points out " large consumer goods companies and ad agencies have moved aggressively to develop their ability to manage the market for cultural properties [brands]".

Complexity and emergence in organisations is a field of practical and theoretical study attracting leading academics (Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw, 2000). Appreciation and understanding of complex adaptive systems applied to organisations by analogy has led to a shift in thinking about organisations. Shaw (2002:11), whose approach is based on practice, not theory, "proposed that if organizing is understood essentially as a conversational process, an inescapably self-organizing process of participating in the spontaneous emergence of continuity and change, then we need a rather different way of thinking about any kind of organizational practice, in other words the way we make meaning of [our activities]".

The empirical evidence provided by this thesis research supports this conclusion with regard to consumer behaviour, though taking a different route. Indeed, Boden (1994) presents a very similar argument to Shaw (2002). Shaw's (2002) statement, quoted above, applies equally to marketing management and their conceptions of change in consumers. Cultural change is tracked and, where possible, manipulated (Holt, 2002). It is a practical, not a theoretical proposal, that a similar shift in marketing management thinking as that advocated by Shaw (2000) would offer new insights into the conversational activities which actually create culture.

7.5.2 Future directions for research on CAS in consumer research

The research process in the field demonstrated that four of the theorised characteristics of a CAS were clearly evident from the CA analysis. It was also suggested in the discussion above that future research on the nature of emergence and its discovery from audio recordings could become a focus for future process research.

This study has produced the possibility of two research futures. One is the adoption of the discursive research perspective to achieve a deeper understanding of how consumers create facts and meaning. This was the proposal made earlier. The second research future, discussed here, is for the practical extension of work on CAS and CA arising from the present study.

At the inception of this study, the researcher was mindful of the warning given by researchers who are respected and established in the academic discipline of organisational behaviour:

> Efforts to demonstrate the effects of complex phenomena are in their infancy because the tools are not well-developed, nor are the tools that are available accessible or familiar to most organizational researchers. Moreover, we suggest that these perspectives need to be better integrated at a theoretical level before engaging in an empirical research programme" (Mathews et al., 1999a)

Now, at the close of his study, it is suggested that Mathews et al. (1999) may have only one theoretical level (research perspective) in mind — the cognitive model building approach — so it may not be surprising that the tools (such as CA) are unfamiliar and unavailable.

At the theoretical level the Shotter–Griffin circle of agency illustrated in Figure 7.5 does seem to be an excellent model for research on CAS. Originally proposed as an approach for organisational consulting, there appears no reason why it cannot be used for the study of consumer talk-in-interaction. Certainly this simplified model withstood the investigation of its theoretical grounding recounted in the theory of the methodology in Chapter 3.
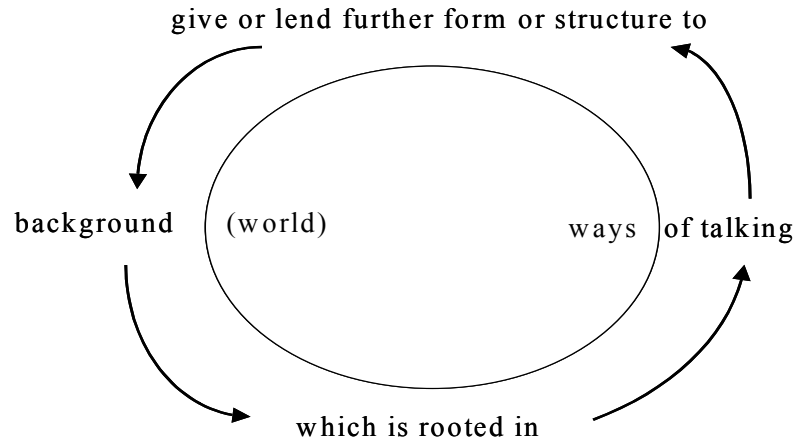
Figure 7.5: The circle of agency. Source: Griffin et al. (1998:323), based on Shotter (1993a:36)

Given that it is possible to establish a sound theoretical foundation — while recognising that the theoretical foundation itself is evolving constantly, rapidly and in diffuse disciplines — there does seem to be a particular opportunity for initiating further consumer research based upon the concept of a CAS. Consumer behaviour research is very interested in how the individual:

- processes communications arising from marketing; and

- interacts with others to form attitudes, images and beliefs.

There is a whole new field for consumer research and practice that is only just being recognised. Several of these new initiatives have been highlighted during the course of this study; for example, Myer's (1999) work on using CA to surface attitudes.

On the assumption that individuals belong to a series of groups, each being seen as a CAS, some stable, others transient, it would appear that a group, as a CAS, offers a potentially rewarding field for investigation. CA would appear to be the perfect tool for surfacing the characteristics of the CAS. Beyond these observations it is impossible to speculate.

For the immediate future, research building upon this study could take the following form:

1. a continuing development of the theory of CAS through research on small groups as a CAS, particularly in the context of consumer behaviour; or

2. field studies with an emphasis on:

   a. CA analysis and interpretation of sequences (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997) from consumer talk-in-interaction to show how sense is made of products, messages, brands etc. This is a linear analysis, the capturing of a single moment.

   b. Analysis of the chaining of sequences dynamically to attempt to show the nonlinear emergence of meaning in talk-in-interaction following the ideas of Moerman (1988:44-45)

7.6   Conclusions

We live in an age when experimental qualitative research is more common and, as Denzin (2000c:24) says, "more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis and intertextual representation" can be expected. The task of this research has been to examine two theories — CAS and CA — with a view to determining whether and to what extent each may serve consumer behaviour researchers in the future. Metaphorically, the task was to open doors.

There were three conclusions to the research question that initiated this study. They are:

1. The discursive paradigm appears to be an alternative paradigm for consumer research appropriate for certain applications; e.g. marketing communications and word-of-mouth communication.

2. When small-group interaction is recorded and analysed using conversation analysis, the characteristics of a complex adaptive system theorised in this study seem evident. These characteristics are unpredictability (which includes spontaneity), self-organisation, co-creation, and emergence. Historically, these have been ignored in traditional consumer behaviour research, yet it is plausible that they play a great part in either formulating or reformulating consumer buying decisions.

3. Complex adaptive systems appear to be capable of research in the field, but more work is needed on refining the characteristics to be researched.

These doors need opening.

Appendix A: Transcript conventions for conversation analysis

Sequencing

[	point of overlap onset;
]	point at which utterance terminates;
(.[ )	an overlap which takes advantage of the first speakers slight pause. This is not a standard convention, but quite common in the Marysville tapes
=	no gap between lines (latching utterances). When the same speaker continues on the next line latching signs are not used

Timed intervals

(0.0)	lapsed time in tenths of a second e.g. (0.5);
,	comma indicates a gap between utterances which is too short to time, more like a very short pause;
(.)	a gap of approximately one tenth of a second.

Speech production characteristics

<u>word</u>	underline indicates speaker emphasis;
<u>word</u>	double underline indicates loud sounds relating to surrounding talk;
WORD	upper case indicates shouting;
↑↓	marked shifts in higher or lower pitch in utterance immediately following arrow;
!	animated and emphatic tone;
?	rising intonation, not necessarily a question;
:	prolongation of immediately prior sound.;
::::	the more colons the longer the sound is drawn out e.g. ye::ar;
-	cut off of prior word or sound;
.	full stop, stopping fall in tone, not necessarily end of sentence;
°	relatively quieter than surrounding talk (° F2);
word	indicates fading away, often after °;

(….)	indicates a fading away which is unintelligible.
< >	bracketing an utterance indicating speeding up;
•h	indicates an in breath (• F3). The more hs the longer;
hhh	no dot indicates outbreath;
w(h)ord	breathiness as in laughter, crying;

Heh –heh – huh –huh

laughter particles;

☺   laughter, especially when "All ☺" [:)].

Transcriber's doubts and comments

( )	inability to hear what was said;
(word)	dubious hearings or speaker identification;
(( ))	transcribers descriptions rather than or in addition to transcriptions.

Presentation Conventions

1   Line numbering is arbitrary and done for convenience of reference (e.g. L 1).   Line numbering does not indicate a measure of time or utterances. Silences between talk may also receive a line number.

1   **D**   Letter in the second column identifies speaker.

2   *   Indicates that identity of speaker(s) is uncertain

3   **   Indicates two or more unidentified speakers

These symbols are not a standard convention.

4   •   dot in left hand margin draws readers attention to particular parts of the transcript, which are in the analysis.

.   vertical dots in left hand margin indicate that intervening turns at talk have been omitted
.
.
…   horizontal dots indicate that an utterance is partially transcribed

Limitations of CA Conventions

Pace of turn

This may be:

- rapid;

- average;

- slow.

Although there are conventions for speeding up, fading away

Continuers

mm   may indicate intention to start a turn.

yea

mm   enthusiastic tone = I agree a lot.

mm   toneless   = yes, go on.

mm   dull tone.= I am being polite.

yea

but   both used as a Trojan horse.

Conventions Added

CT   cross talk;

AT   all talk;

☺   all laugh;

(............)   a fading away that is unintelligible.

(Source: Adapted from Have, 1997:313-14 and Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: vi-vii.)

Appendix B: Glossary of terms used in conversation analysis

Adjacency pairs (APs)

Adjacency pairs are a turn-taking sequence in which the two parts are usually produced next to each other. For example:

1	A	Hello!
2	B	Hello!

The adjacency-pair mechanism is used by participants to display to one another their on-going understanding and making sense of the other's talk. (See Preference). APs provide the analyst with a powerful normative framework for assessing the actions and motives of those engaged in the conversational exchange.

Analytic concepts

Key analytic concepts of sequential order, based on research findings, are :

- turn-taking;
- the management of overlapping talk;
- the organisation of repair;
- the organisation of turn-construction design. (See *recipient design* and *preference organisation.*)

Coherent conversational units

This is a particular type of sequence. For example, when a set of directions is given and the recipient becomes actively involved in listening, showing understanding and giving acknowledgements to the other. This is a coherent conversational unit because it is collaboratively produced .

Conversational sequences

The way in which turns are linked together in a definite order. One aim of CA is to reveal this sequential order.

Continuers

Utterances made by the listener to signify agreement with content or encourage the speaker to continue, such as "yea" or "sure". Continuers often overlap.

Conversational episode (CE)

A term used after transcription of CA transcripts to identify a developed situation, or incident of interest, in a recording that is integral to the conversation but capable of being separated from the continuous narrative for analysis. Conversational episodes are considered in CA as *specimens* of their kind, not as *statements about* anything or *reflections of* an objective reality.

Data excerpt

A data excerpt is that part of a transcript that represents the conversational episode on the recording that was selected for analysis. Thus, the analytical presentation of a conversational episode always includes the data excerpt on which the analysis is based.

Data segment

A part of a recording of a conversation that is circumscribed by a natural boundary; for example, a subject or theme. This boundary arises from within the conversation itself. When a tape is transcribed data segments are identified.

Disjunct marker

An utterance that separates parts, especially in extended sequences such as "oh" or "by the way".

Embedded repetition

The introduction of some part of prior talk to show connection or continuity

Extended sequences

Stories or reports, for example.

Four-part structures

Two ordered adjacency-pair structures in which the first AP implicates what could be a relevant second AP.

Inferential order

The inferential order of talk is seen in the "cultural and interpretative resources participants rely on to understand one another in an appropriate way" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:39).

Interruption

Interruption is a specific type of overlap that is identified when the speaker interrupted responds in such a way as to make it clear that he considers the turn-taking rules to have been broken.

Latching

This is when one spate of talk directly follows another, with no discernible pause. Latching symbols (=) are also used when a speaker who is interrupted continues speaking on another line.

Marker

This term has been adopted for this thesis (it's not a recognised CA term) to describe a device used by one member to signal to the member speaking that he or she would like or intends to start a turn. (See City 3 conversational episodes 16 and 17 for examples.)

Membership categorisation device (MCD)

The descriptions of MCD in CA appear very close to what, in sociology, is called *stereotyping*; however, Silverman (1993:80-89) takes pains to point out that MCDs are *individual to members*, not aggregates. Culture is "an inference making machine". MCDs are "devices actively employed by [individual] speakers and hearers to formulate and reformulate the meanings of activities and identities".

Expressed another way: "People need categorization devices or typifications to make sense of the stream of life carrying them forward. Above all they need "*membership*

categorization devices — highly selective and variable mechanisms for 'doing' social relations" (Boden, 1994:57).

Mundane conversation

The assumption is that every aspect of talk — the form turns take, the content and the length of each turn — are free to vary such as in everyday conversation. Mundane conversation is the subject for pure CA research. It derives from the base line established by Sacks, et al. (1974) in their model for describing turn-taking.

Order

CA is concerned with two types of order: *sequential order* (see *analytic concepts* and *conversational sequences*); and *inferential order*.

Overlap (overlapping talk)

Overlap — when two or more speakers talk at the same time — superficially appears to be both a transgression of turn-talking rules and a disorderly situation. Research has shown that most overlap occurs during transition-relevance places that emphasise the 'rules' (Jefferson (1983) quoted in Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998:55)).

The research reported in this thesis suggests that overlap can also be co-creation of meaning, as speakers appear to be responding simultaneously to each other.

Preface (also **story preface**)

An utterance that asks for the right to produce extended talk and says that the talk will be interesting. Starts with a pause and others are expected to signal its OK for the speaker to continue.

Preference (also **preference organisation**)

An inferential aspect of an adjacency pair sequence deriving from the fact that certain first-pair parts make alternative actions relevant in the second position. For example:

| 1 | A | Good day, <u>isn't it</u> |
| 2 | B | Yep, sure is |

This example shows a *preferred action* in that B responds as anticipated by A, who designed the utterance to achieve this response. Preferred actions are characteristically straightforward and immediate.

A *dispreferred action*, in which the B would disagree with A, is characteristically delayed, qualified or explained. For example:

| 1 | A | Good day, <u>isn't it</u> |
| 2 | B | well (.) um could be (.) but its going to rain soon… |

Preference organisation refers only to structural features of design turns, and is not intended to infer psychological motives.

Pre-sequence:

A variety of these have been described in the CA literature:

- preface;
- core sequence;
- trouble- premonitory;
- gloss;
- cycles of similar sequence (e.g. question–answer). (Have, 1999:114)

Repair

When one speaker corrects another whether there is a factual error or not. Repair includes selection of words, slips of the tongue, misunderstandings, mis-hearings etc. In other words, any way of identifying errors and executing corrections. There are four types of repair:

- self-initiated self-repair;
- other-initiated self-repair;
- self-initiated other-repair; and
- other-initiated other-repair (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:116)

Recipient design

Recipient design is literally when a speaker builds an utterance to fit the recipient. For example, the use of names (avoiding repair), and locational formulations. Research

shows that all turns in talk are designed to be understood in terms of what the speaker knows or assumes he or she knows about existing mutual knowledge.

Recipient design is also an important general principle of conversational interaction. The facts that "turn-size and turn-order are locally managed, party administered, and interactionally controlled" fall under the "jurisdiction of recipient design". This leads to members individualising the particular conversation in which they are taking part. Thus turn-allocation, turn-construction and turn-transition characteristics are adapted locally by members themselves.(Sacks et al. 1974:727). The influence of recipient design is evident in the different speech-exchange systems.

Sequence organisation

Sequence organisation is the theory at the heart of CA. There are three interrelated parts to sequence organisation:

1. Members normally address themselves to preceding talk when constructing their turn;

2. In doing this, members normally project the next action, both empirically and normatively, for the next speaker thus creating or renewing context.

3. By producing the next action, members demonstrate an understanding of the action before (Heritage, 1997:162).

Speech exchange system

Speech-exchange systems are said to lie on a continuum from mundane conversation — being the most natural everyday conversation — to speeches and lectures, being the most one-sided. There are many gradations in between. The difference between speech-exchange systems lies in the extent to which members have equal rights to participate in talk or not.

Story preface

An utterance that asks for the right to produce extended talk and says that the talk will be interesting. After a pause others are expected to signal it's okay to continue.

Turn-construction unit (TCU)

During the production of a TCU, the current speaker is always the owner. (See turn taking.)

Transition-relevance place (TRP)

The place in a conversation when one speaker takes over from another. (See turn taking.)

Turn-construction design

Turn construction design is a general category used to introduce three sequential features of talk closely related to turn taking. These are the notions of *adjacency*, *preference* and *recipient design*.

Turn taking

The model for turn taking accepted by practitioners of CA is that established by (Sacks et al., 1974). The "rules" below were shown to "account for the vast range of turn-taking practices in conversation" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998:50). Turn taking has two components:

1. Turn construction: A turn-construction unit (TCU) has two features:

    a. projectability, which is the ability of a speaker to project meaning; and

    b. transition-relevance: places at the end of each TCU that provide the possibility for the next speaker to take over legitimately. This provides a boundary for the TCU.

2. Turn distribution is normally governed by simple "rules":

    Rule 1:
    a. The current speaker identifies or selects the next speaker; or

    b. where there is no selection, any speaker may self-select on a first-come, first-speak basis; or

    c. after a pause, the first speaker continues.

Rule 2:

Whatever option was chosen, all speakers are open for selection at the next transition-relevance place.

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in CA is the conversational episode, which consists of linked utterances. It is always backed up by a data excerpt. Units of analysis are never aggregated, as in quantitative research (Sekaran, 1992:106). In CA the recurring discovery of similarities between conversational episodes is always a local phenomenon.

Utterance

A string of speech or sound that an individual produces, from when he or she starts to when he or she ends. In CA, an utterance is the basic unit for research, which is analysed as a numbered sequence. Linguistics generally uses sentences as the basic unit, which CA considers too restrictive and not reflecting natural conversation (Sacks, 1992/2000a:647).

Vocal sounds

Some of the most common are:

um, er,	used in a TCU as a holding mechanism by the speaker
mm,mm	used as an overlap to signify agreement a claim to speak
eh	indicating a question or doubt
heh,ha	for laughter
hhh	indicating breathiness

In CA vocal sound are transcribed because they may well have can have interactional meaning. Furthermore, it is argued they contribute towards illustrating the rhythm of the talk in a transcript (Have, 1999:82).

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