

(Telling) Tales of the Unexpected:

A Sociological Analysis of Accounts of Paranormal Experiences

Robin Christopher Wooffitt

D. Phil Thesis

University of York

Department of Sociology

April, 1989.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother,
and in memory of my father.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: On the Analysis of Accounts of Anomalous Phenomena	
1 Introduction	13
2 A brief history of parapsychology	17
3 The sociological investigation of the paranormal	24
4 Ethnomethodological considerations	49
5 Science and the Paranormal	51
6 Conclusions	57
Chapter Two: 'Describing' as a Social Activity	
1 Introduction	60
2 Ethnomethodological analysis of language use	62
3 Parapsychology and the use of accounts	70
4 'Social Intelligence' about anomalies	90
5 Conclusions	93
Chapter Three: The Analysis of Language Use	
1 Introduction	95
2 Conversation analysis	95
3 Discourse analysis	98
4 Discourse analysis: a critical appreciation	109
5 Conversation analysis and monologue talk	125
6 Conclusions	133
Chapter Four: A Single Case Analysis	
1 Introduction	135
2 Data	138
3 Analysis	140
4 Conclusions	163

Chapter Five: A Device for Describing Paranormal Experiences

1 Introduction	168
2 Psychology and the recollection of dramatic events	176
3 State formulations	185
4 The mundane environment of paranormal experiences	189
5 State formulations as gists and upshots	193
6 The sequential implicativeness of state formulations	210
6 Normalizing the paranormal	219
7 Insertions in the 'X - Y' format	225
8 Conclusions	240

Chapter Six: Voices

1 Introduction	244
2 Preliminary considerations	246
3 Sustaining the objectivity of the phenomenon	254
4 Using voices to premonitor a mystery	267
5 Reported dialogue	272
6 Conclusions	293

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

1 Introduction	296
2 Sociology and the paranormal	299
3 Analytic conclusions	302
4 Methodological considerations	306
5 Parapsychology and sociology	313

Appendix: Data Collection and Transcription	323
---	-----

Bibliography	330
--------------	-----

Acknowledgements

The research presented in this thesis was partly funded by the Society for Psychical Research. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Society for its generous assistance on this project.

When I started my doctoral studies I was jointly supervised by Colin Campbell and Shirley McIver, and I would like to acknowledge their help and encouragement during a period when my ideas were particularly nebulous.

For the most, part, however, Paul Drew has supervised this research, and his help has been enormous. His detailed comments on earlier versions of these chapters has largely ensured that I was able to say what I wanted without being obscure or pompous. In particular, he has given generously in his observations on the analytic chapters - far more generously than could be acknowledged separately - and, as a consequence, his influence is, at least to me, apparent throughout the analyses. He has also been sympathetic to my (usually dire) financial circumstances during my time at York, and has been more than helpful in this respect. So, for all of this, and for showing me the best way to lay lawns and build paths, I thank him.

While I have been writing this thesis I have spent a large part of my time in Wentworth College, and not an inconsiderable part of that in Wentworth College bar. Many happy hours were passed there in the company of a group of people who ensured that the sheer slog of writing a thesis was, for some brief moments, forgotten: Rita Caine, Colin Clark, Mike Gardner, John Swettenham and Katie Weeds.

I have had a useful support team during this thesis, the members of which have contributed in various ways. First, Colin Clark deserves a mention for bringing me into the computer age, and for his outrageous stories and audacious deals. I have had four 'typo bloodhounds': Alison Brown, Simon Klyne, Mike Gardner and Tim Stickland have each proof-read parts of the thesis. Any mistakes or errors, therefore, are their responsibility entirely. Simon Klyne deserves special thanks: by virtue of his awesome ability to talk to computers he has been, in a very important sense, the 'technical midwife' to this thesis. Finally, for the past year and a half, my first sight every weekday morning has been Katie Weeds' ankles. As much as anyone, she is responsible for ensuring that the thesis was completed in a reasonable amount of time.

The most important debt of gratitude I owe to Sue Widdicombe. Not only was she there to talk to, and grumble at, when I needed her, but she has been a stabilizing force throughout an otherwise unsettled four years. In addition to this, she has had a significant influence on my goals and ambitions: more than I think she knows, her own achievements have set me targets, and inspired my efforts. For these and other reasons, I couldn't have done this without her.

Declaration

The analysis in sub-sections [a] to [c] of Chapter Four, section 3, was originally published in 'On the Analysis of Accounts of Paranormal Phenomena' (1988) in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 55, 812, 139-149.

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with people's accounts of their direct encounters with paranormal phenomena. The discussion in the first three chapters sets out the reasons for an examination of these materials and the objectives of such an analysis, both in terms of sociological interests, and also in relation to parapsychology. In Chapters Four to Six I pursue specific analytic themes.

In Chapters One and Two I outline an ethnomethodological approach to the study of accounts of anomalous experiences. Hitherto, parapsychological studies have used accounts as investigative resources to try to discover the 'facts' of reported experiences. On the other hand, sociologists have largely ignored personal accounts, and have 'explained' claimed experiences in terms of underlying social causes. Rejecting these two approaches, I examine the ways that speakers tacitly use language to describe their experiences, focusing in particular on the moral, inferential and constructive features of language use.

In the empirical chapters I use a conversation analytic methodology to explicate some of the interactional tasks that are mediated through the design of specific utterances. In particular I examine some ways that speakers attend to the possibility that their account may receive a skeptical or unsympathetic hearing, and design their utterances to defuse arguments which could be adduced to undermine the verisimilitude of their reports.

In Chapter Five I examine the ways that speakers address this broad range of interactional tasks through the design of utterances in which they recall their first impression of the onset of the phenomenon. In this analysis I argue that these formulations, which have traditionally been taken as indicating the operation of cognitive processes, are socially-organised and culturally-available devices.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis takes as its subject matter the way that people use language to describe direct, personal encounters with a range of anomalous or supernatural phenomena. It is therefore related to three areas of academic work:

- [a] parapsychology, the scientific study of paranormal events;
- [b] sociology, especially sociological investigations of involvement and belief in the paranormal;
- [c] contemporary approaches to the analysis of language use, especially those which are informed by broadly ethnomethodological arguments concerning the nature of the relationship between descriptive utterances and their referents, and the role of language in social life.

As this thesis deals with such a range of issues, I have employed a rather unconventional structure for the first two chapters. Instead of devoting a chapter firstly to parapsychology, then to sociology, in each of the first two chapters I try to draw together related themes and issues from both disciplines.

In Chapter One, I trace a brief history of parapsychology. This begins by discussing the concerns and events which motivated initial efforts to establish the reality of psychical phenomena, and goes on

to sketch the development of parapsychology as a laboratory-based scientific discipline. Although parapsychology has achieved some recognition as a respectable scientific subject, its present status is precarious, and some researchers are beginning to challenge its fundamental assumptions. To illustrate this I introduce Blackmore's (1988a; 1988b) arguments that parapsychology should be concerned with actual experiences rather than conducting experimental studies to find evidence of psychic phenomena. She emphasises that such a research objective necessarily entails a greater emphasis upon the use of people's accounts as investigative resources.

The primary purpose of this chapter, however, is to review the sociological research on belief in the existence of, and forms of involvement in, occult or supernatural phenomena. This research falls into two broad types, identified as the socio-correlative and the socio-cultural. The objective of the former is to identify the sociological and social-psychological correlates which are associated with various types of involvement in the occult. The results from these studies suggest that social 'marginality' and psychological vulnerability correlate strongly with claims to believe in or to have experienced supernatural events. The second line of research proposes that cultural changes have facilitated involvement in the occult. For example, that increasing trends towards secularization have released individuals from religious orthodoxies, thus liberating them to engage in activities hitherto proscribed by the Church.

Both of these approaches, to varying degrees, are informed by the common assumption that personal experience of and involvement in the paranormal are mere epi-phenomena of underlying and determinant social forces. I argue that this assumption is incorrect by drawing

on evidence from sociological and parapsychological studies which show that paranormal experiences are not restricted to certain 'marginal' sections of society. Also, I discuss contemporary evidence that knowledge of and belief in supernatural events are integral features of contemporary cultural life.

There is a further problem with this body of research. In their commitment to furnish the 'true' - that is, sociological and rational - explanations for the experiences which people claim, researchers have exhibited a traditional sociological orientation to the 'primacy' or 'superiority' of the analysts' accounts. Ethnomethodological considerations on the relationship between 'scientific' - that is, sociological - reasoning and theorising, and 'lay' forms of explanation, have shown this to be a highly dubious methodological assumption. Furthermore, and more relevant to my interests, it obscures an interest in the way that people themselves describe and account for their experiences. Some advantages of an ethnomethodological interest in people's accounts of personal experiences are illustrated through a brief discussion of Smith's (1978) analysis of the way language is used in a description of a young girl's decline into mental illness.

The kinds of analytic issues which are generated from an ethnomethodological perspective on language use are detailed in section 2 of Chapter Two. In particular I look at the flexibility of descriptive resources which are available to natural language users, and consider some of the practical, pragmatic tasks which are mediated through talk in social interaction. In short, I focus on moral and inferential aspects of descriptive practices. Having established some properties of the medium through which people

describe their paranormal experiences, I turn to look at the ways that accounts have been used as investigative resources by parapsychologists.

Parapsychology is primarily a scientific discipline with a heavy bias towards experimental, laboratory-based research. Throughout its hundred year history, however, there have been periods in which researchers necessarily turned to reports of spontaneous experiences. The work of the early investigators was almost entirely directed towards establishing the 'facts' of reported cases. In order to obtain these facts, and to overcome difficulties perceived to be associated with human testimony, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the experiencers and collected numerous corroborative accounts. Their studies, then, were, to a significant extent, dependent upon the various descriptions they solicited.

The establishment of parapsychology as a scientific study ensured that, for many years, there was little active interest in personal accounts. One of the major developments that promoted the scientific status of parapsychology, however, was the development and application of statistics to assess the significance of experimental results. Statistical tests eventually came to be employed in the analysis of accounts of experiences. Through the use of various coding procedures, the character and incidence of specific aspects of experiences were obtained from reports. These were then assessed statistically to investigate patterns within and relationships between discrete categories of the experiences.

Within parapsychology, Louisa Rhine holds a special place by virtue of her studies of a mass of unsolicited reports deposited at the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University, North Carolina. In a

review of her work I emphasise the procedures she devised to overcome the 'reporting difficulties' traditionally associated with human testimony. Her research is also useful in that it illustrates the kind of assumptions about the relationship between language and the world which inform much parapsychological research concerned with accounts of personal experiences.

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the phenomenology of paranormal experiences. I discuss this trend and show how it relates to contemporary developments within the discipline; in particular, Blackmore's recent arguments for a 'new' parapsychology, which takes as its point of departure a keener interest in accounts of spontaneous experiences.

In discussing these four areas of research my point is that parapsychologists have worked with what is now considered to be an unsatisfactory view of language. They have assumed either that written or spoken reports are, potentially, so unreliable as to be analytically worthless; or that descriptions of events are essentially 'transparent', to the extent that the researcher may take descriptions at face value. In each of the four types of parapsychological research these assumptions are explicated and criticised. To do this I draw on two sources: points raised in the earlier discussion of the moral and inferential character of language use; and methodological issues exposed in discourse analytic critiques of sociological studies of science and experimental social psychology. This critical appreciation of parapsychological research is useful insofar as it allows me to illustrate further the character of an ethnomethodological interest in accounts of paranormal experiences.

In section 4 of this chapter I consider Westrum's studies of 'social intelligence' about anomalies. In these he emphasises the sociological significance of the processes through which accounts of phenomena are transmitted from the experients to various official bodies. This allows me to indicate that the activity of producing an account in face-to-face interaction also warrants analytic investigation.

There are two contemporary approaches to the analysis of language use which, in part, owe their origins to ethnomethodological thinking on the nature of natural language and its significance in social life: discourse analysis and conversation analysis. These are discussed in Chapter Three.

The term 'discourse analysis' is associated with a variety of intellectual positions in sociology and linguistics. In this thesis I use it to refer only to that form of analysis which emphasises that language is a variable, constructive and functional medium. I trace two stages of its recent development: its emergence as a methodological alternative to traditional sociological procedures in the study of scientists' actions and beliefs, and its subsequent application to issues within traditional social psychology.

Drawing on research findings from conversation analytic studies, I sketch a critical appreciation of the claims and objectives of discourse analysis. In particular, I focus on four aspects of language use which I feel are not given sufficient attention within discourse analysis. First, that even single word selection may be an organised outcome of locally-occasioned reasoning practices, and thus the processes by which such selections are achieved are analytically interesting. Second, discourse analysts focus on the

'interpretative' resources embedded in accounts through which participants furnish a specific character, or 'sense', for the events they describe. I argue that the way these resources are treated tends to gloss important issues, namely, the ways in which participants may employ specific structural features which inhere in the trajectory of prior utterances as interpretative resources. Third, and related to this point, I am interested in the ways speakers use occasioned 'social identities' as interactional resources. Such identities are accomplished in the fine-grained detail of talk. With its objectives pitched at broader levels, however, discourse analysis does not provide the most satisfactory perspective for a systematic appreciation of the practices which inform 'identity management' in the details of members' talk. Finally, I argue that problematic issues regarding the relationship between sequences of utterances and their 'context' invites resolutions primarily derived from conversation analytic studies and considerations. A conversation analytic approach is, therefore, more applicable to the objectives of the present research.

Hitherto, conversation analysts have, almost exclusively, studied materials generated in telephone conversations and face-to-face interaction involving two or more parties. The accounts used as data for this research, however, are multi-unit, one-speaker turns, as opposed to stories developed in the course of interaction. Therefore it is necessary to discuss the appropriateness of a conversation analytic mentality for the examination of monologue materials, and this is done in section 5 of Chapter Three. Here, I argue that, although the nature of monologue talk may present analytic problems - for example, the analyst has no recourse to the

'proof procedure' which results from the way that participants' utterances are designed to exhibit analyses of prior turns - these are not intractable problems.

Chapter Four is the first analytic chapter. In this I take a small data extract in which a speaker describes the first occasions on which she noticed the occurrence of a strange noise, which she later discovered to be caused by a discarnate spirit. The utterances which compose this extract are subject to a rigorous analysis. This exercise is not only in keeping with the analytic tradition established by Harvey Sacks in his early lectures, but also allows me to accomplish two objectives. First, to reveal how analytic considerations generated in the investigation of other forms of conversational materials can illuminate the way that this sequence has been methodically produced. This in turn confirms the applicability of a conversation analytic approach to the study of one-speaker materials. Second, to identify the range of interactional concerns to which the speaker is orienting in the construction and composition of these utterances. This establishes themes and issues to be investigated in subsequent analytic chapters. Thus, I use a single case analysis, albeit loosely, as a conversation analytic equivalent of a 'pilot' study.

To summarise briefly, the analysis in Chapter Four explicates some of the resources used by the speaker to accomplish two tasks: to provide for, and warrant, inferences about her competence as an 'ordinary', 'normal' person; and to design utterances which incrementally reveal the mysterious character of the phenomenon she is reporting. The analysis also explicates a normatively-prescribed convention regarding the design of descriptive utterances to which

the speaker orients throughout the course of these utterances.

One important point to emerge from the analysis is that this account, and indeed all accounts, consist of speakers' reports of their memories of the phenomena they have encountered. One aspect of this feature of accounts of paranormal experiences is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

This chapter begins with the observation that there is a format which is recurrent, not only in reports of paranormal events, but in descriptions of dramatic events generally. This is identified as 'I was just doing X....when Y'; the 'Y' component is used to introduce into the account the speaker's first awareness of the phenomenon, and in the 'X' component a reference is made to the mundane and trivial activities or circumstances at the time of this experience. The apparent ability to recall trivial events which were happening at the time of dramatic experiences has been the focus of considerable attention within cognitive psychology. Here, I review one explanation which claims that traumatic events trigger the operation of neurophysiological mechanisms which record all information being processed by the brain at that time, thus storing, and making available for subsequent recall, otherwise unmemorable states of affairs. Taking an alternative approach, I argue that these memory formulations are socially-organised devices through which speakers engage in specifically interactional business. The analysis takes two directions. First, I try to explicate the procedures which inform the speakers' selection of items to describe their circumstances at the time of their experiences. This suggests that 'X' components are constructed so as to provide for the mundanity of these states of affairs. Second, the analysis shows that speakers

orient to the possibility that their accounts may receive an unsympathetic hearing. I examine some of the ways that speakers use this device to attend to specific interactional tasks which derive from the inauspiciousness of claiming to have had paranormal experiences. For example, to defuse the possibility of attempts to undermine the veridicality of the claimed experience.

The importance of this analysis is that it points to socially-organised practices which inform the composition of memory formulations which are produced naturally in the course of these accounts. In this it draws attention to, and tries to explore, the relationship between this specific type of memory - which has hitherto been taken to be essentially a cognitive phenomenon - and the interactional and pragmatic character of the medium through which instances of these memories are produced.

The final analysis, reported in Chapter Six, deals with some instances of the use of reported speech in accounts of paranormal events. I identify some of the tasks accomplished through the incorporation of active voices into reports. For example, by reporting someone else's comments on a phenomenon, speakers may display that the event they claim to have experienced was also observable to independent witnesses, thereby demonstrating the 'objectivity' of the phenomenon. Also, speakers use active voices to exhibit the 'normal' character of their assumptions about the events they were experiencing: that is, what 'anybody' would have thought and done in these circumstances. By doing this speakers furnish information from which recipients can make inferences which are favourable to their broad objectives - to construct believable accounts of unbelievable events.

In the final section of this chapter I look at instances of reported dialogue and focus on the way these sequences are organised. In particular, a three-stage sequence is analysed. In the first stage the speaker reports another's voice talking about some aspect of the paranormal phenomenon in question. In the second stage the speaker employs an active voice to report their reaction to this information. In the final sequence the other voice goes on to confirm the 'paranormality' or 'objectivity' of the experience. Some of the interactional benefits which accrue from this organisation are discussed, and I attempt to explicate the basis for its effectiveness by drawing on Schutz's remarks on intersubjectivity.

In the Conclusion I draw out some of the implications of the present research. First, some comments are made about the sociological study of belief in and claimed experiences of the paranormal. I argue that there should be more sociological effort directed to increasing our understanding of what appear to be stable and recurrent cultural events. In this respect, it is suggested that ethnomethodologically-informed studies could be particularly illuminating, and I illustrate the kind of empirical issues that may be addressed in such projects.

Second, I make some remarks about the relationship between conversation analysis and discourse analysis. I focus primarily on the similarities between these two approaches, both in terms of their analytic goals and their common intellectual heritage. Furthermore, I suggest that certain discourse analytic emphases can be useful as resources in the pursuit of conversation analytic goals, especially in the study of materials which do not afford the benefits of the 'proof procedure' available as a consequence of a co-interactants'

publically-displayed interpretations of prior turns.

Finally, I turn to parapsychology. I consider Pinch's (1987) recommendation that parapsychology should attempt to secure its place in the scientific community by developing essentially pragmatic links with the orthodox sciences. Taking a lead from this, I suggest that a rapprochement with the social sciences is equally important, and go on to sketch some of the implications of ethnomethodological considerations on the constructive character of language use for some areas of parapsychological research. In particular, I argue that such an approach constitutes one step towards a 'new' psychical research.

CHAPTER ONE:

ON THE ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNTS OF ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA

1 Introduction

The following extracts come from accounts of personal encounters with anomalous forces and entities. The first is taken from a taped interview, the second is from a study of 'Old Hag'¹ experiences and the third is taken from an article in a parapsychology journal.

'As I said, you know, I was playing in a darts match over Leighton Buzzard; I left there about twenty past nine and I was driving through Stanbridge...and there's a road down there called Peddar's Lane...about 100 yards past there the street lights finish. There was a figure I [saw] on the left-hand side, thumbing a lift down there. I pulled up in front of him, so I could see him walking back in the headlights.

He had a dark-coloured jumper on, dark-coloured trousers, with a white open-collared shirt. He came up to the motor; he got in there and sat down - he even opened the door himself, I had nothing to do with opening the door. I asked him where he was going and he just pointed up the road - never said a word. So I assumed he was either going to Dunstable or Totternhoe.

So I was driving up the road, I suppose I was driving for - what, four, five or six minutes, I suppose, doing a speed of about 40 minimum.

I turned round to offer him a cigarette and the bloke had disappeared.

I braked, had a quick look in the back to see if he was there. He wasn't and I just gripped the wheel and drove like hell.' (Goss 1984: 90) [original emphasis]

¹ For a further discussion of these experiences, see footnote no. 1, Chapter Six: 'Voices'.

'It happened last Thursday between 6.30 and 7, and it happened on the second floor of the library, which is unusual. And I've been studying. I've been preparing for a microbiology exam. And I've been putting in a lot of late hours, and I was tired and getting about four hours of sleep a night. Three hours sometimes and I was really very fatigued. And----I'd been studying in the library for about three hours. And then I decided, "Well, I think you should go and lay down before you fall out. Because you're really tired," you know. I went to a sofa that's on the floor and I thought "Well, I'll lie down on the sofa." And sofas being sofas I could really only lie down on it on my back, which was a bad choice. (Laughs.) So I was lying on my back and had my hands across my chest, and I had a series of about three or four very quick dreams which to me made no sense, because they didn't really pertain to anything that----that was familiar to me. They were very obscure episodes. I----I can't even describe them. But I know each one of them shocked me into waking suddenly. And I had the impression that they only lasted for about fifteen seconds apiece. And I know when I finally woke from the last one I said "Well, come on. Stop," you know. You know, "Why are you----your mind is just racing. Just relax and lie down. You'll be OK." So, I laid back down. And I closed my eyes, and hands folded across my chest----

And I had the impression that I could hear someone coming behind me. But I said, "Well I don't----" You know, "They'll pass by." And I could hear the footsteps, and I said, "Well, they're going to pass on by me, and I hope they don't mess with me, whoever they are. I hope it's not somebody who comes by and messes with me." And the next thing I knew I heard a female voice and----The voice wasn't really familiar to me. But the voice addressed me like she knew me. Or it knew me. And it said, "You knew that I would come." Something like that. And----then there was a lot of talk about her----her face. Or her appearance. And she didn't want me to look at her or something, because of her face. And all this time I remember I had my eyes closed, and I kept thinking, "Well, who is this? Who's playing this----Who's who's talking?" And the next thing I knew, my----The pressure----on my arms. And I couldn't move. I couldn't move anything. And it was at this point I said, "Hold it. Wait a minute. Who's messing around with me?" And I could still hear her talking, but I couldn't make out the words too clearly. But I'm saying, "Who's messing around. Let me see who's messing around. Let me see who's messing around with me."

And while I could still feel the pressure, I looked up and there was nobody there. But the pressure was still there. And that scared me!' (Hufford 1982: 81-2) [original emphasis]

'Two years ago my parents went away on a short vacation. Shortly after they left on their trip my son became very ill and had an extremely high temperature. Early the next morning I was surprised to see my mother and father driving in the driveway. Mother rushed in and said, "I had a terrible dream. I dreamed I kissed Bobby and he was burning with fever and when I turned around Bud (my brother) was standing there with a big hole in his head, pouring blood." I told her that Bobby was terribly sick but that my brother Bud had gone to work as usual that morning and was just fine. In less than an hour my brother, a lineman for Southern Bell Telephone Company, had been brought home by his foreman with a big hole cut above his left eye and bleeding profusely.' (Dale, White and Murphy 1962: 13)

The topic of this thesis are accounts of direct personal experiences with anomalous forces and events of the kind illustrated in these extracts. Other types of reported phenomena will include contact with the dead, encounters with ghosts, mystical revelation, apparitional manifestations, attacks by demonic forces, poltergeist disturbances, clairvoyance, precognition, telepathic experiences, and UFO sightings.

Events such as these may be far from uncommon: Blackmore's (1982a) investigation of the out-of-body experience leads her to conclude that as many as one person in every ten may have had an experience of this kind. Thus, in the United Kingdom alone, there may be as many as five million case histories of this experience. Given the wide array of paranormal phenomena which are reported, we can only speculate at the total number of individuals who have had a direct encounter with some sort of anomaly.

Neither are these experiences peculiar to contemporary culture. A recent study of the relationship between society and the paranormal begins with well-documented, illustrative examples of the range of phenomena in question: a manifestation of an apparition, a

levitation, mediumistic powers, knowledge of the death of a distant relative and a U.F.O sighting. These events occurred in 1610, 1645, 1868, 1920 and 1967 respectively (Evans 1982). cursory examination of some of the more serious literature devoted to the paranormal reveals that people have been making reports of incidents of this kind throughout recorded history. (For example: Blackmore 1982a; Evans 1982; 1984; 1987; Gauld 1982; Levi 1982; McClure 1983; Vallee 1966; Zohar 1982.) As William James wrote:

'The phenomena are there, lying broadcast over the surface of history. No matter where you open its pages, you find things recorded under the name of divinations, inspirations, demoniacal possessions, apparitions, trances, ecstasies, miraculous healings and productions of disease, and occult powers possessed by peculiar individuals over persons and things in their neighbourhood....Look behind the pages of official history, in personal memoirs, legal documents, and popular narratives and books of anecdotes, and you will find that there never was a time when these things were not reported as abundantly as now.' (James 1979 [1897]: 223)

The primary objective of this chapter is to consider previous sociological research which has, in broad terms, dealt with issues concerning the paranormal. I want to show that throughout this research there has been little attention given to accounts of direct, personal contact with anomalous phenomena, and to sketch an outline of the range and character of sociological questions which may be explored through the analysis of accounts.

Hitherto, the study of reports of this kind has been the preserve of parapsychology (the most sustained and organised study of paranormal phenomena), psychic researchers, UFO research groups and committed individuals. Thus, it is necessary, first, to look

briefly at the history of parapsychology. This allows us to locate the importance of accounts of paranormal events within the development of this discipline, and also to outline some of the attitudes to the use of accounts displayed by parapsychologists.

2. A brief history of parapsychology

The study of the paranormal was stimulated by two events: the growing popular interest in spiritualism and the possibility of some form of continued existence after death; also, the increasing awareness of the occurrence of a wide variety of anomalous mental experiences, such as precognition and telepathy. (For a more complete history of the study of psychical phenomena, see Gauld 1968; Haynes 1982; Mauskopf and McVaugh 1980; Nicol 1982.)

Spiritualism began in the 1840's in the United States when two young sisters in New York became the apparent focus for a series of strange rappings and knockings. These sounds seemed to have no physical cause (Jung 1977: 92ff). Eventually, a method was devised by which the noise could be asked questions; the answers to these claimed that the source of the noises was the spirit of a man who had been murdered in the house where the girls were living.

The girls quickly became celebrities. When they visited other cities the noises appeared to follow them, and they were able to engage in conversations with the dead through the knocks and raps produced by their spirits. In the wake of their popularity and their travels, many other individuals claimed to communicate with the spirits of the dead, and this ability came to be known as mediumship.

The popularity and fame of spiritualism grew, spreading across the United States and eventually to Europe (McVaugh and Mauskopf 1976). Although spiritualism developed into a religious movement which even today still boasts a considerable number of churches, its primary significance is that it popularised, and gave credence to, the possibility that people could, in some form, survive death.²

At approximately the same time, within certain intellectual circles, there was a growing awareness of what came to be known as spontaneous psychic experiences. It was felt that, given sufficiently rigorous investigation, events of this kind could furnish insights about the nature of the universe, and the human beings who populated it. Many of the founder members of the Society for Psychical Research were motivated by such 'quasi-metaphysical' interests (Blackmore 1988a; 1988b).

The first society specifically concerned with the study of psychic events was the Cambridge University Society for Psychical Research. The Oxford equivalent, the Oxford Phantasmological Society, was established in 1875 (Nicol 1972). Both organisations were eclipsed, however, by the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. The Society was heavily influenced by Cambridge academics, especially those of Trinity College. The first President, Henry Sidgwick, was a Fellow of Trinity, as were other notable members, such as Edmund Gurney and F. W. H. Myers. Despite the link with such a prestigious university, however, initial research in Britain was conducted largely by private individuals who possessed sufficient personal resources to fund their activities.

² For recent discussions of the survival issue, see Kastenbaum (1984), and Thouless (1984).

The early investigators tried to adopt the methodological protocol of the physical sciences: collating evidence, testing hypotheses and verifying first-hand reports of experiences. In their attempts to infuse the study of psychic phenomena with scientific rigour, these researchers charted the path for future studies, in particular, those conducted within the auspices of universities. For example, much of the early research in Britain established techniques and approaches which were later to be refined by J. B. Rhine in the United States. Tyrrell (1938) pioneered a card-guessing methodology during the 1920's; Olliver (1932) experimentally distinguished between telepathy and clairvoyance. These developments either pre-dated, or were contemporary with, Rhine's paradigmatic influence on psychical research.

The initial stages of what later came to be known as parapsychology thus reflected two concerns: to establish the phenomena as a proper subject for academic inquiry; and the development of the scientific study of these phenomena. Both these are evident in the way that much of the early research was conducted according to the procedures of other experimental sciences.

The American Society for Psychical Research (A. S. P. R.) was founded in Boston in 1885. Like its British counterpart, the members were originally interested in spiritualism, but soon came to direct more of their energies towards establishing a scientific approach to the phenomena (Palfreman 1979). Unlike their British colleagues, however, the American researchers enjoyed the assistance, albeit limited, of university departments. Furthermore, there was a greater interest in the use of statistics to assess the validity of experimental studies. In 1912 at Stanford University, J. F. Coover

tried to find out if human behaviour could be influenced through the exercise of will-power. Although he produced no positive results, his work was important in that it was conducted with strictly controlled procedures. Some years later at Harvard, L. T. Troland devised an experiment to test for the ability of subjects to influence mentally the operation of an electrical circuit. This too was a landmark, for it was the first research to employ a machine specifically designed to test for psychic phenomena (McVaugh and Mauskopf 1976).

In both the United States and Europe, then, there was a movement towards adopting standard procedures and methodological techniques in the study of psychical phenomena. Thus, in 1927, when J. B. Rhine was appointed to the psychology department at Duke University, North Carolina, there were sufficient preconditions for the establishment of a thoroughly scientific approach to the understanding of anomalous mental events.

Rhine's work is of central importance in the history of the study of the paranormal insofar as it had a paradigmatic influence on future research. He devised replicable experiments and produced a standard terminology, employing for the first time the title 'parapsychology'. The subjects for his experiments were ordinary individuals, not self-confessed mediums or 'psychic stars'; and his experimental results were analysed with sophisticated statistical techniques, and furnished numerous significant results. He tested to see if psychic abilities were effected by variables such as distance, or drug-induced altered states of consciousness, thereby raising a variety of issues which subsequently became the focus for further research. He supervised research students who later continued

working in other university departments, and he founded the Journal of Parapsychology, which quickly became the pre-eminent forum for the publication of empirical and theoretical papers.

The consequence of Rhine's efforts was that the investigation of paranormal phenomena became synonymous with laboratory-based experimental studies. The spontaneous experiences which had prompted the founding fathers of psychical research were considered to provide, at best, only anecdotal evidence, and this was considered to be insufficient for a scientific discipline.

Accounts of personal experiences were not ignored altogether. Rhine's wife, Louisa Rhine, spent many years studying reports of experiences which occurred in everyday life, and we shall consider her contribution in more detail later. For present purposes, however, we may note that this area of research was thought to be useful only because it offered the possibility of furnishing information about the occurrence of psychic events in a natural environment, which might then be utilised in the design of ever more sophisticated laboratory studies.

During the 1940's and 1950's parapsychology seemed to thrive. In 1957 the Parapsychological Association was formed, and in 1969 it was allowed to affiliate with the American Association for the Advancement of Science.³

Despite a sudden renewal of interest in the paranormal during the late 1960's and early 1970's (Truzzi 1971; 1974a; 1974b), professional parapsychology has had a difficult last twenty years. Universities are now reluctant to have parapsychology laboratories

³ However, three previous applications had been rejected (Collins and Pinch 1979: 254).

officially affiliated to them. The laboratory established by Rhine, for example, is now an independent research unit - the Foundation for Research into the Nature of Man - and has no formal links with the university. (The exception to this trend is the recent appointment of a Professor of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh. This Chair, however, is funded by private money bequeathed in the will of the writer, Arthur Koestler.) Despite the evidence accrued from a massive number of experimental studies, orthodox scientists are hesitant to accept the claim that psychic events exist, and that parapsychology is a 'proper' science. Indeed, its critics have become particularly strident, vocal and well-organised in their denunciation of knowledge claims produced by parapsychologists (Collins and Pinch 1979; Pinch and Collins 1984; see the journal The Skeptical Inquirer, published by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal). Moreover, some of the most impressive evidence for psychic abilities has been found to be fraudulent (Markwick 1978; 1985; Nicol 1975; Rogo 1985; see also the exchange between Blackmore 1987, and Sargent 1987).

In a recent historical study, Mauskopf and McVaugh (1980) conclude that the prospect for parapsychology is bleak. Support for this comes from a recent exchange between two professional parapsychologists and a committed skeptical psychologist, in the journal Behavioral and Brain Sciences (Alcock 1987; Rao and Palmer 1987). This exchange suggests that the critical debate between the two camps has become stagnant: the parapsychologists make cautious and measured claims for the existence of minute extra-sensory influences detected by increasingly sophisticated experimental studies; the skeptic elevates parapsychology's (implicit) claim to be

a revolutionary science and finds no evidence to support it. Sociologists of science who have analysed this debate have noted that the terms in which it has been conducted rarely seem to develop (Pinch 1987). It appears that science alone is incapable of arbitrating upon the existence or non-existence of paranormal phenomena.

It is not only sociologists and skeptics who have noted that parapsychology has made little progress in its attempt to become an accepted member of the scientific community. In a series of papers, Blackmore argues that parapsychology has failed to establish its subject, and has made no significant contribution towards an understanding of human nature. To rectify this, she suggests that it must discard many of its fundamental assumptions. In particular, she focuses on the concept of 'psi' - the mental ability which is claimed to be present in all forms of psychic phenomena (Blackmore 1985a; 1988a; 1988b).

Blackmore argues that the search for evidence of psi has led the discipline down a blind alley, especially as this has obscured interest in those events which initially stimulated psychical research: spontaneous experiences of anomalous phenomena. Blackmore urges that these experiences are the proper subject for parapsychological investigation, not the nebulous concept of psi. She has no doubt that these experiences occur; the issue is to explain why they occur and take the form they do.

We will assess Blackmore's appeal for a new psychical research in a later chapter. For our purposes here, however, we need only make the following observation: that the character of the study she recommends in place of traditional parapsychology relies heavily on

the use of people's accounts of their experiences. For example, in analysing the phenomenological features of the out-of-body experience, in the study of precognitive dreams and in the examination of spontaneous poltergeist activity, the parapsychologist does not have direct access to the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, as long as paranormal phenomena remain 'elusive', the researcher must inevitably use first-hand reports as a primary resource. As Blackmore herself has stated:

'The phenomena [of parapsychology] are essentially accounts of people's experiences.' (Blackmore 1988b: 56)

Insofar as the subject matter of this thesis are precisely such accounts, there is a clear connection with the type of research envisaged by Blackmore. Before further elaborating this connection, however, it is necessary to outline previous sociological work on aspects of the paranormal.

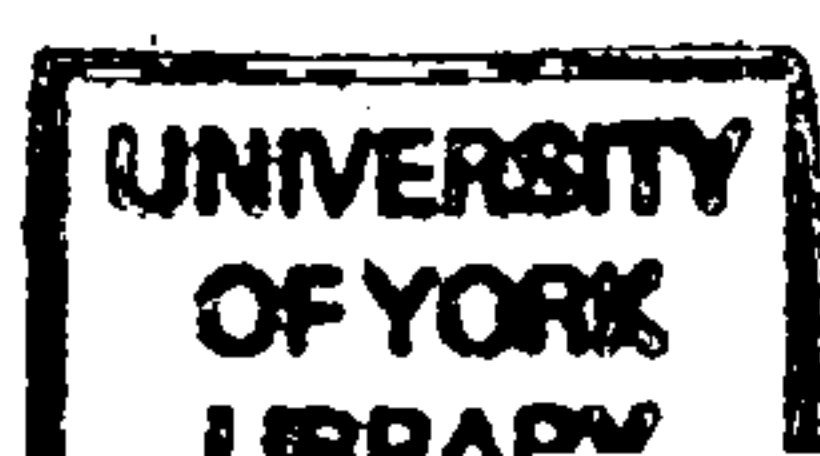
3 The sociological investigation of the paranormal

In the late 1960's and early 1970's there occurred in Western nations a massive resurgence of popular interest in those forms of experiences and beliefs commonly referred to as occult. For example, take the extent of popular interest in astrology: in the United States during the mid-1970's there were as many as 10,000 full-time and 175,000 part-time astrologers, who, either through personal contact or newspaper and magazine astrology columns, catered for an

estimated 40,000,000 people. The popularity of astrological forecasts was not limited only to the United States, but was common also in France, West Germany and Japan (Truzzi 1975). Moreover, a variety of people sought involvement in one form or another: research showed that 21% of the books in the campus bookshop at the University of Pittsburgh dealt with the subject of astrology (McConnell and McConnell 1971); also, a study of the readership of one occult magazine revealed that a high percentage of the subscribers had professional occupations (Hartman 1976).

There were other factors which further stimulated popular interest in aspects of the occult. For example, the publications of J. B. Rhine on parapsychology promoted belief in the existence of events such as ESP and precognition. Eastern religions and forms of mysticism were popularised by rock music celebrities. The study of magic became fashionable, and the number of covens grew throughout the United States and Western Europe, culminating in establishment of the Church of Satan in San Francisco. The writings of Erich von Daniken (1971; 1974), which claimed that primitive civilisations had been visited by extraterrestrials, enjoyed massive commercial success, and the advent of Uri Geller in the early 1970's led to a dramatic public awareness of psychokinesis and other forms of paranormal mental faculties.

Social scientific research which was prompted by these events roughly followed two paths: an attempt to discover the social and social-psychological characteristics of people who believed in the existence of, or claimed to have experienced, anomalous events; and the investigation of the cultural changes which had facilitated the resurgence of popular interest in the occult. While neither approach



looked directly at accounts of paranormal experiences, they are still important for our purposes because they raise for discussion a variety of issues relevant to the study of accounts.

[a] The social correlates of paranormal experiences

This approach attempted to locate the sociological characteristics of individuals who claimed either to have experienced paranormal phenomena, or who expressed the belief that such phenomena existed. In much of this research there was an overriding concern to provide a sociological account for these experiences and beliefs. That is, researchers worked, explicitly or implicitly, on the assumption that there is a significant correlation between a variety of social characteristics and belief in or experience of the occult. Moreover, that this supported the conclusion that these beliefs or experiences were in some way a consequence of the individual's social position or social-psychological traits.

Wuthnow's (1976) paper on belief in the power of astrological predictions provides a particularly striking example of this assumption. He reports that the tendency to believe that planetary forces influence human behaviour is strongest amongst groups which are marginal in society. The greatest appeal is in the poorly-educated, the unemployed, ethnic minorities, females, the unmarried, those over-weight, those under-weight, the ill, recently bereaved or the lonely. From his research he concludes that, for these groups, astrology may act as a substitute for more conventional religious belief. Astrology, then, has a functional role for the deprived as it is, essentially, a coping mechanism.

A similar theme informs Moody's (1974) participant observation

study of a coven in San Francisco. Between 1965 and 1967 Moody studied the dimensions and practices of the group. His analysis claims to reveal the social and social-psychological character of the members who participated in the coven's activities. He argues that 'pathological' traits were exhibited by many members of the coven. The most common trait was:

'a high level of general anxiety related to low self-esteem and a feeling of inadequacy.' (Moody 1974: 226)

Moody suggests this syndrome was related to interpersonal conflict in the nuclear family of the members of the coven. For example, 85% of the group claimed that their childhood was disrupted either by divorce or alcoholism of the parents. Their adult lives were no more successful or happy: many members of the coven had failed in their social, business and sexual relationships. The implication is clear, if not articulated explicitly: that the resort to witchcraft was a response by the members of the coven to the cumulative pressures exerted by the miserable circumstances of their lives.

In both these studies the analysts provide a sociological account for the behaviour and beliefs of the people they have studied. In doing so they display a commitment to what might be termed a 'sociology of error' approach (Bloor 1976). That is, they are furnishing accounts of events which are deemed to reveal the true causes of the beliefs of the participants. These sociological accounts are, therefore, superior to those which the participants themselves may offer as accounts of their actions.

Social-psychological analyses of aspects of belief in or experience

of anomalous phenomena provide explicit examples of the assumption of the superiority of the analyst's account. Warren (1970) examined the various status positions held by people who had claimed to have seen UFO's. He looked at status inconsistencies - people who hold conflicting social positions. For example, a black, working class doctor practising in a predominantly white middle class area may feel tension arising from the conflict between his professional and ethnic statuses. Warren found that status inconsistencies were more likely to have reported UFO sightings than status consistents. From this he concluded that the tendency to believe that one had witnessed an anomaly of this kind was causally related to the problems resulting from status inconsistency. Littig (1971) argued that belief in the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs is significantly related to affiliation motivation - a 'human disposition to be accepted and loved by others' (Littig 1971: 308). Both reseachers assume that the real root of belief in or experience of UFOs is in underlying social-psychological processes, and that these are preponderant amongst individuals who are, in some way, frustrated or deprived.

The work of Bourque (1968) and Bourque and Back (1969) examines the phenomenon of religious or mystical anomalies in relation to the social-structural position of the individuals claiming to have had such experiences. They begin with the observation that the experience of altered states of consciousness seems to have two primary forms: the religious and the aesthetic transcendental state. They attempt to discover whether there are two distinct experiences, or whether the same phenomenon is being comprehended and described in two different ways. They conclude that the character of the underlying experiences is the same, but that the significance

attributed to transcendental experiences depends upon class position, religious affiliation and marginality. They regard the individual's social characteristics as having a crucial importance in determining the phenomenological forms of the experience. For example, they argue that the people who report religious transcendental experiences share a number of common features (Bourque and Back 1968). These individuals display a great deal of 'ego-anxiety', and a degree of 'social anxiety'; they are relatively disinterested in economic or aesthetic concerns, but they are highly oriented to religious values. They go on to conclude:

'In fact, in the light of their anxiety levels and their concern with social values, it may be indicated that the experience itself is a structured group attempt to overcome feelings of frustration and alienation.' (Bourque and Back 1968: 38) [emphasis added]

In a later paper they take a more linguistic stance. Following Bernstein (e.g., 1972), they argue that certain strata in society have access to specific linguistic resources, and it is the use of these differentially available resources that determines the nature of the experience being reported. Those who are lower down the social scale will have access to a linguistic code redolent of religious imagery, while those of a higher social class position will be able to articulate their experiences in terms of its more aesthetic qualities (Bourque and Back 1971).

This study is relevant to the sociological analysis of accounts of anomalous events in that it points to one direction in which research may go: to examine how it is that language can be used to provide for the character of the experience being so reported.

Although this theme informs Bourque and Back's paper, however, their argument is of little value to the present study. Their position is not fully explored in any detail, and there are no analyses of instances of the ways in which language is used in the way the authors indicate. Moreover, the division of linguistic resources into two codes which correspond to two broad divisions of the social strata is particularly unsophisticated.

Nelson's (1975) study of the psychic experiences and belief in the existence of paranormal events in the population of Dawley, in Shropshire, begins with a similar position. He argues that it is better to assume that psychic experiences do exist, and as such they ought to be treated as 'givens' in sociological analysis. His research assessed whether certain social conditions facilitated or inhibited belief in the existence of, or experience of, anomalous psychic phenomena. He found no significant class-based difference when those class allocations were made according to the Registrar General's classifications. Those who ascribed themselves to the middle classes, however, were less likely to believe in the existence of ghosts. The inter-generational downwardly-mobile were more likely to claim to have had a greater number of actual experiences than the upwardly-mobile. The intra-generational downwardly-mobile were more likely to believe in and claim experience of psychical phenomena. Nelson concluded that social mobility may release individuals from set or rigid ways of perceiving and interpreting events in the world, thus facilitating a heightened sensitivity to the occurrence of anomalous phenomena.

Although Nelson's approach is, in many respects, different to that found in the research by Wuthnow, Moody, Warren, Littig and Bourque

and Back, it is important to emphasise the over-arching similarities in these studies. First, the accounts of personal experiences are not treated as a topic for sociological study; their value is obscured by the analysts' overriding commitment to deal comprehensively with a wider spectrum of beliefs and experiences. Second, in all cases it is assumed that sociological correlates can be unproblematically located and then used either as a causal explanation of the anomalies reported, or for the belief that the anomalies exist, or can account for the phenomenological features of various experiences. In the strongest sense, there is the implication of a direct causal link between the features of people's lives and their propensity to report belief in, and encounters with, anomalous forces. In the weak sense, there is the suggestion that the nature of the phenomena may be determined by the sociological variables of individual's lives, or that their position in the social structure may influence which type of events they experience, and to what degree. Third, consistent throughout all these studies is the argument that the downwardly mobile, the marginal - in short, those who are psychologically vulnerable - are more likely to report experiences of and belief in the existence of anomalous phenomena.

There is a considerable body of research, however, which contradicts the findings from Wuthnow, Moody and so on. Hay and Morissy's (MS) national survey of mystical, religious and paranormal experiences, for example, produced evidence opposite to that from Bourque and Back's analyses. In particular, they found that religious transcendental experiences were usually reported by advantaged groups, rather than the disadvantaged. Furthermore, people reporting this type of anomalous phenomena tended to score

highly on tests designed to assess psychological well-being. In a further study, Hay (MS) noted that individuals who had remained in education longer than the average were more inclined to claim to have had paranormal experiences. Wuthnow (1978) reports that he found no relationship between the level to which an individual had been educated and the propensity to experience or believe in the existence of extrasensory perception. Saunders' (1972) study of the social correlates of 80,000 people who claimed to have seen UFOs indicates that the better educated are more likely to report their sightings. Summarising the results of surveys by Green (1966), Palmer (1975), and Blackmore (1980), Blackmore (1982a: 82ff.) reports that the incidence of out-of-body-experiences, or OBEs, is unrelated to sex, age, ethnicity, birth order, political affiliation, religion, religiosity, education, occupation and income. She concludes that we cannot say with any conviction who are the people most likely to have this particular type of experience. Finally, we may again refer to Hartman's (1976) study of the American occult magazine, 'Gnostica', which revealed that those who are better educated and those with professional occupations were highly represented in the readership.

Contradictory evidence is also provided by Greeley (1975): for example, he found that people who claim to experience psychic phenomena show greater extremes of both positive and negative affect, and that they are likely to have enjoyed a longer period in education than non-psychics. Although some of his conclusions can be taken as supporting the marginality thesis, overall his results are ambiguous. Given the wealth of contradictory evidence, then, it would be unwarranted to presume that experience of or belief in anomalous

events can be explained by reference to the characteristics of people who make such reports.

It is also worth noting that surveys indicate that a large number of people claim to have anomalous experiences. This can be illustrated by looking at studies of the OBE. Green (1966) found that 19% of her sample claimed to have experienced this phenomenon. Palmer (1975) sent a questionnaire survey to the inhabitants of the town of Charlottesville, West Virginia, and to the students of the nearby university. The results revealed incidence rates of 14% and 25% respectively. Haraldsson et al's (1977) survey of the population of Iceland produced a figure of 8%. Blackmore's (1980) survey of students from the universities of Surrey and Bristol revealed incidence rates of 13% and 14% respectively.

Haraldsson's (1985) survey of national polls from a number of European countries and the United States provides a similar guide to the incidence of a variety of paranormal phenomena. The author's own summary states:

'Here we have for the first time relatively comparable data from most nations of Western Europe and the U.S.A.....Weighted figures have been given for the type of experiences among the total populations surveyed in Europe....For the whole of Western Europe telepathy was reported most frequently, by almost every third respondent (32%); contact with the dead by every fourth to fifth person (23%), and finally every fifth respondent claimed a personal experience of clairvoyance (20%).' (Haraldsson 1985: 155)

Given the reservations as to the accuracy or usefulness of survey methodologies (for example, Cicourel 1964) it would be unwise to treat these figures as if they indicate a 'real' rate of the incidence of the OBE, or of the other phenomena reported. They are

significant, however, in that they strongly suggest that reports of the experience of paranormal phenomena are common to a large section of the population of Western Europe and the United States. If these phenomena are differentially distributed in favour of those who are in socially marginal positions, then we must reconsider the meaning of the word 'marginal'.

There are a range of criticisms which centre on methodological issues. The studies cited so far have employed a range of methodological techniques: interviews, questionnaire surveys, participant observation and so on. They have looked at a variety of questions, including both experience of and belief in the existence of a number of anomalous phenomena: astrology, witchcraft, belief in and experience of psychic events and UFO sightings. Furthermore, the subjects for these studies have come from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from the inhabitants of a small Shropshire town, to residents of the Bay area in San Francisco. Such a wide variety of methods, objectives and subjects makes it difficult to produce general points which summarise the overall conclusions that we might draw from this body of research. It is equally difficult to provide a comprehensive critical appreciation. Consequently, we will make some points which are relevant to specific studies.

Warren's (1970) attempt to explain UFO sightings by reference to variant status positions held by single individuals can be questioned on two grounds. First, attempts to replicate his original findings have failed (Fox 1979). Second, status inconsistency theory has been shown to be inherently weak. For example, it gives little attention to the interpersonal circumstances in which statuses are actually experienced; furthermore, there has been an over-emphasis

upon individual statuses, and no systematic exploration of statuses which derive from group membership (Knocke 1972; Nelson 1973).

Many of the studies discussed have relied on categories and indices which are observer-created. That is, they are produced from the theoretical or empirical perspective adopted by the analyst. Wuthnow (1976) attempts to test whether astrology is a substitute for conventional religious affiliation amongst the socially marginal. His findings suggest that those on the margins of society are more disposed to believe that astrological predictions work, and that human beings are governed by planetary influence. His evidence seems to support this hypothesis. It is important, however, to note how the category of 'marginal' was produced. We have already observed that it seems to include a wide variety of sociological correlates: the old, bereaved, poor, less well educated, over-weight, under-weight, ethnic groups, women, unmarried people, and so on. We may seriously question the utility of an analytic category that is clearly applicable to a large number of individuals.

A central point in Wuthnow's argument is that these people suffer some form of deprivation, and their acceptance of astrology is a consequence of this. But we can ask, what is 'deprivation'? Is it a state of mental discomfort and tension, a form of psychic strain? Is it constant? Can individuals be less deprived one day, and more deprived the next? We may ask the same about 'general anxiety' (Moody 1974), 'social anxiety' and 'ego anxiety' (Bourque and Back 1968). That is, the researchers use these terms unquestioningly, as if the meaning of them is unproblematically available and commonly known. This point is not only relevant to the writing of the final report, but also impinges upon the actual study. For example, to

determine if his interviewees had weight problems, Wuthnow asked that his interviewers make an assessment of their weight. The results of this assessment contributed toward the overall classification of the individual as either marginal, or not. This procedure, however, is clearly marked by serious difficulties. It assumes that interviewers' have sufficient knowledge of what the proper weight for a person should be, and that they are at least proficient in making such assessments. These would clearly be clouded by culturally-available standards of body weight, and the interviewers' knowledge, and interpretation of these standards in relation to specific individuals. Thus there are problems, both in the way that categories such as 'marginal' are composed, and in the manner that they are ascribed to specific individuals.

A further issue concerns the ways that the social conditions of an individual's life actually come to be manifested as the experience of, say, a paranormal phenomenon. Implicit in much of the research reviewed here is the assumption that there is some causal link between what we might term the 'epi-phenomenon', for example, seeing a ghost, and the 'true' phenomenon: being subject to the psychological pressures imposed by virtue of social marginality. In the analyses presented here there are no clear attempts to articulate exactly how these two aspects of experience are related, let alone a satisfactory account of how one may be the cause of the other.

The most important feature of this research is that it obscures people's own accounts as an area for sociological investigation. The (assumed) rationality of the sociologist's accounts renders uninteresting the type of descriptions which may be collected; for example, reports of direct experiences. This methodological

presumption informs Wuthnow's following remarks:

'Even if we had asked people why they were interested in astrology, it isn't clear that the deprived would have recognised it as a coping mechanism.' (Wuthnow 1976: 163)

This quote from Wuthnow would suggest that, because it is likely that they would not correspond to the analyses furnished by the sociologists, such reports are considered to be analytically worthless. This point has been made by Eglin (1986) in his ethnomethodological study of alchemy:

'The admittedly least sophisticated and yet perhaps most telling indictment against analytic forays into the realm of the occult is simply researchers' persistent unwillingness and - with reference to the sanctioned and sanctionable legitimacy of their researches - inability to take the practitioners of the occult sciences seriously; to attend to these practitioners' claims and representations as anything other than epiphenomena, if not instances of fraud and chicanery; to resist the ever-present temptation toward reduction. All studies of the occult or arcane sciences which fail to take into account the claims of its practitioners can in no way assess those practitioners' methods or victories, and are consequently capable of bringing into view little more of ultimate interest than the invidiousness of their own investigations.' (Eglin 1986: 124)

This passage illustrates that ethnomethodological criticisms of sociological practice question the assumption that the analytic accounts sociologists provide stand as more objective or superior versions of the events than ones which may be provided by the participants in those events. Following this, the real problem for sociology is not to furnish purportedly 'definitive' statements about the world which reveal the 'true', as opposed to perceived and

thereby irrational, influences on social life; instead it is to furnish analyses of the ways that participants provide for, and display, the accountable and rational sense of events, behaviour and phenomena (Sacks 1963; Garfinkel 1967; Garfinkel and Sacks 1970). These points will be explored in greater detail later. For the present we may note not only that these issues may be actively explored by studying the ways that people talk about their paranormal experiences, but that there is a sustained body of theoretical writing and empirical research which promotes such an approach as a sociological imperative.

A further observation is that within parapsychology, the discipline with an official responsibility for the study of anomalous phenomena, there is a growing interest in, and recognition of the importance of, accounts of paranormal experiences. Indeed, we have seen that one leading parapsychologist has gone as far as to argue that such reports are the fundamental phenomena of parapsychological inquiry. The sociological approach exemplified in the socio-correlative studies, however, systematically directs attention away from personal reports. In this, it is singularly ill-equipped to attend to issues of contemporary importance.

In summary, then, the evidence provided by the investigation of the social correlates of paranormal experiences, or belief in the occult, can be criticised on several grounds. Firstly, there is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that the experience of and belief in the existence of anomalous events is not confined to the marginal, deviant, or psychologically maladjusted. Indeed, some parapsychologists (such as Blackmore 1982a, and Palmer 1979) have come to the conclusion that experiences of these kinds are not

peculiar to any specific section of the population. Secondly, it is clear that these experiences are not rare events, but may be quite widespread. Thirdly, the methodological procedures adopted in these studies can be questioned, not only in that they rest on an unwarranted assumption as to the superiority of professional over 'lay' explanations and accounts, but also in that they obscure how these lay accounts may be sociologically interesting.

[b] The occult as a deviant culture

We have already stated that in the late 1960's and the early part of the 1970's there was a sudden increase in the extent of popular interest in all aspects of the paranormal. Although this increase was evident in many Western countries, it was in the United States where it made its biggest impact. The second strand of sociological research, prompted by the proliferation of mystic and occult philosophies and practices, and claimed experience of various forms of paranormal phenomena, looked to the cultural context in which these developments were occurring. A predominant theme in this literature was that specific social and cultural events facilitated or encouraged belief or involvement in some form of the occult. In its strongest sense, this reiterates the harsh reductionism common to aspects of the socio-correlative research: that social forces can be identified which are deemed to provide an account for people's claimed beliefs and behaviour which is superior to any that they themselves may provide. Another overlap with the socio-correlative perspective is the conflation of experience and belief: both are accounted for by the same sociological explanations.

Perhaps the most sustained analysis of this kind comes from the

work of the American sociologist, Marcello Truzzi. In his analysis of modern forms of witchcraft, for example, (Truzzi 1971), he argues that contemporary involvement in black magic, Wicca, Satanic crafts and so on, is not to be understood as the result of direct experience of the efficacy of magic by an increasing number of people. Rather, he claims that such involvement represents a form of reaction to the pronouncements of the Church. That is, by dabbling in matters which are traditionally proscribed by the established Church, such as witchcraft and associated activities, people are demonstrating their liberation from, and rejection of, the prevailing religious orthodoxy.

He develops a more sophisticated analysis in his consideration of the Church of Satan in the United States. He suggests that the values, attitudes and beliefs espoused in the philosophy of the Church, as exemplified by the writings and philosophy of its founder, Anton le Vey, are not traditionally magical or Satanic in the sense of, for example, the writings of Aleister Crowley. The members of the Church, Truzzi claims, are more like cynical realists, attempting to manipulate what they consider to be supernormal forces for very pedestrian, pragmatic ends. Witchcraft, then, is not a new search for a perverse form of spiritual meaning, but the manifestation of a disenchantment with standard religious teachings.

For Truzzi, esoteric culture is parasitic on exoteric culture. The knowledge it claims to provide has appeal by virtue of the fact that it contradicts the accepted store of knowledge in a society:

'In many ways the occult is a residual category, a wastebasket for knowledge claims that are deviant in some way.' (Truzzi 1974a: 245)

Truzzi's analyses of the relationship between the occult and exoteric culture rest on the assumption that these two forms of cultural life are distinct, and that the analyst's task is to explain why individuals reject normal culture, and its associated patterns of behaviour and belief, and adopt the deviant culture of the occult. This assumption, however, overlooks the extent to which the occult is a central feature of exoteric culture. Indeed, it is possible to question whether the distinction between these two cultural forms can be sustained. Instead of viewing interest in the occult as, in some broad sense, a rejection of orthodox beliefs and activities, it is possible to ask in what ways the occult derives support from dimensions of exoteric culture.

For example, in various ways occult beliefs and practices derive positive support from aspects of orthodox religion. In his analysis of the relationship between folk and official religions, Bock (1966) draws attention to the way that elements of the former are absorbed into the latter and become acceptable characteristics of that religious form. This work is useful insofar as his definition of folk religion bears a similarity to common conceptions of occult groups. He argues that, whereas official religion appeals to a universal sacred authority, folk religions are attached to, and common to, specific groups. In this, we can see a parallel between for example UFO contactee cults, witchcraft groups, occult societies and so on, and folk religions. His work implies that the contemporary form of orthodox religion may be due in part to the assimilation of ideas, images, themes and practices derived from, and more conventionally associated with, folk religions. The point is that even orthodox religion may have an elements of ideology and

practices which reflect the concerns of folk, occult or pagan activities. Bock argues that this is clearly the case with the symbol of Father Christmas, the annual appearance of whom is a central theme of the modern-day form of the Christian celebration of the birth of Christ. He shows how the original St. Nicholas motif was incorporated into more traditional religious ideology despite its original appearance as a feature of European folk religious beliefs, and the behaviour associated with them.

There are many features of contemporary religious orthodoxy to which the occultist can reasonably point so as to illustrate that supernatural elements pervade even the most stable and accepted religious orthodoxies. For example, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and in the prophecies of the Book of Revelation there is a distinct flavour of the supernatural, or paranormal. By proposing the truth, literal or symbolic, of such events the established Church can hardly not emphasise that its own traditions are heavily imbued with magical or supernatural events (Campbell and McIver 1987).

Not only can occultists draw support from certain features of contemporary religious doctrine, they can also obtain support for their own ideas and practices by indicating the failure of the Church to provide 'proof' of the teachings it provides. Occultists can claim that their own doctrines are, in a sense, more scientific than those offered by the established Church. Consequently, they are able to provide 'evidence' for their own beliefs, whereas the Church cannot. In so doing they capitalise on a 'failure' of the established Church to be able to substantiate its claims. Ashworth's (1980) study of new mythologies highlights this process. He considers, amongst other things, the popular appeal of the writings

of Erich von Daniken and the myth of Atlantis. He argues that proponents of what he terms 'popular' sciences claim to be able to prove their arguments and theses, which, in part, accounts for their appeal. That is, whereas religion can offer no proof of its assertions, the writers of popular science always attempt to ground their arguments in facts, theories and evidence. They gain credibility for their theories by adopting the rubric of science.

The established Church is in an uncomfortable position with regard to its official pronouncements about the dangers of dabbling in areas of occult practice. The clergy may denounce these activities as dangerous, but in doing so they can be seen to be endorsing the occultists' claims that these practices have real effects. Indeed, by claiming that such activities are dangerous, the established Church may be making them more interesting and exciting, thus increasing the likelihood of public interest and involvement in them.

The Church does not reject the occult out of hand. Many members of the clergy are clearly interested in the relationship between the paranormal and the concerns of orthodox theology. In 1954 the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual studies was founded in Britain, thus forging a formal theological link between religion and the occult. There is also the journal, The Christian Parapsychologist, which is devoted to issues of the connections between the paranormal and religion. It is also interesting to note that since the occult revival of the early 1970's the Church has been more inclined to discuss openly those aspects of its own teachings which display a supernatural or paranormal flavour (Marty 1970). For example, since the middle 1960's the church has expressed a greater willingness to discuss the status of angels, which culminated

in Billy Graham's (1975) arguably definitive text on the subject 'Angels: God's Secret Agents'.

Marty (1970) has argued that the success of modern occultism rests in its ability to incorporate and assimilate traditionally middle class values. He focuses not on the occult underground - the seamier side of occultism, involving black magic, sacrifice and orgiastic ceremonies - but on the occult 'aboveground', or the occult establishment. In this domain he finds that, although there are elements of strange sexual practices and supernatural powers, these function merely as titillating aspects. There is little that resembles the orgiastic excesses of popular versions of black magic. The success of the occult establishment rests in the ways that acceptable personal goals have been derived from exoteric culture. The participants tend to orient towards transcendental, mystical or spiritual values, and in this they share aims which are not so far removed from the goals of the established Church. This is supported by Lynch's (1979) study of one occult group, the popularity of which stemmed not from a rejection of religious values, but the way that it was able to offer novel means by which to attain essentially traditional forms of spiritual enlightenment.

Analysis of the values of the Californian-based Church of Satan provides further evidence that the relationship between exoteric and esoteric culture is misrepresented by a model of dichotomously opposed alternatives. The members of the Church do not espouse anti-Christian values simply as a consequence of their opposition to the established religious values and activities. They reject Christianity, and other forms of traditional religious adherence, because they believe it fosters individual dependence upon external

powers and forces, thereby diminishing human freedom and curbing the potential for self-fulfilment. Their own beliefs and practices are oriented directly to the achievement of personal goals through the manipulation of supernormal forces.

Occultists exploit prevailing rationalism, and the popular adherence to science as the ultimate arbiter on truth and reality, to establish further their credibility. The Church of Satan argues that its philosophy is informed by knowledge of events and forces which, although as yet 'undiscovered' by orthodox science, will eventually yield to the same scientific mode of investigation as any other accepted physical force. To support this claim occultists point to episodes in the early development of areas of established science to indicate that its roots are shrouded in what would today still be considered as mysticism and magic. For example, early interest in chemical reactions was stimulated by the alchemists' attempts to transmute base metals into gold. Information about the motions of planets and stars was made available for astronomers partly through the detailed observations compiled by astrologers. Interest in medical treatment developed from herbal remedies employed by witches. Moreover, as late as the 1800's Scottish scientists were debating the merits of phrenology, the interpretation of personality through assessment of the contours of the skull (Shapin 1979). In a similar vein, we can note that Charles Darwin was a physiognomist, and that his decision to embark on the voyage which was eventually to lead him to the Galapagos Islands was, to some degree, motivated by his favourable opinion of the face of the Beagle's captain. All these can be cited by occultists to show the extent to which the history of science has been heavily infused with aspects of the occult or the

paranormal.

Related to this is the way that parapsychologists may refer to aspects of contemporary science to substantiate their claim that the forces they deal with are not necessarily opposed to modern science. Some have argued that developments in quantum mechanics - the study of sub-atomic particles - support parapsychological explanations; for example, that paradoxes produced in quantum theory can be resolved by reference to the influence of mind and observation upon matter. (For a discussion of the relationship between parapsychology and quantum mechanics, see Collins and Pinch 1983, chapter 4; Gardner 1985; Josephson 1975; Koestler 1972; Oteri 1975.)

The 'cultic milieu' identified by Campbell (1972) ensures that there are various sources of support for individuals involved in some form of occult participation. That is, people interested in one kind of anomaly are likely to be exposed to ideas from other areas of occult involvement. For example, interest in the U.F.O. phenomenon may lead to an awareness of issues from parapsychological research, and also a familiarity with doctrines common to ceremonial magic. The cultic milieu ensures that individuals from disparate areas of anomaly involvement to come into contact with their colleagues, thus facilitating an exchange of ideas and stimulating individual interest. In this way, the cultic milieu sustains the stability of occult involvement.

Finally, Campbell and McIver (1987) have indicated the extent to which occult themes, images and ideas permeate the reading material produced specifically for young children. The libraries of children's schools are awash with witches, ghosts, goblins, fairies and creatures from outer space. This stock of material ensures that

young children are exposed to a vast array of information about the paranormal. Campbell and McIver make the point that, with so many children being exposed to such powerful images at such an impressionable age, it is surprising that in their later adult life more people do not reject orthodox culture for the esoteric.

The relationship between the occult and ordinary culture is therefore far more complex than suggested in the work of sociologists such as Truzzi. Rather than dichotomously-opposed alternatives, the esoteric and exoteric are intimately connected. The paranormal derives support from orthodox culture; many features of the occult have permeated ordinary culture, and some occult beliefs and practices reflect prevailing currents from mainstream culture. By way of a summary to this section we may make some observations which relate to our interest in accounts of paranormal experiences.

The study of the cultural conditions under which interest in the paranormal flourishes has, like the socio-correlative approach, tended to ignore people's own accounts of their experiences. Moreover, the experiences themselves have been overlooked as an area for sociological analysis. This is primarily linked to the assumption that the things which are being reported simply can't have happened in the ways that they are being described. For example, it is assumed that astrology is popular, not because it provides accurate information about the future, but because the marginal circumstances of people's lives lead them to look to 'fate' as a means to rationalise their plight (Nederman and Goulding 1981); or that people claim encounters with spirits of the dead on account of the combination of specific psychological, social class, educational, occupational and geographical characteristics. Similarly, we noted

earlier that some sociologists have been critical of the assumption that belief in and knowledge about the occult is inherently deviant. Yet even their work seems to imply that the sources of support for contemporary occultism, which they cite as evidence to confirm that the occult is a part of orthodox culture, can somehow explain the continued existence of patterns of involvement.

The primary conclusion from this section is that knowledge about and belief in the existence of paranormal or supernatural phenomena are not deviant to mainstream culture. Indeed, such knowledge may be regarded as a fundamental feature of the fabric of contemporary society. However, this is not to claim that paranormal experiences are treated as 'just another' form of experience by members of society. Clearly, their very nature assures suspicion, and, at times, derision for those who claim them; reactions which seem to have permeated much of the work reviewed in this and the last section. It is necessary, therefore, to develop a position which eschews a priori skepticism and suspicion. To do this we will turn to themes raised earlier regarding ethnomethodological concerns. This discussion will demonstrate that the ethnomethodological position is not only a suitable perspective from which to undertake a study of accounts of paranormal experiences, but that such an approach is imperative.

4 Ethnomethodological considerations

We may illustrate these points by discussing briefly Smith's (1978) study of an account of mental illness. Smith's datum was a report of a young girl's decline into mental illness and behavioural irregularity, which was provided by one of her friends. The analytic interest in this account was not motivated by the assumption that it allowed the sociologist to find out whether the girl was 'really' mentally ill, or whether the friend was being pernicious, and distorting the 'truth' of the matter. Smith rejects the idea that a single, 'true' version of events can be obtained from the details of the report; indeed, she goes on to reveal how the 'same' information could be used to support an entirely different reading of the reported behaviour. What she does is take the account apart to explicate two of its features. First, the taken-for-granted assumptions and conventions about 'normal' and 'abnormal' behaviour which inform the friend's descriptions. Second, she examines the rhetorical linguistic practices through which this stock of knowledge is deployed as a resource to build an account which points clearly to the conclusion that the behaviour of the girl was due to her increasing psychological instability. That is, Smith reveals how the 'facticity' of the girl's problems are constructed in the course of the account.

The primary analytic contribution is this: Smith reveals how an account of a state of affairs in the world is designed to be recognisable as that state of affairs. It does not presuppose an objective world, independent of members' reasoning and discourse practices, which can be used as a 'yardstick' either to confirm or disconfirm the truth of the friend's account. Instead she looks to

the embedded practices through which this sense of events is accomplished.

The method exemplified by Smith's study echoes central concerns of the ethnomethodological study of social life:

'in contrast to certain versions of Durkheim that teach that the objective reality of social facts is sociology's fundamental principle, the lesson is taken instead, and used as a study policy, that the objective reality of social facts as an ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life, with the ordinary artful ways of that accomplishment being by members known, used, and taken for granted, is, for members doing sociology, a fundamental phenomenon..... Ethnomethodological studies analyse everyday activities as members' methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., as "accountable", as organisations of commonplace everyday activities.' (Garfinkel 1984 [1967]: vii)

An ethnomethodological approach thus rejects the assumption that accounts of paranormal experiences furnish a series of passive or neutral comments upon those experiences. It suggests that these experiences are unavoidably constituted through accounts. That is, the sense or meaning of the events, the 'facticity' and 'objectivity' of the phenomena - the actual character of the experiences - are inextricably tied to people's natural language descriptive practices, and the 'lay' or common-sense reasoning which is embedded in those practices.

These arguments entail two important implications for previous sociological studies of the paranormal. First, they indicate that an important issue - how members themselves provide for the recognisably paranormal character of experiences - has been systematically ignored in the attempts to furnish rational

sociological explanations. Second, they emphasise that the actual phenomena - the experiences - are inseparable from the discourse through which they are made available for public or analytic inspection. This lends a sociological dimension to Blackmore's statement that parapsychological 'phenomena are essentially accounts of people's experiences' (1988b: 56).

5 Science and the Paranormal

Throughout this chapter we have touched upon the relationship between science and the paranormal on several occasions. In a previous section we noted that the occultists have sought credibility for their own knowledge claims by arguing for an underlying similarity between the forces they study and those studied by orthodox scientists. The development of a thoroughly scientific parapsychology exemplifies the attempt to establish the rationality of claims of the paranormal. It is useful to consider one approach to the sociological examination of this relationship because it connects with a theme central to this chapter, and which was discussed in the last section - the way in which a sociological project should proceed in dealing with the accounts of incidents, the ontological status of which is at best, problematic, or worse, controversial.

Insofar as the occultists' claims often contradict the established body of knowledge about how the universe works, it is surprising that these have not received more extensive critical attention from members of the orthodox scientific community. Most scientists do not

attend to occult pronouncements because they regard these as being simply too ridiculous to merit serious attention. An example is the way that archeologists, physicists, astrophysicists and biologists ignored von Daniken's (1971; 1974) thesis that the Earth was visited by extraterrestrials who genetically interfered with primate life forms to evolve homo sapiens (Story 1976). Despite the lack of widespread and stringent critical analysis, however, there has been a consistent core of scientists who try to debunk the claims for the existence of anomalies. This is particularly evident in the skeptical attacks on the status of parapsychology, the scientific study of psychic phenomena, and on the concerted efforts of a small group of scientists to provide normal explanations for sightings of UFOs. The critical debate between parapsychologists and their skeptical colleagues has been of particular interest to sociologists of science. By debating parapsychology's claim to be a legitimate member of the community of scientific subjects, the protagonists publically display, and thereby make available to the sociologists, the usually tacit and undisclosed criteria concerning what is to count as valid science. In assessing the merits of a series of experiments, for example, the protagonists exhibit the assumptions that inform their reasoning as to what constitutes correct experimental protocol.

In an earlier section we discussed the history of the scientific study of paranormal phenomena. Critics have rejected parapsychologists' claim to scientific status, suggesting that their activities and alleged phenomena fail to meet the criteria for acceptable scientific activity. They argue that parapsychologists cannot produce a replicable demonstration of the existence of some

paranormal force or event. Also, they state that it provides no theoretical understanding of the phenomena it claims to study. Furthermore, it is claimed that some parapsychologists are committed to certain mystical or metaphysical beliefs which may influence their ability to take an objective stance to their work. Finally, critics can take any set of positive experimental results and reconstruct the protocol of the experiment to reveal how those results could have been produced fraudulently. The mere suggestion of fraud is often treated as sufficient to warrant skepticism not only of that set of experiments, but also suspicion of other work by the experimenters involved. (The criticisms of parapsychology have been comprehensively documented by Collins and Pinch [1979]).

Many of the criticisms of parapsychology, however, can also be applied to established areas of orthodox scientific practice. For example, astronomers and geophysicists cannot provide replicable experiments to prove conclusively specific theories. Quantum mechanics, an established, albeit highly specialised, area of orthodox physics, provides little theoretical framework for the observations of the scientists. It is equally possible to argue that any orthodox scientist, committed to working within the domain of a particular theory, might be tempted to produce fraudulent results to support his/her viewpoint. A case in point is the work of the psychologist Sir Cyril Burt, who, it is popularly believed, fabricated experimental results to ensure support for his theories about intelligence and genetic endowment.

Pinch (1979) has noted that part of the appeal of the fraud hypothesis is that it can be employed as if it provides alternative scientific hypotheses to account for positive experimental results.

It is possible to argue, however, that the suggestion of fraud can not legitimately be used in this way insofar as it fails to meet the criteria for proper scientific practice: it cannot furnish replicable results, it is supported by no solid theoretical base and is supported by the 'metaphysical' bias of its users. In short, many of the criticisms directed at the parapsychologists can be equally applied to one of the main tactics employed by the critics.

One perspective in the sociology of science suggests that the investigator should be impartial to the truth or falsity of the knowledge claims advocated by the branch of science in question. Also, that the procedures of science by which the truth or falsity of an issue is decided are inherently social practices. That a branch of science proposes the factual character of one knowledge claim does not then mean that that claim is beyond the scope of sociological inquiry; rather, it means that the sociologist can investigate the social mechanisms through which that claim's status as an objectively-available fact is constructed. Furthermore, empirical investigation of the social production of such knowledge claims can reveal the processes through which the actual character of a phenomenon is negotiated.

Collins (1976) studied the response of the parapsychological community to one scientist's claims to have shown that plants were able to detect, and respond emotionally, to the destruction of live shrimps through immersion in boiling water. Such a startling claim led to attempts to replicate the original experiment; these provided little support for the findings of the original research. The parapsychologist who conducted the original study, however, argued that the replications which had produced counter-evidence to his own

were not in fact replications at all, but were subtly different in design, and that these variables were responsible for the contrary evidence. For example, the original experimenter used one method to detect the physiological changes in the plants which, he claimed, were evidence of an emotional reaction to the death of the shrimps. Other scientists suggested alternative ways of measuring this reaction. Each method, however, inevitably imputed different qualities to the phenomenon. Thus, in the ways that scientists debated which were the proper procedures by which to study the phenomenon of plant response, they were actively, though not deliberately, engaged in negotiating the properties of the phenomenon. As Collins puts it:

'Now, if in selecting a set of experiments to constitute a successful series of replications, believers in [the phenomenon] select one set as competent, and another as incompetent....then in negotiating the acceptance of this set - in which project they may well succeed if they are persuasive- they have not only negotiated the existence of the phenomenon, but have also negotiated its character- i.e. it is of such a nature as to be affected by certain subtle psychic influences....In this way, can a new phenomenon come into existence, and thus can its characteristics be socially determined' (Collins 1976: 27)

The debate within the parapsychological community as to the adequacy of the subsequent replications has the same character as equivalent debates in orthodox science; for example, in the attempts to replicate a working model of what is known as a T.E.A laser (Collins 1974), and in the debate following the claim that gravity waves had been detected (Collins 1975). In these relatively advanced areas of scientific activity, in which no consensus had

emerged, either with respect to the definition of the phenomenon or the ways to proceed experimentally, routine scientific debate concerning the most suitable procedure entailed a negotiation of the character of the phenomenon.

The relativist position in the sociology of science clearly echoes many of the features of an ethnomethodological position on the study of accounts of paranormal experiences. Firstly, we have seen how, throughout previous sociological investigation of belief in and experience of paranormal forces, sociologists have implicitly or explicitly adopted a position with regard to the ontological status of the events and beliefs under study. Some have assumed that anomalies are real, and have conducted their research accordingly (for example, Nelson 1976), but the majority have assumed that these anomalies do not exist. The relativist perspective of the sociology of science suggests that not only is it unnecessary to adopt such a position, but that in doing so the more interesting sociological questions are obscured.

Collins and Pinch's (1979; 1983) research into the production of parapsychological knowledge has revealed that what counts as valid knowledge is socially constructed. Furthermore, they have indicated that the actual character of phenomena, whether paranormal or not, is constructed through scientists' practices, and not objectively available 'in the world' waiting to be discovered. In doing this they have drawn attention to, and explicated, some of the resources which scientists use to do science. While they have explored this issue in their analyses of the ways that the scientific community generally negotiate the factual status of scientific claims, related questions can also inform the study of individual accounts of

paranormal experiences. For example, what linguistic resources do speakers use when describing anomalous events ? How are accounts organised so as to provide for the recognisable objectivity and facticity of the phenomenon ? Also, what tacit knowledge and assumptions about the paranormal inform accounts of actual experiences ?

The primary advantage of asking questions such as these is two-fold. Firstly, the analyst is not compelled to adopt a position about the ultimate truth of the events which are reported; this in turn ensures that such assumptions are not explicitly or implicitly incorporated into the subsequent analyses. Secondly, this epistemological agnosticism generates interest in the ways that descriptions may provide for the actual character of the phenomena, rather than merely reflect it.

6 Conclusions

The sociological study of accounts of anomalous experiences is important for two reasons. First, Blackmore's sustained criticism of the contemporary form of parapsychology has led her to emphasise the importance of personal experiences as a proper subject matter for the discipline. In doing so, she has drawn attention to the fact that these experiences are available for subsequent investigation only through the descriptions of them provided by the experiencers. That is, the subject matter of parapsychology is inextricably connected to the medium through which those experiences are made public; indeed, until a method has been devised to obtain

other forms of data about these experiences, for the practical purpose of research, accounts are the phenomena.

With notable exceptions, there has been no sociological interest in personal accounts of spontaneous experiences. Hitherto, the main objective was the description of the social-correlates of belief and existence, and the cultural conditions under which these may occur and flourish. Informing a variety of studies, however, was the assumption that the events which people have reported do not exist. This further ensured that personal accounts were deemed to be essentially accounts of error, and thereby uninteresting.

While we may be correct to criticise these studies, they have been useful insofar as they have facilitated a sketch of the broad character of the sociological interest in accounts. We have noted Bourque and Back's (1971) argument that the linguistic resources available to speakers by virtue of their class position provides for the precise character of their transcendental experience. This implies that descriptions may not merely reflect the state of affairs to which they refer, but may in part constitute the events being reported. This connects with the ethnomethodological interest in the practical resources used by people when they describe their personal experiences. As an illustration of the 'constitutive' character of members' practical reasoning we looked to studies of science undertaken from a relativist position, in particular the work of Collins and Pinch. Their sociological agnosticism regarding the ontological status of scientific phenomena allowed them the opportunity to explicate the inherently social practices by which the character of these phenomena were negotiated. By establishing a similar position with regard to the events which experiencers claim to

have witnessed, we can not only generate questions for empirical investigation, but also ensure that skeptical assumptions and judgements about the phenomena are not incorporated into the analysis.

The discussion of ethnomethodology emphasised the resources people use and display in their activities. The resources available to speakers when describing their anomalous experiences are their tacit linguistic competences and communicative skills. Thus, to understand further the activity of making an account, it is necessary to develop a more comprehensive appreciation of precisely these resources. In the next chapter, then, we will explore this issue by focusing on the practice of 'describing' as a social activity.

CHAPTER TWO:

'DESCRIBING' AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY

1 Introduction

In this chapter I want to discuss in more detail the character of an ethnomethodological interest in accounts of paranormal experiences. Within the sociological literature there is a considerable body of material devoted to exposition of Garfinkel's (1967) original works and their subsequent developments (Atkinson 1978; Atkinson and Drew 1979; Benson and Hughes 1983; Douglas 1971; Garfinkel 1986; Garfinkel and Sacks 1970; Heritage 1984; Leiter 1980; Mehan 1975; Sharrock and Anderson 1986; Turner 1974). Consequently, to avoid unnecessary repetition, we will not here discuss the theoretical importance of his work, nor review the early history of ethnomethodological research. Instead, I will illustrate those ethnomethodological considerations which are germane to the present project by looking at the practice of 'describing' and arguing that it is a social activity. This will be done through a discussion of primarily empirical materials taken from occasions of talk in face-to-face interaction.

This exercise is useful for three reasons. First, by looking at actual instances of the activity of describing we gain a clear understanding of features of language use that would be difficult to explain through a simple exegesis of the relevant points. Second, as

the data to be analysed in this thesis are recorded verbal reports of personal experiences, it is useful to have an empirical illustration based on materials taken from talk in interaction. Third, since the increase in the availability of relatively sophisticated audio technology, parapsychologists and other researchers actively use audio recording facilities in data collection. Thus, it is increasingly becoming the case that the materials from which these researchers work are also verbal descriptions of paranormal phenomena.

A second objective of this chapter is to review the ways that parapsychologists have used accounts of paranormal experiences as resources in their research. The vast majority of descriptions which parapsychologists have used have been written, rather than spoken. As the empirical chapters of this thesis will deal only with spoken accounts, it is important to clarify why it is useful to review this literature.

In the ways that parapsychologists have used reports to investigate paranormal phenomena they have displayed some of the assumptions about language use, and the relationship between language and the world, which have informed their work. It will become clear that these assumptions are radically different from those that we will be adopting here. This exercise is useful, then, inasmuch as we can develop an understanding of alternative approaches to the study of accounts. Moreover, this exercise will reveal these assumptions to be fundamentally problematic, and that they impinge in the analysis of reports and also obtrude in the methodological procedures used by parapsychologists. Therefore, we can not only clarify the ethnomethodological position, but we may also illustrate why it is

preferable to traditional parapsychological approaches.

2 Ethnomethodological analysis of language use

The first point to consider is that no descriptive utterance can exhaust the particulars of the state of affairs to which it refers. The description of any event can be extended indefinitely. For example, with regards to the formulation of location, or 'place', Schegloff has written:

'Were I now to formulate where my notes are, it would be correct to say that they are: right in front of me, next to the telephone, on the desk, in my office, in the office, in Room 213, in Lewisohn Hall, on campus, at school, at Columbia, in Morningside Heights, on the upper West Side, in Manhattan, in New York City, in New York State, in the North east, on the Eastern seaboard, in the United States, etc. Each of these terms could in some sense be correct....were its relevance provided for.' (Schegloff 1972b: 81)

The point is, then, that any description or reference is produced from a potentially inexhaustible list of possible utterances, each of which is 'logically' correct or 'true' by any test of correspondence. By producing one descriptive utterance from a range of potentially usable items, however, the speaker 'brackets in' or indexes certain particulars of the referent of the description, and, at the same time, 'brackets out' other aspects of the referent. Thus, any description is a selection which brings to the recipient's attention specific particulars of the state of affairs being described.

These features of the description, however, provide materials

which the recipient can inspect to identify the sense of that utterance which is relevant in that specific occasion. That is, the process whereby a descriptor actually comes to describe is a reflexive process: the recipient furnishes the sense of the utterance not only from what is said, but also from an inspection of the way in which it is said. As Garfinkel and Sacks put it:

'We understand mastery of natural language to consist in this. In the particulars of his speech, a speaker, in concert with others, is able to gloss those particulars and is thereby meaning something different than he can say in so many words; he is doing so over unknown contingencies in the actual occasions of interaction; and in so doing, the recognition that he is speaking and how he is speaking are specifically not matters for competent remarks....The idea of 'meaning differently than he can say in so many words' requires comment. It is not so much 'differently than what he says' as that whatever he says provides the materials to be used in making out what he says. However extensive or explicit what a speaker says may be, it does not by its extensiveness or explicitness pose a task of deciding the correspondence between what he says and what he means that is resolved by citing his talk verbatim. Instead, the talk itself, in that it becomes a part of the self-same occasion of interaction, becomes another contingency of that interaction. It extends and elaborates indefinitely the circumstances it glosses and in this way it contributes to its own accountably sensible character.'

(Garfinkel and Sacks 1970: 344-5) [original emphasis]

These points can be illustrated by a brief consideration of the following data, taken from a telephone conversation.

(1) (Trip to Syracuse:2)

1	C	So tha: [:t
2	I	[k-khhh
3	C	Yihknow I <u>really</u> don't have a place tuh sta:y.
4	I	'hh <u>Oh</u> :::::h
5		(.2)
6	I	'hhh So yih not g'nna go up this week <u>e</u> n?
7		(.2)

8 C Nu::h I don't think so.
9 I How about the following weekend.
10 (.8)
11 C *hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?
12 I *hhhhh Oh:. hh ALright so: - no ha:ssle, (.)
13 s [o
14 C [Ye:h
15 I Yihkno:w::
16 () *hhh
17 I: So we'll make it fer another ti:me then.

(Drew 1984: 130)

In this example C and I are talking about an arranged trip. Although one date has already been arranged I now explains that she cannot go on that trip. As an alternative she suggests another time, the next weekend. This extract, then, illustrates the way that the same state of affairs - in this case, a date for a proposed arrangement - may be described in different ways. For example, I refers to 'the following weekend' (line 9); it is noticeable, however, that C provides a re-description of the date of the proposal by substituting 'weekend' with 'vacation' (line 11). In doing so, he draws attention to features of that occasion which are glossed over, or not emphasised, by 'weekend'. These are that this suggested date for the trip, being also a vacation, or national holiday, cannot be treated as any weekend. In this sense, highlighting it as a vacation makes relevant not only that fact, but also makes relevant for that moment of the conversation certain inferences from the word 'vacation' - that people routinely have events arranged for vacation weekends. That is, he provides a set of materials from which the recipient can infer that his selection of terms was designed to indicate why he would not be able to go on that trip at that time. In her subsequent utterances, I displays that she recognises this implication of C's re-description.

By re-describing the proposed occasion for a planned trip the speaker was able to achieve specific interactional tasks. He registered his inability to attend the trip on the dates suggested by his co-participant. He did not have to state explicitly that he could not attend; his selection of descriptive utterances accomplished this by permitting the recipient to analyse his utterance to locate its significance. His selection of the components of that utterance, then, was intimately relevant to the precise linguistic context of its use - a suggestion as to a possible date for a planned trip - and the action it constituted - an oblique but interactionally sensitive way of displaying his unavailability for that date.

We can observe from this example that the selection of a descriptive utterance may be influenced by the speaker's tacit reasoning about the actions it will perform. It illustrates further that such selection is not only informed by, but also displays, the speaker's practical reasoning as to the significant features of the precise location of the utterance. It is not that he is going away somewhere else that weekend, or that he dislikes the company of the caller, although these and other reasons may be correct; what matters, however, for the way that he deals with the caller, is that he can decline the suggested arrangement in such a way that he does not have to state explicitly that he is unable to go. Instead, he provides sufficient material for the recipient to come to this conclusion.

When people talk they are presenting materials - what they say, how they say it - which may be used as the focus for and basis of moral and evaluative judgements. From the inspection of precisely these

materials co-participants can arrive at judgements and conclusions concerning the speaker's character, motives, intentions and so on, and the character of the talk in which they are engaged. In short, talk is a moral and inferential business.

These features are displayed in the example used above. We can observe that the way the speaker re-describes the occasion for the suggested trip provides materials by which the recipient can infer that the speaker cannot make the trip. In doing this, he implies that the reason for not being able to make the trip rest in the features of weekends that are also vacations - visiting friends, or family, and so on. His unavailability, then, is not due to his reluctance, but rather the features of weekends that are also vacations. Stating explicitly that he was not happy with the proposed date might lead to interactional difficulties: such a statement might warrant an account as to why he felt like this; it might seem unjustly abrupt, and possibly rude. Stating that he does not wish to go on a trip is a morally different business from stating that events beyond his control prevent him from complying with the caller's suggestions, or that, by virtue of the special place of vacations in people's calendars, his reluctance is related to the date suggested for the trip.

This moral and inferential character of language has been noted by Sacks in his discussion of members' measurement systems. When discussing the ways that in which people order times, and the sequence of events in their lives, he provides a stark illustration of the bases for evaluations and judgements which are available in the materials produced in ordinary talk. He claims that such issues are interesting:

'when you can see that 'Tuesday' is the right sort of answer to the question, 'when did you have the cast taken off?' under certain circumstances, and 'November the 11th' is an answer that would get you committed.'
(Sacks lecture 14, Fall 1967)

The significance of this feature of language use is further demonstrated in the following data, taken from the transcript of a rape trial. In these extracts the counsel for the defence is cross-examining the prosecution's main witness, the victim of the alleged rape. Note that both parties produce what might be termed competing versions of ostensibly the same event. The point I wish to make is that the sense of the events being described is occasioned by the way it has been described. That is, the 'reality' of the incidents referred to is provided in the way that the descriptions have been constructed.

(2)

1 C [referring to a club] it's where girls and fellas meet
2 isn't it ?
3 W People go there.

(3)

1 C And during the evening, didn't Mr O. [the defendant] come
2 over to sit with you ?
3 W Sat at our table

(4)

1 C [referring to a car journey taken by the witness and the
2 defendant] some distance back up into the wood, wasn't
3 it ?
4 W It was up a path I don't know how far.

(Drew forthcoming)

In (2) 'where girls and fellas meet' is countered by 'people go there'; in (3) 'sat at our table' contrasts with 'sit with you'; and in (4) 'it was up the path' is an alternative to 'some distance back into the wood'. These versions are not necessarily incompatible; they are not, in any logical sense, mutually exclusive. In ordinary conversation, furthermore, the provision of one such description would rarely merit the production of an alternative reading. The significance of these utterances rests in the way that the speakers have chosen to describe events so as to construct a specific set of inferable properties, from the inspection of which the over-hearing jury can come to those conclusions each party to the cross-examination wishes them to arrive at.

For example, in (3), the question 'didn't he come over to sit with you?' implies that the witness was sufficiently familiar with the defendant that they might sit together in a club. From this the jury members might reasonably infer that the witness was in fact friendly with the defendant, and, possibly, not unaware of the nature of his interest in her. This information would be damaging to her testimony. By recasting the counsel's version of events, however, the witness makes it inferable that the defendant's behaviour was prompted not by any special relationship with her in particular, but was due to a familiarity with that group of people of which she was only one member.

This extract suggests that the witness's choice of words with which to refer to events in question is in no way accidental, or determined by the properties of those events. These descriptions are inextricably tied to the moral business of building materials which warrant the inference that she was not in any way encouraging the man

who is alleged to have subsequently raped her. Furthermore, the descriptions of both the witness and the counsel reflect the relevance of their immediate circumstances - a courtroom trial. As such, they are designed with respect to the speakers' tasks in the course of the cross-examination. Through the construction of their utterances, both speakers are concerned to depict a version of reality favourable to their overriding objectives.

To summarise, then, the ethnomethodological interest in language indicates a number of issues for analytic inspection. Firstly, that any description is necessarily a version of the state of affairs which has been composed from an indefinite range of possible utterances. And in the way that a description has been composed it displays the method by which this was accomplished; that is, the practical and methodic reasoning which informed the speaker's selection of precisely those items are displayed in the subsequent utterance.

Secondly, that speakers design their utterances with a view to interactional concerns: that is, their descriptions are actions which accomplish specific tasks in the trajectory of the conversation. Furthermore, that the design of descriptive utterances is a resource by which the recipient can arrive at an understanding of the sense of that description for that occasion of its use.

Thirdly, in the data examined above we can see that descriptions are designed to attend to moral issues: that is, descriptions can be constructed to provide material which furnishes inferences sensitive to the speaker's context and circumstances.

An ethnomethodological perspective on language-use is indifferent to the ultimate truth or validity of the accounts. Instead, the

analytic interest focuses on the culturally-available, 'common-sense' sets of procedures which inform the production of accounts and descriptions. The correspondence of these to some state of affairs, supposedly independent of the linguistic resources through which they are described, is of no analytic interest.

To conclude this section, then we can summarise those features involved in the process of constructing a description in ordinary language use, and which, therefore, are present also in the descriptions which constitute spoken accounts of paranormal phenomena: descriptive utterances are social activities; they are constructive, and are designed to attend to moral and interactional business, and thus are sensitive to the circumstances in which they are made.

3 Parapsychology and the use of accounts

In this section we will consider some of the ways in which parapsychologists have dealt with reports of paranormal events, the issues they have explored through these accounts and the assumptions about language use which have informed their approaches.

As we observed in the previous chapter, parapsychology is primarily a laboratory-based scientific discipline. Throughout its history, however, there have been periods during which interest in spontaneous personal experiences flourished; during these periods parapsychologists turned to accounts as investigative resources. There are four phases of research which are relevant to this discussion: the early work of the founding fathers of the Society for

Psychical Research; attempts to employ statistics to analyse features of the experiences reported in accounts; the work of Louisa Rhine, and a recent resurgence of interest in the phenomenology of paranormal experiences. This latest development is particularly significant as it includes Blackmore's initiative to re-define the proper subject matter of parapsychology as the broader study of the experiential characteristics of the phenomena, which in turn points to a greater emphasis upon people's accounts of their experiences.

[a] Early investigations

When the Society for Psychical Reserch was founded in 1882 one of its principle aims was to produce evidence that psychical phenomena actually existed. The first major initiative by the Society looked at reports of spontaneous experiences to see if these could furnish such proof. The authors of 'Phantasms of the Living' (Gurney et al, 1885) were not concerned solely with apparitions; they wrote in the introduction that the study was designed to deal with all types of cases where it appeared that the mind of one human being had influenced another without the apparent use of any of the ordinary five senses. Although apparitional cases were investigated they were significant only insofar as the authors believed that they indicated that telepathically-produced images could be created either as objective physical manifestations, or as mental images in the mind of the recipient.

The investigation involved collecting and analysing accounts of spontaneous events. This reliance on human testimony was a matter of some concern to the authors as they considered that this was an inherently weak source of evidence, primarily due to the possibility

of lies, inaccurate description, distortions, misperceptions and so forth (Gurney et al 1885, Vol. I: 114-172). Thus, the investigators tried to find evidence which either corroborated or disconfirmed the stories of the principle witnesses or experients. This was done largely though soliciting evidence from other witnesses, cross-examining witnesses and verifying the details of the reports. The researchers believed that a sufficiently detailed investigation could reveal the extent to which any one account was an accurate description of the facts of the incident, or, alternatively, the product of 'unconscious exaggeration' from 'unskilled reporters' who were often 'emotionally implicated' in the phenomena they claimed to have observed (West 1946).

There seems to be some confusion as to the precise number of cases which the investigators felt had been sufficiently verified: L. E. Rhine (1977) claims there were 702; Schouten (1981) claims there were 712. These cases had been most exhaustively investigated and were used as the material for the next stage of the research. This tried to identify the manner in which the telepathic images appeared in the percipient's consciousness. The analysis of the reports yielded two types of experience: where the impression was sensory and externalised, and where the impression was not sensory, but mental.

Gurney et al believed they had provided convincing evidence that information transfer without the use of normal sensory channels did occur, and that they had identified some of the phenomenological features of these experiences. The importance of this research, however, was not that it proved the existence of telepathy and related phenomena (the scientific community of the day did not regard the evidence as conclusive): it is significant because it displays an

approach to the use of accounts which has persisted in parapsychology to the present day (for example, see Dow 1987a).

Not all the early research explored psychic links between human beings. In his study of pre-cognition, Besterman (1932-1933) had subjects record their dreams. Of the 430 written descriptions he collected, 18 showed sufficient similarity to subsequent events to suggest premonition. Only 2 recorded dreams, however, were considered to be good cases. Thus, this research found no conclusive evidence for precognition. Saltmarsh (1934) analysed unsolicited written precognitions which had been submitted to the offices of the Society for Psychical Research. The 349 reports were analysed in terms of two primary criteria: 'form' and 'content'. Form referred to whether the experience occurred as a dream, a waking experience or a hallucination, and so on. Content related to the message of the precognition: whether it concerned illness, death or merely trivial incidents.

Tyrrell's (1942) research used as data only those cases of apparitions which had previously been investigated and verified. From these accounts of psychic experiences he located recurrent patterns and principle features from which he constructed a hypothetical or ideal type of the experience (Dale 1951; 1962).

While these studies were certainly innovative and important at the time, a brief critical assessment illuminates some problematic areas. In all these studies the investigators were entirely dependent upon spoken or written accounts of experiences. By analysing the descriptions provided by experiencers the investigators sought to identify the primary features of the phenomena. As we have seen, however, descriptions do not merely correspond to a state of affairs

in the world: they are constructed from a vast range of possible descriptive items. Thus, any actual description is a version of the events to which it refers. Furthermore, the method by which a description has been constructed reflects the speaker's practical reasoning about the immediate circumstances, and what tasks the description is designed to do. Thus, the researcher is inevitably dependent upon the tacit interpretative work which is embodied in the accounts. A problem for the researchers, then, is that they inevitably have to reconstruct a version of what actually happened from materials which are already heavily imbued with the speakers' own tacit understandings and interpretations of the experience. (For a related discussion of these problems in the sociological study of scientists' activities, see Gilbert and Mulkey 1984.)

Of course, early researchers were fully aware of difficulties involved in using human testimony. They considered misperception, elaboration and lies to be the primary obstacles to accurate information, and therefore tried to verify the details of the reports from the principle witnesses, usually by soliciting further descriptions from other individuals. In soliciting these corroborative statements, however, they obtained further descriptions which were, inevitably, also constructive and informed by the speakers' practical reasoning. Consequently, gathering more and more accounts only serves to increase the researchers' dependence upon the interpretative resources embodied in those descriptions.

In the present research, however, we will focus specifically on the ways that speakers' practical reasoning (Garfinkel 1967) and interpretative practices (Gilbert and Mulkey 1984) inform the construction of accounts of paranormal experiences. By making these

the object of research the analyst is thus liberated from a dependence upon speakers' tacit communicative skills. Furthermore, as there is no emphasis upon obtaining the 'facts' of the case the analyst is relieved of the ponderous task of deciding which versions of events are the most 'accurate' or 'objective'. Finally, by focusing on the competences which inform accounts of paranormal experiences we can discard the view of language as a corresponding medium through which an investigator can, with varying degrees of success, obtain access to the 'objective' features of the world. Instead we may investigate empirically the descriptive practices through which speakers actively constitute the character of their experiences

[b] Statistical analysis of features of accounts

The conclusion that people's accounts provided inherently weak forms of evidence led to the attempt to employ statistics in the analysis of reported paranormal experiences. It was hoped that such rigorous techniques could overcome the problems caused by memory distortions and reporting effects. The objective was to isolate trends in accounts by content analysis, and subject these to mathematical analyses to locate any statistically significant patterns common to a wide number of reports.

Green (1960) analysed 300 written reports of spontaneous phenomena. These accounts were coded, and a number of factors were assessed, for example, the type of extrasensory perception, the family relationship between the people involved, (if any) or the sense of conviction expressed by the percipient. Cases were then graded A to C according to their evidential value, in the assessment of which three factors

were taken into account: the quantity and quality of information claimed to have been telepathically transmitted; the corroboration of the account, and the time interval between the event and the subsequent report. It was felt that the greater the interval between the experience and the report, the greater the likelihood that 'tricks of the memory' (Green 1960: 106) would obscure the experient's recollection of the event. Thus, Green shared with the authors of 'Phantasms of the Living' a view of the inherent fallibility of human memory.

The procedure in this research was straightforward. The primary trends in the data were identified by the analyst and the relationship between these trends was then assessed statistically. The results of this analysis prompted Green to indicate the importance of various features associated with extrasensory experiences. For example, the percipients' attitude to the paranormal; the situation in which the event occurred; the 'motivation' of the incident (for example, did a family crisis precipitate telepathic communication between the members?); the dimensions along which ESP became manifest, and the psychological and neurological traits of the individuals involved. Green argued that her results were useful insofar as they indicate some consistent trends in the data, and that these recurrent features of the experience could be used by experimental parapsychologists to enable them to develop more sophisticated laboratory experiments. Thus, the interest in and importance of personal accounts was seen to rest in the way that these could be examined and exploited so as to enhance laboratory-based techniques. This exemplifies the way that parapsychologists have, in general, regarded personal reports as being somewhat

peripheral to the primary concerns of the discipline, thereby obscuring their importance as a topic for analysis; an observation echoed by Blackmore's recent appeals for a more experientially-oriented parapsychology.

Statistical measures have been employed not only to assess the significance of relationships between consistent features of accounts, but also as a measure of the reliability of reports of spontaneous cases. The most exhaustive statistical analyses of this kind have been conducted by Schouten (1979; 1981; 1982). In each of these studies he employed the same methodology. He used accounts taken from collections which had already been employed in parapsychological analysis: collections gathered by Gurney et al (1885), Sannwald (1961) and L. E. Rhine (1981). In each case the collection was then coded into a variety of categories according to characteristics such as: the type of experience reported, the 'seriousness' of the event, the relationship between the individuals involved, the sex and age of the percipient, the time interval between the event and the subsequent report, and so on. Schouten's statistical analyses revealed a high degree of consistency among reports of spontaneous psychic experiences from different cultures, and which had been collected at various periods in the last hundred years. These consistencies, he argued, are good evidence that the principle features of psychic experiences are stable over time and are not influenced by culture; and which have, therefore, an objective existence independent of the individuals who experience them.

Finally, Pratt (1969) employed statistics to study the accuracy of information produced by mediums. He devised an experiment in which

mediums were asked to use their clairvoyant powers to gather information about five subjects; the readings were conducted in the absence of the subjects. Each medium thus produced five reports which were then circulated to the subjects, who were not informed which of the various readings were meant to refer to them. The subjects then assessed each report: every item which they recognised to be an accurate comment about them was rated as a 'hit'. Statistics were then used to reveal if there was a significant number of hits when subjects rated those reports which were meant to be about them.

There is a problem common to the three types of study exemplified by Green (1960), Schouten (1979; 1981; 1982) and Pratt (1969). In each case the research has an unexplicated dependence on the assumption that parts of an account can be unproblematically recognised as referring to, or corresponding with, a feature of the experience. To illustrate this we will consider Schouten's research. Schouten was interested in the relationship between various aspects of psychic experiences. Thus, in assessing the data - written accounts of spontaneous experiences - he had to decide the appropriate categories into which experiences could be coded. In order to do this, however, Schouten must have worked with some criteria by which he recognised certain features of accounts to merit classification in the appropriate category. These tacit assumptions about what counts as a specific characteristic of the experience are not explicated, yet they are crucially important: the criteria which are used when allocating aspects of an account into categories will in part determine the character of those categories. For example, Schouten considered the relationship between the type of experience

and the seriousness of the reported event; in particular, he wanted to test the hypothesis that ESP has a 'protective' function - that serious or traumatic information may be acquired and released into consciousness in such a way that the percipient is only vaguely aware that something is wrong. This is opposed to the sudden realisation of the facts of a serious incident. Thus, in these cases, ESP may inform the percipient that something awful has happened while not furnishing unambiguously shocking information.

If we are to study the relationship between the type of psychic awareness and the seriousness of the incident then it is of paramount importance to know what counted as 'serious'. For example, would foreknowledge of a minor accident which happened to a close relative count as serious? Would telepathic knowledge of the death of a distant friend count as serious? That is, what procedures were used by the analyst to locate the 'serious' features of the events? Equally in Green's analysis, there is no mention of the criteria which she used to categorise accounts according to specific characteristics. The same arguments also apply to Pratt's study in which subjects were asked to read the mediums' descriptions and assess whether these contained accurate information about them. In order to make such decisions the subjects must have engaged in interpretative work through which they came to recognise the significance of some remarks, and the inaccuracy of others. That is, the extent to which a remark is seen to be an accurate representation of some feature of the subject is in part the product of the subject's use of tacit criteria by which assessments of accuracy are made.

In each of these studies, then, statistical operations were used to

assess the mathematical relationship between apparently recurrent features of the experiences. In each case, however, these characteristics had been derived through the analysts' interpretations of accounts of those experiences. Thus, the categories subsequently assembled may not in fact reflect consistent features of the experiences, but more the consistent interpretative practices of the analyst. Consequently, the statistical operations may not tell us anything about the relationship of parts of the experience, but more about the relationship between the categories of the experience as constructed by the analyst. While there have been critical commentaries on the research by Schouten and Pratt (for example, Rush 1987; Scott 1972), there has been little attention given to identifying the range of problems that may arise from the ways in which data are coded prior to statistical analysis.

[c] The work of Louisa Rhine

Parapsychologists resorted to the use of statistics as a response to the problems of using human testimony. However, this was not the only response to these difficulties. In this section we will examine the work of Louisa Rhine, who has produced arguably the most extensive series of studies of spontaneous phenomena. Using as her data written reports of anomalous experiences she produced 18 empirical research papers in the period from 1948 to 1981. The primary findings of this research were summarised in her book 'The Invisible Picture' (1981).

In an editorial in the Journal of Parapsychology J. B. Rhine argued that information about spontaneous cases generated by reports could be useful to experimental parapsychologists (1948b). Voicing

an opinion shared by he and his wife, he claimed that laboratory research had produced sufficient evidence to prove the existence of psi. Consequently, further research should primarily explore the dimensions of this phenomenon. The Rhines felt that the base environment for these experiences was not the laboratory, but everyday life. Consequently, the reports which people made of their experiences could provide clues about the ways that the phenomena worked; these insights could then be used by experimental parapsychologists to refine their laboratory techniques. Largely due to the popular success of J. B. Rhine's earlier books, the Parapsychology Laboratory in which he and his wife worked had received approximately 14,000 unsolicited reports of spontaneous experiences. The task of analysing this material fell to Louisa Rhine.

She began with the assumption that it would be impossible to try to verify all the accounts which had been submitted to the laboratory. There were too many, and a large number of the events had occurred many years before. Besides which, it was felt that the problems encountered by the early researchers' attempts to verify accounts proved that such a procedure, however meticulous, could not furnish sufficiently hard evidence. She considered that the massive number of reports collected by the laboratory presented a way by which she could avoid the reporting effects which had beleaguered earlier work. She argued that these reporting effects were idiosyncratic, and influenced by the individual's psychology and the circumstances in which the account was made. She was convinced that laboratory research had shown that the phenomena were objective and stable. She reasoned, therefore, that over a large number of cases, the

reporting effects would not cause a consistent distorting influence. Consistencies in the accounts, however, would reflect robust aspects of the phenomena, and the way they worked in a natural environment. Isolating these features from a large array of reports would either reveal further information about the nature of the experience, or could be used as the basis for further statistical analyses to determine the relationship between features of the experience.

In her procedure she classified each written account into one of a series of collections. Occasionally she would type versions of the accounts contained in the report, emphasising the important aspects. While this certainly eased the process of classifying such a large number of cases (Schouten 1981), it raises two issues: by what criteria did she code accounts into categories, and extract the 'essential' aspects? Also, when re-writing versions of people's letters, to what extent did she translate the account, or alter various parts of it? Her own review of her work (1981) provides no information about the way these operations were performed. It appears that she assumed that the significant features of the experiences were glaringly self-evident, and that it was an unproblematic task for the analyst to identify them. For example, in her investigation of the forms of extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK) she begins by observing that peoples' descriptions of their psychic experiences can be classified into three categories: some psi experiences are reported as appearing to the percipient's consciousness, like sudden photographs, some in the form of dramatisations, while others are symbolic in nature. Because these descriptions are commonly found in the data, she assumes that they represent stable properties of the phenomena. That is, they indicate

underlying processes by which psi-based information is transmitted.

Her work is important because it emphasises the significance of systematic aspects of reports and accounts of experiences. By treating stable features of accounts as indicative of stable features of the underlying experience, she displays an analytic assumption which is common to many areas of sociological study: that if the same things are reported by a large number of different people, then this provides strong evidence that the events to which they all refer are objective features of the phenomenon, and not the product of distortions arising from 'reporting effects'. However, we have argued that descriptions are not vehicles for the passive representation of an external reality; rather, they are constructive. Furthermore, any account is sensitive to, and will reflect, the circumstances in which it is produced; for example, the manner in which a description is designed will be sensitive to interactional tasks which have been generated by the recipient's treatment of prior features of the account. Thus, any recurrent aspects of accounts may reflect the similarity in the social circumstances in which they are made, rather than any consistent properties of the state of affairs for which those utterances stand as accounts (Gilbert and Mulkey 1984). Thus, it is more appropriate to examine descriptions to reveal how speakers systematically organise their discourse to address specifically interactional issues which recurrently arise in the process of making reports of paranormal experiences.

By way of a conclusion to this section we may note that Rhine felt that 'reporting effects' - the ways that accounts were influenced by context, including the social context in which the account was made - were idiosyncratic, and therefore unworthy of analytic attention.

In contrast, the position outlined in this chapter suggests that the systematic features of accounts may be those aspects which are most sensitive to, and inextricably tied to, the recurrent social circumstances in which accounts are produced.

[d] The phenomenology of paranormal experiences

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the phenomenology of paranormal experiences (Alvarado 1984; Schlitz 1983). This was stimulated in part by a recognition of the importance of L. E. Rhine's work, and by a resurgence of interest in developing lines of parapsychological research which were not laboratory-based. (For example, see Dow's (1987a) plea for a more 'active' approach to the study of psychic phenomena.)

The use of the term 'phenomenology' bears little resemblance to the sophisticated philosophical and sociological analyses which bear this title. Parapsychologists use the concept simply to refer to the primary features of an experience as the individual perceives it. A similar concern informs phenomenological studies in other areas of anomaly research: Evans' (1984: 1987) research on entity encounters; Hufford's (1982) study of 'Old Hag' attacks; Schwarz's (1977) study of Men-in-Black appearances, and Uriondo's (1980) work on UFO sightings. For the purpose of this discussion we will discuss the phenomenological approach in relation to research on out-of-the-body experiences, or OBEs. This has two advantages: it allows us to focus on its development as an alternative perspective; moreover, it takes us directly to a consideration of Blackmore's recent arguments for an experientially-based parapsychology, which have led her to a position which parallels the approach adopted in the present

research.

Early research noted several phenomenological characteristics of the OBE: the sensation of floating and soaring, being able to see the physical body while separated from it, observing a cord linking the astral body to the physical, and the sensation of shock upon re-entering the physical body (Muldoon and Carrington 1951). Based on differences in the characteristics of the experience, Crookall (1961; 1964) suggested a distinction between 'natural' and 'enforced' OBEs. Natural OBEs occur gradually, and mental and perceptual awareness is heightened; enforced OBEs occur suddenly, and cognitive facilities are not qualitatively increased, but in many cases actually diminish. Crookall's analysis is based upon people's descriptions of their perceptions and thoughts during the experience, and upon their accounts of the circumstances leading up to the onset of the phenomenon.

Alvarado (1984) failed to find evidence to support Crookall's distinction between the two primary forms of the OBE. Blackmore (1982a) has suggested that a more useful distinction might be between spontaneous and induced OBEs; for example, there may be a qualitative difference between OBEs induced by meditation, and those which occur as a result of a sudden accident.

A more radical departure from traditional parapsychological analysis of the OBE is revealed in her attitude to those aspects of the experience by virtue of which it is traditionally known as a paranormal phenomenon. Despite the evidence from studies by Muldoon and Carrington (1951), Crookall (1961; 1964) and Morris et al (1978), she is not convinced that there are two components to the self, one of which is separable from the physical body. Neither is she

sympathetic to arguments that the experience itself is merely the phenomenological expression of a period of heightened consciousness which facilitates extra-sensory perception. Aligning herself with more psychological theories of the OBE (for a review of these, see Rogo 1982), she attempts to devise an explanation which focuses on underlying cognitive and neurological processes. In contrast to many psychological theories, however, she tries to incorporate and account for the details of the percipient's reported experience (Blackmore 1982a; 1983; 1984b).

As we have already mentioned, Blackmore's position is that parapsychology would be more productive if research was not primarily motivated by an attempt to find psi. She argues that the basis of the problem is that psi has always been defined negatively: that is, in terms of what it is not. Consequently, as orthodox science continues to provide rational explanations for an increasing number of phenomena which were hitherto considered to be indications of psi, the brief of the discipline actually diminishes. Furthermore, as psi becomes increasingly elusive, there occurs a corresponding urgency in parapsychologists' attempts to find it, and thereby furnish their study with a legitimate subject matter. However, this has led to a great emphasis upon the development of particularly sophisticated laboratory-based techniques, as a consequence of which parapsychology has not developed the range of empirical or theoretical innovations necessary to maintain its momentum as an emergent and radical science. Thus, Blackmore considers that, over the past century, parapsychology has failed to generate any novel lines of inquiry. Using Lakatos' phrase, there have been no 'progressive problem shifts' within the subject.

As a response to this dilemma she argues for a new parapsychology which is not hide-bound to psi, but which takes as its starting point the fact that people do report and describe anomalous experiences. It is this observation that leads her to recommend that greater analytic attention be paid to the accounts of these occurrences.

Blackmore's arguments bring her to a position similar to that which forms the point of departure for the present research: an interest in people's accounts of their spontaneous paranormal experiences. Through a sympathetic but critical examination of her research, however, we can delineate the precise advantages of the analytic perspective which is derived from an ethnomethodological consideration of language use. We will consider her research on Near-Death Experiences, or NDEs, as this develops themes which she explored in her work on OBEs.

A typical scenario may be: during an important operation a patient 'dies': that is, she becomes clinically dead. While theatre staff try to resuscitate the patient, she undergoes a variety of experiences: the sensation of leaving the body, meeting deceased relatives and travelling through a tunnel towards a brilliant white light. Just before reaching the source of the light, however, the attempts of the theatre staff to resuscitate the patient are successful, and the patient 'regains unconsciousness' under anaesthetic.

For many the NDE has a profound mystical and spiritual importance; indeed, many of those who have had this experience have subsequently developed an active spiritual life. However, Blackmore accounts for the phenomenological features of the experience in terms of cognitive

processes. For example, the 'tunnel experience' is a common feature of NDEs. Blackmore claims that we can account for this by tracing the neurological pathways through which electrical impulses are transmitted through the brain in times of physiological crises, such as the initial stages of death. Thus, the experience of travelling down a tunnel is a function of cortical 'winding down' prior to the cessation of all activity. As she eloquently phrases it, Near-Death Experiences are 'visions from a dying brain'.

This review is necessarily inchoate, and many imaginative parts of her explanation have been overlooked (a more comprehensive outline of her theory can be found in Blackmore [1988c]). We can question whether this approach is a 'new' parapsychology, however: by looking to neurological processes to account for the perceived dimensions of the experiences, she seems to be claiming that the phenomenon is not paranormal at all. While she is careful to point out that these experiences may have a life-changing impact upon the individual, and that in no way does she wish to deny or undermine their profound significance for people that have them, it seems more appropriate to regard her work as largely skeptical of the paranormal, rather than a new approach within parapsychology.

Blackmore attempts to account for the consistent features of experiences by building theoretical explanations which focus on cognitive procedures. She generates the consistent features which are to be explained in two ways: through survey methods, which she also used in her research on OBEs; and through her knowledge of reports which are available in the literature, or which she has acquired in the course of her research. Both of these methods may be problematic. For example, within the social sciences there has been

a sustained critical examination of the usefulness of survey methods (e.g., Cicourel 1964). Furthermore, in the discussion of L. E. Rhine's work we listed the difficulties involved in assuming that recurrent descriptive passages unproblematically represent stable features of the experience. Thus, there may be problems with the way that she uses reports to generate those aspects of the experience which she then tries to explain.

Focusing on the organised ways that language is used by speakers when making accounts, however, allows us to make two significant advances. First, analysis of accounts is not conducted with a view to arbitrating on whether the reported experience actually 'happened' as described, or whether it was the product of determinant cognitive processes. That is, the 'ultimate' truth or falsity of accounts does not interfere with the goal of the analysis. In this respect, then, the ethnomethodological perspective on the study of accounts of anomalous phenomena may be regarded as a more radical development than Blackmore's new parapsychology. Secondly, we have emphasised that interactional considerations are addressed by and mediated through descriptive practices. Thus, recurrent features of verbal accounts can be examined to illuminate the ways in which speakers' attend to interactional issues which are commonly generated in the process of making a verbal report of a personal paranormal experience.

Although we have subjected Blackmore's research to critical attention, by way of a conclusion to this section we should note that through her work she has displayed a single-minded determination to illuminate and tackle fundamental problems which beset parapsychology, while at the same time generating empirically-

investigable research topics and explanatory theories. Although we may disagree with some of her claims, and question some assumptions which have informed her use of accounts as a resource in studying paranormal phenomena, her work nonetheless represents a coherent, controversial and ambitious challenge to established parapsychological research.¹

4 'Social Intelligence' about anomalies

In the last chapter it was argued that the 'agnosticism' advocated by sociologists of science working in a relativist tradition is applicable to the analysis of accounts of paranormal experiences. In this final section we will consider the work of the sociologist Ron Westrum, whose own research is broadly related to the concerns of the present study, and which addresses issues generated by a relativist perspective on the study of scientific knowledge.

In a series of papers, Westrum has attempted to identify the social processes which intervene between the production of an account of a direct experience of an anomaly, and the reception of the subsequent report by the relevant authorities and experts. The focus of his research is summarised thus: 'Where anomalies are concerned, then, the question of how one knows what one knows cannot be ignored' (Westrum 1977: 296). He is interested in the system of social intelligence through which reports of anomalies are transmitted to bodies such as scientific research groups, or in the

¹ For a useful discussion of Blackmore's position within parapsychology, see Beloff's (1987) review of her (1986a) account of her work as a 'career' parapsychologist.

case of Unidentified Flying Objects in the United States, the Air Force. He has examined social intelligence processes by looking at the progress of reports of meteorites (1978), sea monsters (1979b) and UFOs (1977; 1979a); to illustrate his work we will look at the transmission of UFO reports.

Westrum observes that there are a number of processes which influence whether or not a report comes to the attention of an official agency. Sightings of aerial anomalies are reported initially to friends, family or colleagues. If these accounts receive sympathetic hearings from these primary groups this increases the chance that the witness will then make a formal report to secondary agencies, such as the police or a newspaper.

When reports are submitted to the press they may be filed, and not used immediately. Newspaper editors often work with the policy that when enough reports have been compiled only then will they run a story on UFOs, using the accounts they have collected. Such a story, however, may generate the impression that there has been a sudden increase in the number of sightings. Consequently, the story may create the effect of a wave or 'flap' of UFO reports. Similarly, media coverage may encourage reports from people who have had experiences, but who had hitherto failed to report them. Often these accounts report events which happened several years prior to the date of the newspaper article. Such details, however, are often omitted from any subsequent follow-up articles, thus substantiating the impression that there is a rapid increase in contemporary sightings. Westrum further notes that a sympathetic story will encourage others to come forward with their personal experiences, while a story that is flippant, or ridicules the witnesses, will deter others from

coming forward.

During the 1950's and 1960's the United States Air Force received large numbers of accounts of UFO sightings. Even an official agency such as the Air Force, however, was not a neutral transmitter of information. The structure of military channels of communication ensured that reports made to a local office or camp had to be passed on to a central body authorised to investigate sightings. Thus, personnel in the local camps had to decide which reports to submit to their superiors for further investigation. Westrum argues that these personnel were under implicit pressure to submit only those cases which they felt the investigative teams could most easily account for in terms of natural phenomena, or misidentification. That is, they actively withheld reports which seemed most strange, or difficult to explain in conventional terms. The types of account received by official government agencies were influenced by the personnel's understanding of the tacit policy operated by their superiors. In the case of the UFO investigations, the Air Force policy was to 'debunk' reports (Hyneck 1972; 1978); particularly difficult cases were filtered out by subordinate personnel.

Westrum emphasises the factors which intervene between the experience of a phenomenon and the receipt of the subsequent account by an appropriate body, and draws attention to the ways that these factors may crucially influence any subsequent knowledge about the nature of the events which are reported. The main problem with his work is that his consideration of social factors is limited only to the events which influence accounts after they have been produced. To complement his work, then, it is necessary to examine the sociological processes which inhere in the way that accounts are

produced in face-to-face interaction.

We have seen in previous sections that descriptions can be analysed to reveal the interactional tasks for which they have been designed. These interactional tasks will be generated by the particular circumstances in which the account is made. For example, the immediately prior trajectory of an account will furnish a context which may influence the character of other aspects of the account. Furthermore, the speakers' analyses of the way in which the recipient appears to be reacting to the account will inform subsequent utterances. Thus, the issues which informed Westrum's work - the social processes that impinge upon and shape the nature of reports - can be explored also by examining the interactional environment in which accounts are produced.

5 Conclusions

The general advantages of an ethnomethodological perspective on the analysis of language use have been outlined elsewhere by various authors (e.g., Atkinson 1978; Atkinson and Drew 1979; Gilbert and Mulkey 1984; Potter and Wetherell 1987). In this chapter I have tried to illustrate these with specific reference to ways that accounts are used in parapsychological research, and also in Westrum's work on the social influences upon the transmission of reports. I have argued that spoken accounts of anomalous experiences are socially-organised, constructive and sensitive to the interactional environment in which they are made. This perspective has been contrasted with assumptions that implicitly inform the ways

that parapsychologists have treated accounts in their research This not only revealed some problematic features of parapsychological approaches, but also allowed us to clarify the character of an ethnomethodological approach.

There are two approaches to the analysis of language use which, to a varying degree, have a common intellectual background in ethnomethodology: conversation analysis (e.g., Atkinson and Heritage 1984), and discourse analysis (e.g. Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). Prior to any empirical analysis it is therefore necessary to examine these two approaches in more detail.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE USE

1 Introduction

In the last chapter we sketched the broad features of an ethnomethodological perspective to language use, and discussed how this differs to the ways in which parapsychologists have traditionally used accounts of paranormal phenomena as resources in their research. In this chapter I want to discuss the two contemporary empirical approaches in the study of naturally occurring talk: conversation analysis (CA) and discourse analysis (DA).

2 Conversation analysis

Over the past twenty years CA has emerged as one of the primary methodologies in the analysis of spoken interaction produced in natural settings. There are a number of introductions to, and overviews of, this research tradition (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Button and Lee 1987; Heritage 1984; 1989; Levinson 1983; Psathas 1979; Schenkein 1978; Sudnow 1972; Wootton 1989). Consequently, we need only provide a brief discussion of this mode of analysis.

Initiated by the pioneering work of Harvey Sacks, and his colleagues Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, conversation analysis sets out to detail the methodic and socially-organised character of the practical reasoning which informs the production and recognition of orderly sequences of naturally occurring talk. CA is a radical departure from previous forms of analysis, such as the discourse analysis informed by linguistics and Speech Act theory (Coulthard 1977; Brown and Yule 1983), and componential analysis (Becker et al 1961) in that the production of utterances, and the sense they obtain, is seen as an accomplishment, the achievement of which is inextricably tied up with the immediate linguistic context in which they are produced. That is, words used in talk are not to be studied as semantic units, but are products which are designed in terms of the interactions being negotiated through the talk - a complaint, a request, an accusation, and so on. The design that they exhibit is informed by the speakers' competences, methods and practical reasoning as to the character of these interactional tasks. The analytic objective, then is to explicate the procedures on which participants rely to make sense of other people's talk, and to furnish an occasioned sense for their own utterances. Insofar as the same sets of interpretative practices inform both the production and understanding of utterances, the orderly accomplishment of talk in interaction is regarded as the consequence of the operation of socially-organised cultural skills and competences.

The bulk of conversation analytic research has focused on 'ordinary' conversation, such as face-to-face and telephone interaction, and thus has not directly attended to issues relating to the context in which the talk occurs, or the overriding goals or

motives of the speakers, except where these 'contexts' or 'motives' may be oriented to by speakers, and may inform the trajectory of conversational sequences. The data to be studied in this thesis are accounts of paranormal experiences which are produced in the course of informal interviews. Insofar as these interviews were pre-arranged, and the objective behind them was to solicit accounts of precisely these types of experiences, these data cannot be treated as naturally-occurring materials in the same way as talk which occurs spontaneously in everyday interaction. This does not invalidate the applicability of conversation analytic forms of investigation for the purposes of this research. In recent years there has been a move to study talk which occurs in institutional settings; for example, in courtroom interaction (Atkinson and Drew 1979), in news interviews (Greatbatch 1983; 1988), in political speeches (Atkinson 1984a: 1984b) in doctor-patient interaction (Heath 1984; 1986) and in the organisation of sales interaction (Pinch and Clark 1986). These studies show that the distinctive character of talk in specific situations is a consequence of the ways in which speakers adapt procedures which are recurrent features of everyday talk to the specific particulars of the circumstances. Thus, talk in naturally-occurring situations has a foundational or 'bed-rock' status in relation to language use in specific settings.

In summary, then, CA is not restricted solely to the study of conversation. Indeed, by virtue of its sensitivity to the foundational character of interactional strategies and competences through which everyday talk is organised, it provides a particularly delicate tool for the analysis of talk produced in a variety of circumstances. (These and related issues will be discussed in more

detail in section 5.)

3 Discourse analysis

The term 'discourse analysis' is used to refer to a wide range of analytic techniques and empirical and theoretical research. In this chapter I will use it to refer only to the form of analysis developed in sociology by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), and extended to social psychology by Potter and Wetherell (1987). Although DA seeks to analyse all forms of discourse, written and spoken, it has been used to deal with recorded materials produced from informal interviews, and is thus clearly relevant to the concerns of this project. Unlike CA, DA is a relatively new development, and while there have been debates which deal with specific aspects of the discourse analytic programme, (see, for example, the contributions of Gilbert and Mulkay, Gilbert, and Abell, in Gilbert and Abell [1983]) there has been little attempt to assess its broader significance as a methodological development. In this section, then, we will initially look at the development of DA, plotting its rise as a response to methodological problems which emerged in the sociological study of science. Although a plea for an emphasis upon the study of discourse was made in Mulkay et al's (1982) paper, a more comprehensive exegesis was presented in Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), and it is this text that we will concentrate upon.

Gilbert and Mulkay (hereafter G&M) study one dispute in the area of biochemistry known as oxidative phosphorylation, which was concerned with the mechanisms by which chemical and other kinds of energy are

stored within cell structures. Their initial objective was to provide a sociological description of the nature of the debate. To this end they collected taped interviews with the various biochemists involved in the dispute, read the relevant research papers and obtained informal communications between the participants, such as letters and notes. Their preliminary analysis of this material presented them with a problem: within their data there were a variety of different versions of the debate, each of which was plausible and convincing. Furthermore, they noted that any one feature of the debate, such as the significance of a series of experimental studies, could be described and accounted for in a number of different ways.

G&M realise that the variability they observed in scientists' discourse was not peculiar to their project, but is a constituent feature of any research which relies upon the use of accounts of behaviour as an investigative resource. The recognition that variability was an inherent feature of their data posed a serious problem: in the analytic enterprise of furnishing a single, definitive account of any specific state of affairs, how should the analyst account for and deal with the diverse range of versions available in the data ?

They illustrate the customary procedures used by sociologists to negotiate these difficulties:

(1) obtain statements by interview or by observation in a natural setting;

(2) look for broad similarities between the statements;

(3) if similarities are found, these are taken at face value; that is, as accurate reflections of what is 'really' happening;

(4) construct a generalised version of participants' accounts and present these as an analytic conclusion.

While they identify this procedure with regard to one specific study, they claim that this formula may be applicable to many other areas of sociological research.

Based on their recognition of the variability of discourse, G&M identify a number of crucial problems in this traditional approach. Firstly, they cite Halliday (1978) to indicate that all discourse is inextricably bound up in the context of its production. They claim, therefore, that ostensible similarities between different accounts cannot be taken to indicate consistent features about the world. These may be due to the overriding similarities in the circumstances in which the discourse is produced. They argue that:

'Without detailed examination of the linguistic exchanges between researcher and participant, and without some kind of informed understanding of the social generation of participants' accounts of action, it is not possible to use these accounts to provide sociologically valuable information about the actions in which analysts...are interested.' (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984: 7)

They go on to examine the role played by the researcher when confronted by a variety of accounts of ostensibly the 'same' event or circumstances. In particular, they address the argument that, on account of his/her expertise, the analyst can attend to the valuable information while locating and dispensing with the irrelevant material. They argue that this position rests on the assumption that any social event has one 'true' meaning. They indicate, however, that social activities are the 'repositories' of multiple

meanings, by which they mean that the 'same' circumstances can be described in a variety of ways to emphasise different features. Which particular formulation is invoked as a warrantable version at any one time will not only depend upon the context in which the account is produced, but also the interactional tasks attended to in the course of producing that account. In this, they make a critical point which is applicable to various forms of ethnographic study of participants' talk. That is, a native language speaker's decision to use a particular word may be intimately related to specifically interactional circumstances.¹ There can be no privilege for the analyst's decision as to what constitutes an objective or accurate version of the world simply because any state of affairs can sustain a range of descriptions, the warrant for any one of which rests in the circumstances of its production.

In recognition of these problems G&M advocate, as an alternative, the study of participants' discourse to reveal the interpretative practices, embodied in discourse, by which accounts of beliefs and actions are organised in 'contextually appropriate ways' (1984: 14). They do not attend to one set of statements about the world as if any one form of discourse can furnish more relevant or accurate material. Instead, they seek to explicate the systematic properties of language use through which scientists construct their accounts in a range of formal and informal environments.

They note that their arguments have broader implications for sociological research. G&M observe that hitherto sociologists have displayed a commitment to provide one definitive account of that

¹ For an illustration, see Wootton's analysis of Frake's study of medical naming in primitive tribes (Wootton 1975: chapter 3).

feature of the social world being studied, and thus consequently, they are obliged to make inferences about participants' actions from discourse about those actions. (We may note, parenthetically, that this was true also of parapsychologists confronted with accounts of paranormal experiences.) G&M argue that the analysis of participants' discourse ensures that the analyst is liberated from a dependence upon one specific set of interpretative practices. That is, instead of trying to reconstruct 'what actually happened' from accounts, the object of study becomes the ways that accounts are organised through certain sets of interpretative practices to construct a version of 'what actually happened'. Furthermore, insofar as no form of discourse can be considered to be superior to any other for the purpose of analysis, they are obliged to consider all forms of discourse, and all varieties of versions of events contained within that data. Thus, they claim to be able to remain 'closer to their data' (1984: 14). Most importantly, they argue that the study of discourse is necessarily prior to, if not a replacement for, traditional forms of analysis:

'Given that participants' use of language can never be taken as literally descriptive, it seems methodologically essential that we pay more attention...to the systematic ways in which our subjects fashion their discourse. Traditional questions...will continue to remain unanswered, and unanswerable, until we improve our understanding of how social actors construct the data which constitute the raw material for our own interpretative efforts.'
(Gilbert and Mulkay 1984: 15)

Having provided a critique of traditional approaches in the sociological study of science, they go on to present examples of the analyses furnished by a DA perspective. For example, G&M identify

the scientists' use of two interpretative repertoires, or linguistic registers: the empiricist and contingent repertoires. They analyse how these registers are systematically employed by scientists to produce asymmetrical accounts of error and correct belief which are appropriate to varying contexts.

It is not necessary to review in detail the empirical analyses conducted by G&M; the purpose of this review is merely to indicate that the mode of analysis they devised echoes the analytic issues addressed in the present research. Furthermore, DA was generated from a consideration of methodological difficulties which also obtrude in the ways in which parapsychologists have hitherto relied upon accounts of anomalous experiences.

G&M's work makes three important contributions. Firstly, they draw attention to and articulate profoundly important methodological problems which beset sociological research in which the analyst relies upon accounts, descriptions and reports of the area of social life under study. Critics of G&M have noted somewhat dismissively that variability in discourse should come as no surprise (for example, Abell 1983). One reviewer has gone as far to belittle G&M's contribution by implying it amounts to little more than the observation that 'some scientists write their scientific papers in impersonal terms but in interviews talk about science personally' (Halfpenny, 1988: 177). These observations fail to appreciate the way in which G&M identify confounding issues which arise from the nature of language use, and fashion an analytic approach by which to deal with them.

Secondly, DA generates a whole new range of issues for analytic inspection, and provides a methodology by which such questions can be

addressed.

Thirdly, in drawing attention to the essentially reflexive and constructive character of discourse, it raises questions about the forms of language use in which analytic or sociological claims are made.

Developing this last point, Mulkey (1985), has gone on to devise new forms of sociological analysis. In these the constitutive nature of discourse, especially the analyst's discourse in the construction of an academic text, is exploited as a resource to reveal more clearly the linguistic processes through which participants provide for the sense of, and thereby fashion, their social activities. While this specific development has generated further research (for example Mulkey, Ashmore and Pinch, 1988) the most sustained development of Gilbert and Mulkey's approach has been within social psychology, particularly Potter and Wetherell's (1987) attempt to explore the implications of the variable and constructive aspects of language use for traditional methodologies and theories.

P&W's programme stems from the acceptance of the following points:

- (1) language is used variably;
- (2) language is constructed and constructive;
- (3) any one state of affairs can be described in a number of ways, therefore
- (4) there will be variation in accounts;
- (5) there is no foolproof way to deal with variation and sift through accounts so as to locate the best and most informative reports,
- (6) consequently, the purpose of analysis should be to study the

ways that language is used flexibly and constructively.

While these points reiterate aspects of Gilbert and Mulkey's arguments, they are significant because P&W discuss them in relation to, and emphasise the implications for, many areas of orthodox social psychology. In subsequent chapters they deal with specific areas of research, exposing the methodological deficiencies of each area and drawing out the implications of these problems. They also provide illustrative examples of the ways in which their version of DA avoids these difficulties, while still furnishing analyses relevant to traditional social psychological concerns.

As an example we can note P&W's discussion of the concept of social representations (Moscovici 1981; 1982; 1984). Social representations are mental entities, made up from concepts and images, which in each case have an identifiable structure. The theory argues that social representations provide the means by which people are able to understand and evaluate their social worlds. To understand thoughts, attitudes and attributions, then, it is necessary to grasp the social representations from which these other social psychological phenomena emerge. The theory also draws a powerful link between varying social collectivities and different forms of social representations, insofar as it is claimed they mark the boundary of any social group. The all-embracing character of the theory promises a theoretical underpinning to a diverse area of issues in the subject. At the same time, it avoids coarse cognitive reductionism: that is, the level at which the theory works is intended to be irreducibly social psychological.

P&W make a number of important criticisms of this theory,

employing the concept of linguistic repertoire developed in Gilbert and Mulkay (1984). First, they argue that the theory of social representations has been hindered by its attachment to a notion of the social group as a fixed entity which can be identified insofar as the members all subscribe to the same social representations. Research usually begins by looking at the social representations of homogenous groups. This procedure hinges upon the assumption, however, that common representations can be seen to indicate the limit of a group. As P&W state 'There is a vicious circle of identifying representations through groups, and assuming groups define representations.' (Potter and Wetherell 198: 143)

Second, the authors cite the predominantly ethnomethodological argument that group membership is an occasioned phenomenon. That is, the way in which a speaker may align with or reject membership of groups and categories may be related to the specific social and interactional context in which group membership becomes salient. (Garfinkel 1967; Sacks 1979;). Thus, a claim to be a member of a specific group may not be taken to indicate a series of fixed and determinate statuses. This is clearly problematic for a theory which is informed by the notion that social groups are static entities.

Third, P&W claim that the theory implicitly relies on the idea that social representations are, inherently, mental entities to which the analyst can obtain access through participants' discourse. This obscures the essential indexicality and variability of the language through which people talk about their group affiliations.

As an alternative, P&W suggest that the notion of linguistic repertoires overcomes the problems they identify with the theory of social representations. For example, by emphasising the ways that

different people use language variably, in accordance with discrete contexts and specific interactional tasks, the analyst does not have to endorse a circular argument about the relations between groups and representations, nor subscribe to the view that social phenomena must be informed, at some level, by an underlying cognitive reality.

Although P&W's discourse analysis is in most respects the same as the variety espoused in Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), there are some interesting differences. The P&W version, for example, addresses a wide variety of issues in social psychology, whereas Gilbert and Mulkay remain in one specific area of sociology. Unlike Gilbert and Mulkay, P&W explicitly acknowledge the ethnomethodological influences on their work. Furthermore, P&W draw extensively on conversation analytic studies of naturally occurring talk, rather than studies inspired directly by Garfinkel's (1967) writings. For example, their chapter on accounts uses Atkinson and Drew's (1979) research on courtroom interaction; and their critique of social psychological attempts to study categorisation is informed directly by material from Sacks' early lectures.

Unlike Gilbert and Mulkay, P&W try to describe the process of 'doing' discourse analysis. While they are moderately successful when dealing with the more mundane aspects of the process - for example, identifying research questions, collecting material and transcribing tape recorded interviews - their attempt to articulate the analytic processes which occur when they confront any actual data is, by their own admission, less satisfactory. The authors point explicitly to their inability to provide a coherent account of what they do. To compensate they invoke comparisons between the skills involved in riding a bike and analysing data. Both sets of skills

are, in Ryle's (1949) terms, 'knowledge how' rather than 'knowledge that'. They go on to emphasise the inductive search for recurrent patterns in the data, looking for broad similarities, not only in the ways that people use language to discuss any specific topic, but also in terms of the functions for which any stretch of discourse has been designed.

Finally, P&W provide a brief discussion of reflexivity, an issue which has become centrally important to the form of DA pursued in Mulkey's subsequent research (Mulkey 1985). They acknowledge that their arguments about the constructive nature of language use apply also to their own writings, including the discourse through which such observations are made. This does not disqualify their work. They claim:

'It is possible to acknowledge that one's own language is constructing a version of the world, while proceeding with analysing texts and their implications for people's social and political lives. In this respect, discourse analysts are simply more honest than other researchers, recognizing their own work is not immune from the social psychological processes being studied. Most of the time, therefore, the most practical way of dealing with this issue is simply to get on with it, and not to get either paralyzed by or caught up in the infinite regresses possible.' (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 182)

In this passage the authors present a practical resolution to problems inherent in reflexivity. (For an alternative resolution see Ashmore, 1985). That is, although any academic text can be examined to see how it constructs one version of the world, it is permissible to suspend, or 'bracket off' that possibility when attempting to provide an analysis of a state of affairs. Consequently, the analyst can legitimately deploy the rhetoric of more 'positivist'

domains of social science research in the manner through which any 'findings' are presented.

To summarise, then, the objective of discourse analysis is to examine the functional use of language in a range of forms, and in a variety of contexts. Consequently, it is available as a technique by which to study spoken accounts of paranormal experiences. In the following section we will examine some problems with this mode of analysis, and thereby clarify the character of the analyses to be developed in subsequent chapters.

4 Discourse analysis: a critical appreciation

In this section we will take a critical look at some aspects of DA, developing points raised primarily in Gilbert and Mulkey's text, but which are also applicable to subsequent developments. The discussion will be organised around four themes: the processes by which word selection is accomplished, the notion of 'interpretative resources', the issue of occasioned social identity, and the relationship between talk and the context in which it occurs.

[a] Word selection

We may start with Gilbert and Mulkey's observation that discourse is variable. That is, in their research they recognised that they were being provided with different accounts of the same thing, by the same or different people, often by the same people within the space of a single interview. At the root of this observation is a series of philosophical issues which are highly germane to their overall

project. These concern the ways that words obtain their meaning.

Garfinkel (1967) lists a variety of philosophers who emphasise the indexical nature of some classes of words: that is, that they obtain their meaning from the circumstances in which they are used. More recently, Barnes and Law (1976) argued that all words and utterances can be treated as indexical, and derive their sense from situations in which they are used. Clearly, then, the meaning of a word cannot be derived from some set of criterial features which inhere in the nature of the object or state of affairs in the world to which the word refers (Wittgenstein 1953; Pitkin 1972; Waismann 1965). What Gilbert and Mulkey have observed, then, is one consequence of the fact that descriptions and referential utterances are not determined by the properties of the features to which they refer. Rather, utterances are composed of selections available to the speaker. Any description or reference is produced from a potentially inexhaustible list of possible utterances. As the literal correctness of an item cannot be cited as the warrant for its use insofar as any number of items may be equally warranted, this raises a crucial question: what principles inform a speaker's actual selections from this range of possibilities ?

Gilbert and Mulkey attend to this issue by highlighting the context-dependence of accounts. In varying contexts, speakers may produce varying accounts. In their research, they found that scientists employed an empiricist repertoire in formal contexts, and a contingent repertoire in informal contexts. The emphasis on repertoires or linguistic registers requires comment. According to Potter and Wetherell, a repertoire is:

'constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions. Often a repertoire will be organised around specific metaphors and figures of speech (tropes)....' (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 149)

Discourse analysts are interested in the way that speakers use language functionally: to achieve certain ends in the course of interaction. In the interviews conducted by Gilbert and Mulkay, for example, the scientists were attempting to depict their work as being guided by their adherence to the correct procedure of scientific activity; they described alternative, contradictory work in terms of contingent, personal or social factors which were depicted as having prevented other scientists reaching the conclusions they did. That is, in constructing a persuasive account of the superiority of their work in the course of face-to-face interaction with the interviewers, they employed two repertoires by which to characterise asymmetrically the specific state of affairs being described.

We have noted previously that no state of affairs constrains the referential items which may be used to describe it; also, that speakers have a range of descriptive items from which to choose in constructing a description. Gilbert and Mulkay's emphasis upon the importance of linguistic registers offers a way to understand the procedures by which a specific series of selections is made: items are selected in accord with the linguistic repertoire being used, and the broader tasks which are negotiated through that repertoire. Thus, a scientist may select specific utterances to refer to another scientist's work to imply that he is not sufficiently objective, but motivated by personal interests. To understand the procedures of word selection, then, it is necessary to analyse the activity the

speaker is engaging in through the use of a specific linguistic repertoire.

Such repertoires may be invoked over large sequences of talk. By implication, then, the actions being accomplished are located at a general level of the discourse. It is this point however, that is problematic: conversation analysis has revealed that the activities accomplished in talk are located at a sequential and interactional order of detail for which the notion of linguistic repertoire cannot provide an account. This feature of talk can be illustrated by reference to materials introduced in the previous chapter.

(1) (Trip to Syracuse:2)

1 C So tha: [:t
2 I [k-khhh
3 C Yihknow I really don't have a place tuh sta:y.
4 I 'hhOh: :: :: .h
5 (.2)
6 I 'hhh So yih not g'nma go up this weeken?
7 (.2)
8 C Nu::h I don't think so.
9 I How about the following weekend.
10 (.8)
11 C 'hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?
12 I 'hhhhh Oh:. hh Alright so:- no ha:ssle, (.)
13 s [o
14 C [Ye:h,
15 I Yihkno:w::
16 () 'hhh
17 I So we'll make it fer another ti:me then.

(Drew 1984a: 130)

A brief analysis of this extract illustrated three important points. Firstly, in substituting 'vacation' for 'weekend' the speaker displays his inability to comply with the co-participant's suggestion, but makes this inferable from his utterance, rather than stating it explicitly. Secondly, this indicates that the selection

of items from which to fashion an utterance is ordered at the most elementary level - single word selection. Thirdly, the reasoning which informs the composition and use of the utterance exhibits a sensitivity to the sequential environment in which it occurs.

Gilbert and Mulkey invoke the concept of the linguistic repertoire to allow them to focus on the functional character of language use. This ensures, however, that the level at which they locate and analyse these functions in the scientists' reports is far too gross to take account of precisely these three delicate features of the moment-by-moment, practical accomplishment of talk. They can not provide either an account for, or an analysis of, the ways that speakers themselves resolve the problem of selection. Indeed, the mantle of the linguistic repertoire occludes from the range of issues to be investigated the fine-grained orderly production of talk. This is paradoxical in light of their claim that the 'detailed examination of linguistic exchanges', and an 'informed understanding of the social generation of participants' accounts' (1984: 7) should be a prelude to, if not a replacement for, traditional sociological forms of analysis.

[b] Interpretative resources

One of Gilbert and Mulkey's primary contributions is their emphasis upon the ways in which interpretative resources are embodied in accounts. Through analysis of these socially-organised resources they reveal the manner in which scientists provide for the character of their actions and beliefs. In their critique of traditional sociological studies they draw attention to the ways in which researchers have an unexplicated reliance upon precisely these

features of language use. However, conversation analytic studies indicate that Gilbert and Mulkey's formulation of these issues falls short of providing a detailed account of the character of these 'interpretative practices', and how these may be utilised as interactional resources.

The last set of data illustrated that speakers' resources in the business of talk are intimately related to the sequences in which they are produced. That is, the word 'vacation' obtained much of its sense, and inferential power, from the speaker's use of it in an utterance which was immediately after a proposal for the date of an excursion. The speaker was relying on the interpretative practices which were embodied, and thereby made available, through the structure of adjacency pairs, and this specific type of adjacency pairing in particular. A further example of this is Schegloff's (1984) analysis of one single misunderstanding between a radio presenter and a listener who is ringing in to participate in a discussion.

(2)

- 1 B An's- an () we were discussing, it tur-
2 it comes down, he s- he says, I-I-you've talked
3 with thi- si- i- about this many time. I said,
4 it come down t'this:=
5 B =Our main difference: I feel that a government,
6 i- the main thing, is- th-the purpose a'the
7 government, is, what is best for the country.
8 A Mmhmm
9 B He says, governments, an' you know he keeps- he
10 talks about governments, they sh- the thing that
11 they sh'd do is what's right or wrong.
12 A For whom.
13 B Well he says- [he-
14 A [By what standard
15 B That's what- that's exactly what I mean. he s-
16 but he says....

(Schegloff 1984: 28)

Schegloff is interested in the way that the utterance 'For whom' (line 12) is treated by B, firstly as a direct question, and then, after clarification by A (line 14), as a token of affiliation or agreement for the position A had been taking. His analysis reveals that the root of the misunderstanding - the ambiguity of the utterance - derives from its placement in a specific sequence of exchanges. For example, its occurrence after B's talk about the behaviour of governments, (lines 9 to 11), and its production as a 'question', the type of which B may himself have produced as a statement in a sequence such as 'he said....and I said "For whom?"' Moreover, and relevant to the point being made in this section, Schegloff argues that A's resolution of the ambiguity is informed by a set of inferences available to the participant from a consideration of the structural features of the talk up to that point. That is, one set of resources to which participants can resort in coming to an understanding of the sense of an utterance are the structural and organisational properties of the way that it is produced. Speakers rely on resources which inhere in the trajectory of prior sequences. We may regard these resources as being locally occasioned: that is, furnished by the precise character of the preceding interaction.

The point is this: Gilbert and Mulkey correctly emphasise the importance of interpretative resources in the ways that participants provide for, and recognise, the sense of an utterance, or series of utterances, produced by co-participants. They do not emphasise, however, that precise interpretations made by speakers may be informed by inferences which are available by virtue of the participant's analysis of the structural aspects and sequential trajectory of the prior interaction. This entails a further

implication: that the resources which are available to participants to furnish a recognisable sense for any specific utterance or stretch of talk are occasioned phenomena: that is, produced locally, and tied to the specific trajectory of the talk.

[c] Negotiated social identities

A related point is that Gilbert and Mulkey's approach fails to deal with the ways in which participants employ social identities, and assumptions deriving from category membership, as occasioned interactional resources. Discourse analysis tends to gloss the procedures by which identities can be negotiated and used by interactants for practical ends. For example, Gilbert and Mulkey's interview material comes from scientists talking about their research, and the research of their colleagues. In their analysis of these materials Gilbert and Mulkey attend only to the their interviewees' identities as scientists. That is, because it is 'scientists' who are talking (rather than 'employees', 'loyal-but-reluctant colleagues', 'rigorously empirical scientists' or simply people talking about their jobs to a sociologist) it transpires that the talk is 'scientists' talk. Analysing a stretch of talk by reference to only one category, however, obscures the ways that category memberships may be fluid, and occasioned to attend to the fine-grained features of interaction. More seriously, an examination of discourse which was founded on the assumption that the materials being analysed were 'scientists' talk could furnish empirically incorrect analyses. This could occur, not only in the way that the actual details of the talk had been adumbrated under the gross categorisation accorded to the respective statuses, but also in the

way that the analyst's expectations of what is actually occurring in the talk may be influenced by knowledge relating to scientists and their activities, or any other pre-analytic variable the analyst might impute to the data. That is, the use of broad categories to define the character of an interaction, prior to any detailed empirical analysis, may in fact distort the very features of the data in which the analyst is interested.

This is not just an analytic observation: the application and negotiation of category membership is a 'real life' concern for interactants. This is illustrated in Drew's (1987) analysis of 'po-faced' receipts of teases. He reveals that these types of humorous remarks recurrently occur after a sequence in which a speaker has been engaging in a stretch of talk that is recognisably overdone, or exaggerated. A tease, then, acts as a form of social control of minor conversational transgressions. Of more interest, however, are the procedures by which interactants construct the teases. He shows that the teaser focuses on category memberships which are inferable from the speaker's prior stretch of over-elaborated talk, and subtly amends them to provide a 'tease implicated deviant identity' (Drew 1987: 246). By producing a po-faced responses, recipients of teases display a recognition of the deviant identity ascribed to them, and produce responses which are essentially defensive, and designed to re-affirm a non-deviant identity.

When teasing, speakers are using as a resource commonly available knowledge about category membership, and the way any membership can be used as the basis for inferences about the people to whom the category applies. This set of common-sense knowledge is highly organised (Sacks, 1972) and has been shown to be a resource for

interactants in a variety of circumstances: in police interrogations (Watson 1983; Wovk 1984); in the assessment of 'deviant' identities (Smith 1978; Watson and Weinberg 1982); in courtroom interaction (Drew 1978; 1984); in the ways that members' themselves control the membership of certain categories (Sacks 1979; Widdicombe and Wooffitt forthcoming); as a resource employed by sales people (Schenkein 1978) and as a resource in the reporting of extraordinary events (Jefferson 1984a; see also Chapter Four, section 3). Each of these studies explicates the way that speakers rely on socially-organised, culturally-available means by which to provide for the locally-occasioned character of either their identity, or the identity of someone else.

[d] The relationship between talk and context

In this final section I want to look briefly at how notions of 'context' may inform analytic considerations. To illustrate these points it is necessary to discuss the ways in which previous sociological research has treated this issue.

In traditional sociolinguistic studies, the analyst employs the context of the talk as a resource to analyse exchanges. An example is Becker et al's (1961) ethnographic study of medical students. To understand the argot of the medical students Becker observed the occasions in which the students used words and phrases of in which he was interested. From the contexts of their use, Becker tried to identify the meaning of the word and its relationship to the student's peception of his/her activity. This method, however, led Becker to make some questionable interpretations, on one occasion ascribing a meaning to a word which the students themselves

subsequently rejected.

Atkinson and Drew (1979) set out to indicate the order of problem which emerges if common-sensically available devices - members' abilities - are used as unexplicated resources for analytic purposes, especially with regard to ethnographic research. They note, firstly, that an ethnographer's description of any scene can be indefinitely extended; any closure is therefore a practical achievement. Merely being present at a scene to observe the circumstances in which a word is used, then, does not immediately ensure that the observer has a more objective, or even informed, perspective on the events being studied. Furthermore, and as discourse analysts have been keen to point out, language is a constructive medium: any description, then, is constitutive of that to which it refers. This is not only a problem for the ethnographer in compiling a description of some event; it obtrudes when using participants' descriptions to gain a better access to the meaning or use of the utterances in which the analyst is interested. Even if an ethnographer can argue for the validity of the description of the circumstances in which an utterance occurs, it is still necessary to warrant the claim the participants themselves were orienting to these features as being the relevant aspects of the context.

Schegloff (1987a) has elaborated this point. He argues that most social science research which deals with discourse has emphasised that differences in such discourses are essentially the products of the context in which they occur. Thus, for example, in hospitals, talk will be analysed as representative of, and inextricably tied to, the statuses and roles commonly found in such institutions: doctor-patient, doctor-nurse, or nurse-patient discourse. In a courtroom we

will find lawyer-witness speech patterns. The same applies in classrooms, boardrooms, therapy counselling sessions, and so on. Now while it is clearly possible for a sociologist to assemble a description of the context, it is not clear that this will help clarify the discourse in that circumstance. We have already seen that any state of affairs in the world can legitimately be described in a massive variety of ways. Thus, to use a description as a sociological tool in analysis is to elevate one possible description above all others.

While Gilbert and Mulkay are in no way guilty of the same errors, their research does not attend to the ways in which context is a relevant issue, only for the analyst, but also for the participants during interaction. Conversation analytic research, however, seeks to explicate the participants' orientation to features of the circumstances, and reveal how these orientations inform the production of utterances, and are thereby displayed as being relevant for practical reasons. One important corollary of this emphasis is that the actual trajectory of the prior talk is itself a contingency of the interaction, and may be oriented to as an immediate context by which the relevance of an utterance may be displayed. For example, the relevant aspects of an interaction may be embarrassment, a question, an excuse, a repair, an instruction, and so on. Moreover, such relevancies may be fluid, and variable between specific utterances, or even within single turns, and reflect not 'macro' or institutional features, but the specific path of the interaction. These features of the way that speakers orient to context are examined primarily through conversation analytic studies.

During interaction speakers orient to features of the environment,

whether physical, social, or the sequential trajectory of their talk. Insofar as they are being produced for the benefit of co-interactants, utterances will be designed to display these occasioned relevancies. They are available also, therefore, for the overhearing analyst. A more useful understanding of the 'context' of any utterance, then, is to see how speakers exhibit in their talk their understanding of the context, and display the manner in which it is relevant for their talk. In Schegloff's words:

'a notion like "context" will have to remain substantively contentless, and uncommitted to any prespecified referent and be instead "programmatically relevant" [that is] relevant in principle, but with a sense always to-be-discovered rather than given-to-be-applied.' (Schegloff 1987b: 112)

There are, then, a number of features of naturally occurring talk which are overlooked in a discourse analytic research programme. Firstly, the orderly features of utterance design which occur in the fine-grained detail of interaction, including single word selection procedures, are obscured by the emphasis upon the broad linguistic repertoires which inform stretches of talk. Secondly, conversation analysts have indicated that structural and sequential features of discourse are themselves resources available to participants, either to understand another's talk, or to furnish a sense for their own utterances. These features of the 'interpretive practices' and 'organisation' of talk do not receive detailed attention in discourse analysis. Thirdly, research has revealed that category membership and occasioned social identities are resources by which participants can assemble their activities in interaction. Finally, the results from participants' analyses of the relevancies to which

their talk is related will inform the production of utterances, and the interpretation of other's utterances. Insofar as these analyses are displayed primarily for the benefit of co-participants, they are thereby made available for analytic inspection. Thus, the 'relevant' features of the context of any talk will be those which are oriented to by speakers themselves. Occasioned social identities, and the practical accomplishment of the relevance of specific circumstances, are central features of naturally occurring talk, yet they do not receive a systematic treatment within discourse analysis.

In this section I have delineated the features of language use which are of analytic interest in this research by comparing the broad features of discourse analysis with some objectives of, and insights from, conversation analytic studies. By this comparison we have been able to detail the range of issues which may be explored in subsequent chapters, and to account for the use of a conversation analytic framework. Lest this review of discourse analysis seem overly critical, however, by way of a conclusion to this section I want to discuss briefly the complementary features of discourse and conversation analysis, and also point to the primary contributions from the former.

I take it that both forms of analysis share a common objective in examining the ways in which members use natural language resources to furnish the sense of their activities, and of their social worlds. Indeed, it is only by virtue of the underlying similarities between the two approaches that we have been able to use one to illuminate the finer details of the other. However, whereas conversation

analysts have largely neglected to tackle the implications of their approach to language for more traditional areas of sociology, the critical arguments from discourse analysis have had important consequences. (We may note, parenthetically, that the assessment of parapsychological methods in Chapter Two was informed by, and reflected, arguments used to emphasise the importance of discourse analysis.) This is particularly true of Potter and Wetherell's impact on social psychology. Prior to their work, the study of discourse in social psychology was concerned largely with drawing links between actual utterances and the underlying cognitive dispositions they were taken to index. Furthermore, the methodological problems which beset the sociological study of science applied also to a range of important issues in social psychology. By providing the same type of critical arguments, focusing on the constructive and variable dimensions of language, and particularly informed by an ethnomethodological position, Potter and Wetherell have been able to draw attention to the deficiencies in traditional social psychological methodology, the implications of which are only beginning to become apparent to social psychologists. At this stage it is not clear what the ultimate impact this body of sustained criticism will be. However, in a time when the discipline is heavily informed by a distinctly 'cognitive' and experimental philosophy, Potter and Wetherell's overriding achievement is to have indicated the need for psychologists to attend to, and account for, the complexity of human behaviour as it naturally occurs. By making this point in relation to the study of language use they have begun to draw closer the links between sociology and social psychology.

Discourse analysts have indicated, and investigated, the

constructed and constructive features of language use. Furthermore, by looking at specific areas - for example, the sociological study of science and scientists, or topics within social psychology - they have examined the implications of these aspects for our understanding of the broader relationship between social reality and discourse. Of particular importance in this respect is the argument that discourse is functional, not only at the level of detailed interactions, but also in terms of wider social practices and beliefs. Thus, discourse analysis has been used to tackle 'traditional' sociological and social psychological problems, such as civil disturbance (Potter and Reicher 1987), racism (Billig 1985; Potter and Wetherell 1988) and gender and employment (Wetherell et al 1987) in a way that is informative, but which resists methodological and theoretical problems which beset previous attempts to deal with these issues.

Whereas conversation analysis primarily developed from the lectures and publications of Harvey Sacks, discourse analysis is able to boast a more eclectic pedigree, drawing on observations and insights from a variety of related disciplines: sociolinguistics, semiotics, structuralism, speech act theory and literary criticism. We have already noted the way that Potter and Wetherell's analysis of social categorisation draws on work from Sacks (1979), and their discussion of 'accounts' borrows analytic observations from Atkinson and Drew (1979). Thus, while the goals of discourse analysis are considerably broader than those pursued in the study of naturally-occurring conversational materials, results from conversation analyses may be employed as a resource in the pursuit of specifically discourse analytic goals.

Both conversation and discourse analysis have been concerned with

the reflexive character of language use. It is only in the latter domain, however, that the implications of this have been thoroughly explored. In particular Mulkay (1985) and Ashmore (1985; and forthcoming) confront reflexivity and its implications for sociological investigations. In doing so they devise innovative forms of analysis which take reflexivity as a resource for, rather than an obstacle to, empirical research.

5 Conversation analysis and monologue talk

The data to be investigated in this thesis are accounts of personal paranormal experiences, in the production of which speakers engage in long uninterrupted stretches of talk. Such accounts are monologic, rather than overtly dialogic, as in ordinary conversation where two or more parties produce regular turn exchanges. Within discourse analysis, this type of data would be treated as a text, as is any other form of discourse, spoken or written. Consequently, it has been the discourse analysts who have hitherto examined long stretches of talk, although this is not all that they have used as data. In this research we are adopting a conversation analytic mode of investigation. There is a problem, however, in the attempt to employ a 'conversation analytic mentality' (Schenkein 1978b) to the study of one-speaker talk.² To illustrate this problem it is necessary to look in greater detail at the range of issues addressed

² For an illustration of the type of work on monologic data conducted within 'traditional' discourse analysis - that is, research informed by speech act theory and linguistics - see Coulthard and Montgomery (1981b).

in this work.

Conversation analysis can be distinguished from linguistic and speech act theory-inspired approaches to the study of talk in terms of the emphasis placed upon the importance of the immediate sequential context in which an utterance is produced. Whereas speech act theory tends to focus on single utterances, removed from any actual environment in which they may occur, conversation analysis begins with the assumption that utterances must, in the first instance, be contextually understood by reference to their placement in a sequence of utterances. This recommendation is not a product of an analytic preference. Rather, it reflects the ways that participants themselves rely on the context-shaped and context-renewing character of turns within a sequence as a resource in the orderly production of talk. That is, in the way that a speaker responds to an utterance, the producer can infer whether it has been interpreted in the manner for which it was designed. This either allows the producer to see a misinterpretation, and rectify it, or reveals that the recipient has made and exhibited the analysis of the utterance the producer desired, and can therefore continue with the exchange. The way that participants display their understanding of the moment-by-moment production of conversation provides a central resource by which speakers can ensure that the orderliness of the exchange is displayed at all stages in the interaction.

There is a more technical point. The design of any utterance is in some way influenced by the prior utterance. That is, any first utterance will provide for a range of relevant next utterances; these in turn will circumscribe the range of relevant options for a next turn. This is particularly clear in the case of adjacency pairs

(Schegloff and Sacks 1973). These are sequences of two utterances that are:

- (1) adjacent,
- (2) produced by different speakers,
- (3) ordered as a first part and a second part, and
- (4) typed, so that the first part requires a particular second part (or range of second parts).

(Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 396-6)

In the way that utterances provide for the 'conditional relevance' (Schegloff 1972a: 363ff) of subsequent turns, speakers have a valuable resource by which to analyse the on-going character of any stretch of talk. As Schegloff has written:

'When one utterance (A) is conditionally relevant on another (S), then the occurrence of S provides for the relevance of the occurrence of A. If A occurs, it occurs (i.e. is produced and heard) as 'responsive to' S, i.e. in a serial or sequenced relation to it; and, if it does not occur, its non-occurrence is an event, i.e. it is not only non-occurring (as is each member of an indefinitely extendable list of possible occurrences), it is absent, or 'officially' or 'notably' absent. That it is an event can be seen not only from its 'noticeability', but from its use as legitimate and recognisable grounds for a set of inferences (e.g. about the participant who failed to produce it).' (Schegloff 1972b: 76)

There is no need to discuss the evidence that speakers orient to the conditional relevance of second pair parts after the production of a first (for a review of the evidence. see Greatbatch 1983: 91-95). The important point to make here is that the sequential constraints of adjacency pairs provide the basis for inferential operations concerning speakers' 'motives', 'intentions', 'attitudes',

'feelings', and so on, which may be relevant to the specifics of the on-going talk. In the way that speakers can exploit the inference-rich properties of the turn-taking procedures they display some measure of the morally accountable nature of social interaction (Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

Thus, it is not only that one utterance will delimit the range of relevant possible next turns; it is also the case that such sequential considerations allow speakers to attend also to normative features of the interaction. And, in the way that these are dealt with publically - that is, in the next turns through which speakers display their understanding of, and reasoning about, the trajectory of the interaction - they are available not only to co-participants, but also for the overhearing analyst. The importance of this is emphasised by Sacks et al:

'while understandings of other turns' talk are displays to co-participants, they are available as well to professional analysts who are thereby afforded a proof criterion (and search procedure) for the analysis of what a turns' talk is occupied with. Since it is the parties' understandings of prior turns' talk that is relevant to their construction of next turns, it is their understandings that are wanted for analysis. The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns afforded both a resource for the analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analysis of prior turns - resources intrinsic to the data themselves.' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1978: 45 [1974]) [original emphasis]

This does not mean that the analyst's task is solely to provide a translation of the analyses inherent in the manner in which a turn will be produced; nor that such a task inevitably provides access to the 'true' or 'intentional' operations through which utterances are designed. It means simply that conversation analysts have a major

resource in their investigations which is unavailable to

'analysts of isolated sentences or other "text" materials that cannot be analysed without hypothesizing or speculating about the possible ways in which utterances, sentences or texts might be interpreted.'
(Heritage and Atkinson 1984: 9)

With regard to the analysis of accounts of paranormal experiences, we might ask: can we legitimately claim to provide a distinctly conversation analytic investigation of materials which are essentially monologic in character; and if this is possible, what alternative resources are available to the analyst to compensate for the absence of the 'proof procedure' afforded by the analyses of each others' talk provided by interactants themselves ?

Firstly, we may note that conversation analysts have argued that conversational interaction has a foundational or 'bedrock' status compared to any other domain. Consequently, the investigation of interaction in specific institutional settings seeks to analyse the distinctive adaptation of culturally-available sets of procedures for 'doing' talk. Indeed, it is through the manipulation of such procedures that talk in institutional settings obtains its distinct character. An illustration of this is Greatbatch's (1983; 1988) analyses of the manner in which the institutional character of interview talk is interactionally produced and sustained on a turn-by-turn basis. (See also Atkinson and Drew 1979; Drew 1984b; for a more extended discussion, see Schegloff 1987a.) Thus, when speakers are engaged in non-conversational interaction, such as producing accounts of paranormal experiences, the sets of methodic procedures by which their talk is produced are of the same order as those

displayed for analytic inspection in conversational material. That is, there is no qualitative difference between long stretches of uninterrupted talk, and talk which is constituted through a turn-taking system. Although it may be more difficult to explicate the 'rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims' (Sacks 1984: 413) which inhere in the detail of long stretches of talk, it is not a task beset with intractable problems.

A related point is that the accounts treated as data in this research were produced in a variety of informal interview situations. Consequently, it may be objected that it is unwise to proceed as if this material provided naturally-occurring data. The objection would be, then, that the context, to some degree, crucially influences the character of the talk subsequently produced. We have already argued, however, that the most suitable perspective on the issue of the context in which talk occurs is to see how the features of any such environment are oriented to, and thereby displayed as being relevant at that moment, by the speakers themselves. Thus, when making accounts of their anomalous experiences, the speakers will, through the design of sequences of utterances, display those features of the context which they have analysed to be significant to their immediate concerns. By treating utterances as context-shaping, as well as being sensitive to any local, occasioned feature of the environment in which an account occurred, we may reject the argument that it is necessary, or indeed possible, to isolate any formulation of the context as, in principle, the definitive root, basis or cause of features of the speaker's subsequent account.

Adopting this position also draws links with an argument put forward by Potter and Mulvey (1985). They claim that a discourse

analytic perspective does not regard interviews as a method by which the analyst can extract a definitive version of the state of affairs being reported on. Rather, they regard interviews as useful in that they generate the interviewee's interpretative work, which can then be the subject of analysis. The same argument is applicable to people's accounts of their paranormal experiences. By virtue of the interview situation the speaker is presented with the opportunity to display, through the production of the subsequent account, the various descriptive practices which are of analytic interest.

The third important objection to the application of a conversation analytic mentality to the study of one speaker talk is that, because CA attends to the interactional activities negotiated through talk, it is of little use to sets of data which do not have such an interactional dimension (i.e. two or more participating parties). A consideration of the primary objection to this argument is important insofar it touches upon some of the issues with which the analytic chapters of this thesis will be concerned.

While the speakers are producing their accounts, they are doing so in the presence of someone else - namely, the interviewer/researcher. Furthermore, the accounts are produced for the benefit of this recipient. That is, the purpose of the meeting is to allow the speakers to recount the experiences they have had. Also, speakers are relying on resources which are, in an important respect, culturally-available, and which are sensitive to specifically moral and inferential activities negotiated through talk. Thus, when producing accounts, although the recipients may not be not actively participating in the interaction, the descriptions will display the speakers' sensitivity to, and reasoning about, the interactional

consequences of the utterances so produced. These utterances, therefore, may then be investigated to reveal the various recipient-design features employed in their construction.

Thus, there are no in-principle obstacles to a conversation analytic study of monologic, multi-unit turn accounts. Furthermore, we may conclude this section by sketching some of the analytic resources which can assist the researcher in the study of one speaker interaction when access to the proof criterion afforded in interaction between two or more active parties is not available.

In this respect, one avenue to be explored are those occasions in which speakers provide clear self-interruptions of their talk. In the manner in which they proceed - having either changed the trajectory of the account, or 'repaired' a problem with the prior word or utterance(s) - they display an analysis of the on-going accomplishment of their talk. In this, the analyst is afforded not so much a proof criterion, but a foothold in the explication of the speaker's methodic construction of the experience. (This point will be illustrated in Chapter Four.)

Although the interviewer may be largely inactive throughout the interview, insofar as the speaker is not interrupted by questions about the account, occasionally the interviewer may produce minimal, non-vocal signs of interest or encouragement: for example, 'mm hm', and 'yeah'. This class of utterances has been shown to have orderly properties (Jefferson 1984b; Schegloff 1981). Their occurrence, then, may be of analytic interest in that they are displays of the recipient's orientation to a specific aspect of the speaker's account. That is, minimal continuers may indicate that the speaker is dealing with, or premonitors the speaker's dealings with, issues

which are in some ways sensitive to the business at hand - talking about personal encounters with anomalies.

Finally, we may look to see if speakers produce two or more different descriptions of the same events in the course of their accounts. If there are such multiple versions, these alternatives can be analysed to reveal their distinctive design features, thereby providing insight as to the character of the interactional business for which they have been designed.

6 Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with two approaches to the study of naturally occurring talk which may be employed in the analysis of accounts of paranormal experiences. While there are underlying themes common to both conversation analysis and discourse analysis, for the purpose of the present research we will adopt the analytic mentality of the former. This is not to deny the relevance of discourse analysis, both in sociology and social psychology, and I have tried to illustrate the significant critical and empirical contributions it has made. Through an examination of the main features of discourse analysis, however, we were able to delineate certain dimensions of language use which require a conversation analytic approach: for example, the procedures by which specific words, and combinations of words, are selected in the composition of descriptive utterances; and the use of occasioned social identities as interactional resources.

Finally, I have argued that monologic data, such as spoken accounts

of paranormal experiences, are legitimate material for conversation analytic research. Thus, we may proceed to an investigation of inferential activities negotiated in accounts of anomalous experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR:
A SINGLE CASE ANALYSIS

1 Introduction

The majority of conversation analytic research investigates a conversational phenomenon, or its variants, that occurs in a variety of interactional circumstances. The object of this chapter, however, is the examination of one short piece of data, an extract from an interview in which the interviewee provided a number of accounts of personal paranormal experiences. Before moving to the analysis of this extract it is important to be clear why such an exercise should be undertaken.

The analysis of single cases has been a long standing feature of conversation analytic work. In his early lectures Sacks often illustrated analytic observations by examining in detail one fragment of conversational data. As he stated in one of his lectures:

'The idea is to take singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart in such a way as to find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims (a collection of terms that more or less relate to each other and that I use somewhat interchangeably) that can be used to generate the orderly features we find in the conversations we examine. The point is, then, to come back to the singular things we observe in a singular sequence, with some rules that handle those singular features, and also, necessarily, handle lots of other events.' (Sacks 1984b: 413)

Within conversation analysis there are two approaches to the study of single extracts. One method is to tackle a data fragment to explicate a specific phenomenon, and thereby reveal its organised properties. Perhaps Schegloff is the most notable proponent of this form of work. For example, his (1984) analysis of a misunderstanding in a radio interview hinges around the way in which the structural resources provided by the immediate linguistic context furnish for one participant an ambiguous interpretation of the on-going talk.¹ A more recent paper examines an instance of a mechanism for the production and recognition of bad news (Schegloff 1988). Drew's (1989) examination of some of the organisational procedures through which a display of the non-recognition of another person is a further example of the same type of analysis. Of particular note in this respect is Whalen et al's (1988) examination of a telephone call to a Dallas Fire Department. They reveal the conversational basis for the breakdown of the call, as a consequence of which a medical team was not dispatched in time to save a life.

The second approach, however, is not so common. This takes as its point of departure the examination of one piece of data to explicate the range of resources which are being employed by the participants to manage the interactions detailed in that fragment (Schegloff 1987b). That is, it is not the case that the data under examination stands as an illustration of one specific phenomena to be unpackaged. Rather, the object is to display the ways in which conversation analysis can reveal that the specifics of any phase of interaction are produced as orderly phenomena, and how this

¹ For a further discussion of the data used in Schegloff's paper, see Chapter Three, section 4.

orderliness is accessible on a moment-by-moment basis, both to the co-participants and to the analyst. In this sense, then, the second approach to single case analysis seems to echo most closely the concerns which motivated Sacks' recommendation to take 'singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart' (Sacks 1984b: 413) to locate the procedures through which they were initially assembled.

A further feature of data analysis which is not directed towards a particular phenomena is that it generates a range of issues for subsequent investigation. For example, with regard to the target data to be investigated in this chapter, revealing some of the resources employed by the speaker will provide a general insight as to the range of interactional tasks and issues which are relevant to her production of these utterances at this specific time. These concerns may then be used as the focus for further analyses over a larger data corpus.

The object of the analysis will be, therefore, to explicate some of the resources which are used by the speaker to construct this extract, and thereby to illustrate the utility of a conversation analytic approach to data of this type. Furthermore, a by-product of the analysis will be the specification of issues which will be the focus for subsequent analytic investigation.

2 Data

The target extract for this exercise comes from the following account. This was produced during a taped interview with a woman who is a professional medium, who, largely by virtue of her work, claims to have had a number of paranormal experiences. The speaker provides this report approximately twenty minutes into the interview.

Immediately beforehand she had been trying to differentiate between forms of mediumistic powers, drawing a distinction between 'mere' psychic powers and 'true' clairvoyant abilities. She furnishes this specific account as an example of the type of experience which may occur to those with clairvoyant powers.

>it's very interesting< because 'hh (.5) something like this happened to me hhh a few years ago (.) when I was living in Edinborough (.) every time I walked into the sitting room (.3) er:m (.7) right by the window (.3) and the same place always I heard a lovely (.3) s:ound like de ↑de ↓dede ↑dedede ↓dededah just a happy (.) little tu:ne (.5) a:nd >of course< I tore apart ma window I tore apart the window frame I >did Everything< to find out what the hell's causing that cos nobody else ever heard it 'hhh (.2) >yuknow< (.) there could >be ten people in the room nobody'd hear it but me< (.7) er:m: and I wanted to know what was the: (.) material cause of this 'hh well: (.4) I never could figure it out and it didn't (.) upset me in fact it was quite a lovely little happy sound un:d so I just let it go (1.7) one night however a friend was with me (.) and we're just watching the tele (.3) and she was also very psychic a:nd urm (1.3) its- (.) th- the s:ound started the litt(le) musical (s) tu- s::ound started again (.3) and uhm: (.) >she said what's THaght< >I said oh (.) have you heard it< ah (s) >oh ↑thats wonderful you're the first person who's ever heard it besides me< 'hh ((coughs)) she was frightened by it (.) got up and ran out of the room (.7) and so I sat at the table an' I got very angry cos I thought well I don't wanta fright- I don't want this to frighten her (.) doesn't frighten me (.) anyway in my mind I (1) denied this could be a spirit (.7) cause ((clears throat)) an' in my mind I shouted I said well 'hh yuknow you're just trying to frighten m- us end ehm: if you're really real (.) if you're really a spirit bang hard (.) >n it went<

((banging sound)) I thou(ght) o::h huhh you're real
huhh hahh ↑ an I ran outa the room (.7) 'hhh so: about
two or three days later (.3) ahr (.) I went to: a
seance (1.3) the medium came to me almost immediately
and >she sed< o:h (.) by the way (.2) she >didn't know
me< she jus:t (.) came straight to me however, 'nd she
said ehm (.) you know that ehm musical (.) sound you've
been hearing in your li↓ving room 'n I dy(e) h huhh
hah I said ye:ah hh 'hhh and she said ehm (.7) that
was Bo:b a ma:n who passed over quite a long time ago

In this chapter I will be concerned with the following section
which is taken from the early part of the account.

(1) ME A 287 - 293

1 every time I walked into
2 the sitting room (.3) er:m (.7)
3 right by the window (.3)
4 and the same place always
5 I heard a lovely (.3) s:ound
6 like de↑de↓dede↑dedede↓dededah
7 just a happy (.) little tu:ne (.5)
8 a:nd >of course<
9 I tore apart ma window
10 I tore apart the window frame
11 I >did Everything<
12 to find out what the hell's causing that
13 cos nobody else ever heard it 'hhh (.2)
14 >yuknow< (.)
15 there could >be ten people in the room
16 nobody'd hear it but me< (.7)
17 er:m: and I wanted to know what was
18 the: (.) material cause of this

I am specifically interested in lines 5 to 18 (lines 1 to 4 are
included merely to provide some immediate context). This section has
been chosen because it is particularly rich source of events for
analytic investigation, and also because it details information
relevant to other research interests. For example, there is a
description of a paranormal phenomenon, and this should be of
interest to parapsychologists. Also, the speaker describes her

reaction to the phenomenon, and this may be illuminating for psychologists and psychiatrists who are interested in the ways that people react to extraordinary experiences. Thus, not only can the analysis illuminate the methodic procedures by which this sequence of utterances is constructed; it can also reveal significant differences between approaches which focus on what the talk is about, and an interest in the way that the talk is put together.

3 Analysis

For the purpose of analysis I will deal with this section in four parts.

[a] Initial description of the phenomenon: lines 5 to 7

5 I heard a lovely (.3) s:ound
6 like de ↑de↓ dede↑ dedede↓ dededah
7 just a happy (.) little tu:ne (.5)

In this sequence the speaker introduces the first reference to the phenomenon. She has already spoken about aspects of it; for example, remarking that its occurrence was confined to one physical spot. By virtue of the fact that she has reported some consistent feature of the phenomenon which could only be gleaned from a consideration of a variety of such encounters, it is evident that she is not here making a first reference to a specific encounter.

A notable character of this description is the structure. There are three separate components: 'a lovely sound', a sung exemplification and 'just a happy little tune'. This reference to

the noise has been constructed as a list of three qualities.

Three-partedness in the construction of lists has been found to be a recurrent practice in ordinary conversational materials (Jefferson forthcoming). For example:

(2)

1 while you've been talking tuh me,
2 I mended,
3 two nightshirts,
4 a pillowcase?
5 enna pair'v pants.

(3)

1 That was a vicious school there-
2 it was about
3 forty percent Negro,
4 'bout twenny percent Japenese,
5 the rest were rich Jews, heh hah

(Jefferson forthcoming: 63)

The phenomenon is common in all forms of discourse and suggests that three-partedness may be a culturally-available resource for list construction. Moreover, speakers who begin a list are rarely interrupted prior to the completion of the third item, even when the speaker pauses while trying to recall from memory a final component. This implies that parties to a conversation orient to lists as complete only upon the provision of the third item, suggesting a normative constraint operating to structure list production.

In ordinary conversation three part lists can be used to indicate a general quality common to the items in the list. In example (2) above, the speaker provides a summary of the items she has mended. By virtue of their placement in a list, the reference to these items

is hearable as the speaker indicating 'look how much I've done'. Furthermore, listing these items displays to the recipient their (occasioned) co-class membership: that is, the way that they are used conveys that general class of objects to which the speaker's activity has been directed - mending household linen. This feature of listing is often employed as a resource in political speeches.

For example:

(4) Tebbit, U.K. General Election 1983.

1	Labour will
2	spend and spend,
3	borrow and borrow
4	and tax and tax

(Atkinson 1984: 60)

In the extract above the speaker is not concerned with spending, borrowing and taxing as separate features of the Labour Party's policies; by listing these three features he is able to convey the general point that their economic policy is inherently flawed.

In the utterances that we are focusing on, it is apparent that by building her description of the noise in three parts the speaker is using her own 'lay' knowledge of the techniques of listing to furnish a description which is recognisably complete. Also, this reference is designed so that the qualities she indexes will not be heard as specific particulars, but are hearable as pointing to a general feature of the noise.

Analysis of the qualities she indexes in the description allows an insight as to the range of interactional concerns for which this sequence is organised. All three components of the description portray positive attributes of the phenomenon. The use of items

such as 'tune', 'lovely' and 'happy' ensure that other characteristics of the events are not referenced. For example, the sudden manifestation of a noise, the source of which is unidentified, is not a routine occurrence in most people's homes; yet in these utterances the speaker does not allude to any element of mystery or puzzlement. That is, despite it being the kind of event which it would be legitimate to notice and comment on, she makes no storyable feature of the simple fact of the appearance the noise.

We may note a number of issues raised by preceding considerations. In this account, as in all the data, the speaker is reporting her memory of the events. Moreover, in the process of telling the story, she is recasting herself as innocent of the cause of the sounds. That is, she is trying to capture and portray the sequence of events as they unfolded at the time. However, by virtue of her own knowledge of the subsequent denouement of these episodes we may note that this report is, inevitably, a reconstruction.

Parapsychologists have traditionally considered memory to be an obstacle to their research by virtue of its intrinsic unreliability. The types of processes which afflict ordinary memory storage and retrieval constituted a major difficulty in their project of identifying and then analysing the detailed facts of specific incidents. That is, they did not assume that people were telling them lies (although obviously this did happen); rather, they felt that experiencers would inevitably have a distorted memory of their own experiences.

The analytic considerations generated so far indicates that, indeed, the speaker is reconstructing her memory of the events. However, this reconstruction is not the outcome of declining

cognitive facilities, distortions which have occurred over time, reporting effects and so on; rather, it is the product of pragmatic work. To expand upon this point, and to provide an analytic leverage for the target data, we need to consider some of the broader issues related to reporting extraordinary events.

When people engage in talk they are presenting materials - what they say, and how it is said - which may be used as the focus of and basis for interpretive work by the recipient. From an inspection of precisely these materials co-interactants can arrive at judgements and conclusions concerning the speaker's character, and the nature of the topic of their utterances. Conversation analytic research has revealed that these moral and inferential concerns inform not only the recipient's analysis of prior turns, but also the way in which speakers initially design utterances which are to be subjected to such analysis. That is, speakers fashion their utterances to circumscribe the character and range of inferences which may be drawn from them.² These constructive and inferential activities occur in myriad occasions of everyday social interaction.

Jefferson's (1984a) study of reports of events such as shootings, hijackings, accidents and so on, reveal some of the linguistic practices which are sensitive precisely to these interpersonal and evaluative concerns. Witnesses to these extraordinary events often

² For further illustration of the way that descriptions can be designed with respect to the inferences which may be drawn from them, see Jefferson's (1985) paper on the interactional unpackaging of 'glosses'. In particular, her first data extract: here, the speaker claims that she 'lay down' as a result of stomach ache; this is subsequently unpackaged by the co-interactant as 'went back to bed'. The point that Jefferson makes is that 'went back to bed' clearly indicates that the speaker had 'given up' on the day, and had no intention to go to work, whereas 'lay down' formulates a more temporary 'time out' from normal daily routines.

employ a format Jefferson identified as 'At first I thought....but then I realized'. The following example comes from Sacks' (1984b) initial identification of the phenomenon.

'I was walking up towards the front of the airplane and I saw the stewardess standing facing the cabin and a fellow standing with a gun in her back. And my first thought was he's showing her the gun, and then I realized that couldn't be, and then it turned out he was hijacking the plane.' (Sacks 1984b: 419)

Another well-known example is the way that witnesses to the shooting of J. F. Kennedy reported a loud bang, which they first thought to be a car backfire, but which they then realized was gunfire.

Jefferson's analysis begins with the observation that in the first part of the device speakers proffer their incorrect conclusions from an initial assessment of the events they observed. In many cases, these incorrect first thoughts are themselves quite strange; for example, in the extract cited above, the speaker reports that his first thought was that the man was showing the stewardess the gun. Close inspection of the details of his report, however, suggests that had the speaker truly drawn this conclusion then his reasoning processes must have been informed by gross naivety or a staggeringly optimistic view of human nature. That is, he appears to be reporting that he found nothing strange about a man with a gun on an airplane, and that he assumed that, by placing the gun in the stewardess's back, the man was merely showing it to her.

Jefferson argued that however extraordinary these formulations were, they were not so strange in comparison with what the 'reality' turned out to be. In the extract above, for example, it transpired

that speaker was involved in a hijacking; compared to this, a man showing a stewardess a gun is not so dramatic. Jefferson's subsequent analysis revealed that what speakers are doing with the first part of the 'At first I thought....' device is to present, as their normal first assumption, an innocuous reading of the state of affairs on which they are reporting. That is, through their descriptions, they display that they did not immediately assume that anything untoward was happening. Moreover, the composition of their first thought formulations reveals that they have attempted to assemble an unexceptional version of the events to which they were witness. They are presenting the kind of 'first thoughts' any normal person may have. In doing so, they are providing materials, an inspection of which may lead the recipient to infer the normality of their reasoning processes about the world.

Having a recipient come to see that one's reasoning and assumptions about the world are quite ordinary is clearly an important concern for people who are reporting extraordinary experiences such as shootings and hijackings. The extraordinary character of these experiences, however, rests partly in their statistical rarity. Although most people may never encounter incidents of this kind, it is conventionally known that they do happen. Furthermore, there are explanations available for why they happen, whether these concern political motivations for the actions of people, or, in the case of transport accidents, scientific explanations for technological malfunctions.

The strangeness of paranormal events, however, derives from the fact that they present an implicit challenge to scientific declarations about the world, and, moreover, undermine common-sense

knowledge of what sorts of things are possible. That is, although as we saw in earlier chapters, the incidence of anomalous experiences may be higher than hitherto imagined, this fact alone has little bearing on the culturally-available knowledge and assumptions associated with experiences of this kind. Thus, claims of the paranormal may be investigated with a view to explicating the ways in which these wider conventions are oriented to, and negotiated by speakers through their pragmatic work. Furthermore, following the line established by Jefferson's analysis, we may focus on the ways in which fine-grained moral and evaluative concerns are mediated through the specifics of accounts. With this in mind, we may return to the speaker's initial description of the noise to explicate the interactional tasks for which it has been designed.

Individuals who report every strange event as indicating the manifestation of some paranormal agency might be taken as, at best, gullible, or worse, slightly unbalanced. 'Ordinary' people do not interpret every stimuli in their environment as the product of non-normal, non-material causes. Even when those stimuli are not part of the regular and routine features of daily life they are not immediately accorded any supernatural status. In lines 5 to 7 the speaker builds her description of the phenomenon by selecting items which refer to one of its features - its pleasing, tuneful quality. Thereby, the speaker omits material from which it may be inferred that she thought the noise had any mysterious connotations. That is, she is giving the type of description which would be produced by any normal person in those circumstances. Thus, she claims for herself membership of the category of 'ordinary' people (Sacks 1984b), and in so doing exhibits a sensitivity to the evaluation of her story a

recipient might make; a sensitivity which is itself informed by an appreciation of the conventions associated with experiences of this kind.

[b] Speaker's investigation of the noise: lines 8 to 12

8 a:nd >of course<
9 I tore apart ma window
10 I tore apart the window frame
10 I >did Everything<
12 to find out what the hell's causing that

In this section the speaker outlines some of her actions subsequent to the occasions upon which she heard the noise. Two related observations can be made. First, that these actions are depicted as a response to the noise; second, that this response is a search.

Before moving to a detailed consideration of the way in which this response has been constructed, we may note the work done by the utterance 'and of course'.

In the description of her response the speaker makes it clear that at the time she did not know the cause of the noise. Her search for the cause, however, is not portrayed as an unmotivated inquiry. By prefacing the description of her response with the utterance 'and of course', the speaker orients to the normatively-prescribed character of her actions. That is, it is not that she chose to conduct a search, or that this course of action seemed appropriate. Rather, she displays a recognition that this is the expected way to react in circumstances like these. This not only elevates 'searching for a cause' to the status of a normative requirement for people who are confronted by anomalies, but also permits her to affiliate with this convention by demonstrating that her behaviour was in accord with

that of other 'ordinary' people.

The search is also described in three parts. The first two deal with the type and extent of the search. We have previously noted the way that three part lists convey general features which are common to the discrete items so listed, but which would not be immediately available from a separate consideration of those items. In this list the speaker makes use of other resources to emphasise further the overall or general character of her search.

We have already observed that, when listing, speakers orient to the list as complete only upon the provision of the third item. For example, where speakers are clearly having difficulty in locating a relevant third item, co-interactants may volunteer candidate third parts (Jefferson, forthcoming). Another resolution to the problem of accountable list completion is the use of a 'generalised list completer' (Jefferson, forthcoming: 66). Where an appropriate third part does not come easily to mind, speakers may use utterances such as '...and everything', '...and all that', '...and things' after the first two items as a way of completing the list in three. For example:

(5)

1 And they had like a concession
2 stand like at a fair
3 where you can buy
4 coke
5 and popcorn
6 and that type of thing.

(Jefferson, forthcoming: 66)

With respect to our target data we can observe that the third part of the sequence in lines 8 to 12 is not only a generalised list completer, but also displays the properties of an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986). Other such formulations are: brand new, forever, nobody, always, never, and so on. These formulations serve to maximise the object, quality or state of affairs to which they refer. Research into the use of these formulations in ordinary conversation has revealed that speakers use them to influence the judgements or conclusions of co-interactants, especially when speakers may have grounds to suspect that their accounts will receive an unsympathetic hearing. This is illustrated in the following extract.

(6) (The following is an excerpt of a call to a Suicide Prevention Centre; 'D' is the member of the Centre's staff, 'C' is the caller.)

- 1 D Do you have a gun at home?
2 (.6)
3 C A forty fi:ve,
4 D You do have a forty fi:ve.
5 C Mm hm, it's loaded.
6 D What is it doing there, hh Whose is it.
7 C It's sitting there.
8 D Is it you:rs?
9 (1.0)
10 C It's Da:ve's.
11 D It's your husband's hu:h?=
12 C =I know how to shoot it,
13 (.4)
14 D He isn't a police officer:r,
15 C No:.
16 D He just ha:s one.
17 C Mm hm, It-u-Everyone doe:s don't they?

(Pomerantz 1986: 225)

Owning a gun may well be the type of behaviour for which an explanation is sought. In this extract the speaker describes the practice of keeping a gun by using the extreme case formulation

'everyone does', thereby proposing that this is normal and non-accountable; that is, something for which she does not have to offer a mitigating explanation.

In the target data the speaker is describing her search for the cause of the noise, and she employs various resources to provide for the thoroughness of her endeavours. First, the use of 'tore apart' twice implies, at least, urgency. Second, the use of a three part list to portray the general extensiveness of her search. Third, the speaker's use of an extreme case formulation as a generalised list completer further enhances her attempts to persuade the recipient of the extent and the meticulousness of her efforts.

In routine conversation actions and events can be prefaced by formulations of intention or expectation. For example: 'I wanted to arrive on time', or 'I tried to arrive on time'. When people use prefaces such as these it is noticeable that the intended action usually does not occur, as in utterances like 'I tried to arrive on time, but the train was delayed'. People do not routinely construct sentences such as 'I tried to arrive on time, and I did' unless they are specifically emphasising the virtues of effort, or some peculiar feature of the circumstances relevant to the occasion of the talk. There is, then, a way of formulating intended actions which premonitors the failure of those actions and events to occur.

In lines 13 to 15 the speaker chooses to describe her search for the source of the sound. In doing so she details particulars of her effort to locate the cause: that is, she 'tore apart' the window and frame. Presumably, however, the object causing the noise is of more consequence than her attempts to locate it. That is, there is a hierarchy of relevance: if she had discovered the source of the

noise, paranormal or otherwise, this discovery would diminish the significance of her search. Her efforts to locate the cause acquire a reportable status only insofar as they are unsuccessful. Thus, the fact that she reports the search premonitors its failure.

Further evidence that the speaker's attempts to find the source of the noise were thwarted comes from the following section, taken from a later part of the extract. (This will be examined in detail in section [d].)

(7)

17 er:m: and I wanted to know what was
18 the: (.) material cause of this

Here, the use of 'wanted' plainly orients to the speaker's failure at that time to succeed in her efforts.

In the way that the search is described the speaker makes available materials, an assessment of which would suggest the normality of her thoughts and actions regarding the noise: that she acted like any ordinary person might and looked for the cause of the sound, and that this search was extensive and conducted with urgency. Her 'competence' as an ordinary person is further reinforced in her description of where she looked: in and around the physical vicinity of the noise. Insofar as she 'tore apart' the window she directs the search, and the recipient's attention, to physical and material objects. Thus, she makes it inferable that she did not immediately assume the noise was anything but a normal, as opposed to paranormal, sound, and one which could, therefore, be traced to its natural physical origin.

We may note finally that the speaker provides an explicit reason

for her response: to find out the cause of the noise (line 12).

In these five lines, then, there are a variety of resources being employed to attend to a number of inferential issues, and it is useful to provide a brief summary of the work being accomplished.

- 1 The noise stimulates a response.
- 2 The response is a search, thus implying the speaker did not at that time know of the source of the sound.
- 3 The speaker portrays her search as motivated by an orientation to normative expectations associated with the way people should act in these circumstances, thereby displaying her affiliations to these conventions.
- 4 The search is directed towards physical objects, thus demonstrating that she acted like any ordinary person and assumed that there was a material cause for the phenomenon.
- 5 The manner in which the search is formulated indicates its thoroughness.
- 6 The search is formulated to display that it failed.

So far the speaker has not addressed the paranormality of the noise. She has provided sufficient material, however, from which a recipient may infer that the source of the noise is not usual. That is, she has conducted an extensive search in physical locations, despite which the cause has not been located: therefore, 'normal' procedures for locating 'normal' nuisances have not been successful. The implication to be drawn from this is that the sound is non-material. Therefore, the recipient can assign the sound to that class of objects with non-material, and possibly paranormal, causes.

[c] Building the paranormality of the phenomenon: lines 13 to 16

13 cos nobody else ever heard it 'hhh (.2)
14 >yuknow< (.)
15 there could >be ten people in the room
16 nobody'd hear it but me< (.7)

So far the speaker may be said to have provided only indications as to the paranormal qualities of the noise. I will argue in this section that she presents materials which are designed to generate more forcefully the conclusion that the sound is far from normal. This is achieved through reference to those occasions when other people were present during the manifestation of the phenomenon.

In these lines the speaker focuses on the exclusivity of the noise. This in itself is insufficient to suggest that it has paranormal qualities: she may have been the only one in the room when the noise started, she may have been the only person to use the room, she may have been the sole occupant of the house, and so on. The speaker's exclusive perception of the phenomenon is made explicable by reference to any of these possibilities. In these lines, however, the speaker makes a stronger case for the anomalous quality of the sound by constructing an example of an occasion when others were present during the manifestation of the phenomenon.

This example may be termed a 'hypothetical'. That is, it is prefaced by the utterance 'there could be', and does not refer to any specific instances. Instead, it is used to extract recurrent features from actual situations and distil them into an illustrative example of the kind of thing which generally happened.

Using this hypothetical example the speaker is able to claim that she could hear the sound when others, co-present with her, could not. This suggests that she was 'hearing things', or that the sound has

some quality so that it is directed specifically to her, or that she has some special facility for hearing noises of this kind. Any interpretation will permit the recipient to come to see that the sound has an element of mystery involved with it.

The use of a hypothetical illustration, instead of, for example, reference to actual events, has a number of interactional consequences. It permits the speaker to distil regularly occurring features of events and bring them together in a form which may not strictly represent the occasions of their occurrence in 'real life'. Furthermore, as these events are recognisably designed to be a general version of the type of thing which happened, any claims contained within this utterance are not available for direct examination. Had the speaker formulated this example in the following manner 'One night there were ten people in the room when...' she would have been citing one specific event. The details of this event could then be subject to investigation: when did this happen, what time of day, who were the people present at the time? With a hypothetical example no such direct interrogation of the details is possible. Finally, as this example is structured to be hearable as a hypothetical, we may speculate that it registers to the recipient that it is parenthetical to the overriding goals of the speaker: to relate those details of the account which are of primary importance. Any questions directed to it, and the information it provides, would, therefore, be secondary to, and disruptive of, the main concerns of the speaker.

These materials do not only strengthen the recipient's interpretation that the noise was not normal. In the way that the example has been built the speaker has made available certain

properties of the phenomenon. For example, that it occurred in the presence of other people, but that they could not hear it. These substantiate the properties provided in the earlier part of the account: that the noise always manifested in a certain part of one specific room, and that the cause was elusive. That is, the detailed characteristics of the phenomenon are being constructed in the speaker's description of her experiences. Insofar as her descriptions are designed to address moral and inferential business generated in the course of making a face-to-face report, the actual features of the phenomenon are mediated through the various pragmatic tasks accomplished by the speaker.

In this one hypothetical example the speaker is able to achieve a variety of tasks. She has addressed the issue of the paranormality of the noise, and she has furnished information from which the recipient can begin to deduce that the phenomenon is not ordinary. Also, in the ways that these materials have been introduced, she has dealt with interactional concerns regarding the practical, moment-by-moment production of the account. Finally, she has continued to construct the fine detail of the phenomenon which she is describing.

[d] Substantiating the 'normality' of the noise: lines 17 to 18

17 er:m: and I wanted to know what was
18 the: (.) material cause of this

The analysis has so far pointed to some of the ways by which the speaker has incrementally furnished material to support a paranormal interpretation of the noise. In this section I want to begin by observing that the speaker appears to be engaging in contradictory work: having constructed prior utterances to provide for a paranormal

interpretation, she then describes her activities as being motivated by a desire to locate the material cause. This paradoxical situation has a systematic basis, the explication of which reveals the character of the speaker's detailed analysis of her own prior talk.

To clarify the issues to be examined, we may note that in the previous section the speaker provides a description designed to represent recurrent features of occasions on which the noise occurred, and which points very strongly towards a paranormal interpretation. Immediately after this, however, she explicitly mentions, and thereby draws attention to, her interest in finding the material cause of the noise. That is, she is doing the type of work addressed by some of her earlier utterances: displaying that she initially assumed that the phenomenon had a natural explanation, thereby revealing herself to have reasoned about the phenomenon like any ordinary person might. Thus the issue is, why, having built a hypothetical example which suggests a paranormal cause, does she then produce an utterance which claims that she was looking for a normal cause ?

In single-speaker multi-unit turns there are occasions in which speakers display an analysis of their own prior talk, and, in their next utterance, make some correction, amendment or elaboration of that talk. For example:

(8) HS 17

1 S ah came home from work at lunchtime
2 (1)
3 an I walked into
4 the sitting room door
5 (.)
6 in through the sitting room door
((continues))

In this extract the speaker makes a clear 'slip of the tongue' in that she claims she walked into the sitting room door (lines 3 and 4). Her subsequent utterance shows that she recognises this mistake and she makes the necessary correction.

In the next extract the speaker's analyses are more sophisticated insofar as the utterances to which he attends are not in any logical sense incorrect.

(9) DN 22:159 (This extract comes from an account of a series of poltergeist disturbances.)

1 S I said do you want some more tea
2 >oh yeah ah said< oh:: dear the pot's
3 empty I'll have to go and make some more
4 so ah grabbed the pot and the kitchen
5 was on the floor above an ah (.)
6 went up (.9) flew up the stairs
7 in all this sunlight an (.)
8 lovely place it was (.2)
9 anyway I got to the kitchen door
10 an as ah 'hh
11 I had the teapot in my hand like this
12 and I walked through the
13 kitchen door (.5) 'hhh
14 as I was going through the doorway hh
15 (.7)
16 I was just (.) jammed against
17 the doorpost (.3)
(continues)

The first correction by the speaker concerns his description of the way in which he went up the stairs. His initial formulation is 'went up', which he then embroiders as 'flew up' (line 6). Furthermore, initially he describes his movement into the kitchen as 'I walked through the kitchen door' (lines 12 and 13), and then as 'as I was going through the doorway' (line 14). In this second version the speaker has amended the tense in which the utterance is constructed, moving from 'walked through' to 'going through', and

also the way in which the actual location of the incident is described, substituting 'kitchen door' with 'doorway'.

We need not investigate the interactional business addressed by these specific examples. What is important is that they illustrate that speakers may assess their own prior talk and, in various ways, re-fashion it, thereby displaying some of the immediate practical concerns to which they are orienting in the course of building and re-building parts of their accounts.

In the target data it is possible that the speaker has analysed her own prior utterances and arrived at the conclusion that she has furnished too strong a case for the paranormal cause hypothesis, and that, for the purpose of the account at this stage, this needed to be rectified. The nature of the utterance in lines 17 and 18, then, can be seen as an attempt to accomplish this through the nomination of a material hypothesis reason for her search.

The speaker's pragmatic work stems originally from her own prior talk - the hypothetical example in which the paranormal-cause hypothesis is most strongly outlined. What is not clear, however, is the reason why the speaker produced the hypothetical example in the first place.

When discussing the ways in which members report their experiences Sacks (1984b) wrote:

'You could figure that, having severe restrictions on your chances to have experiences, which turn on, for example, something, in some fashion important, happening to cross your path, that having happened, well, then you are home free. Once you got it you could do with it as you pleased. No. You have to form it up as the thing that it ordinarily is, and then mesh your experience with that.

That is to say, the rights to have an experience by virtue of, say, encountering something like an

accident, are only the rights to have seen "another accident", and to have perhaps felt for it, but not, for example, to have seen God in it. You cannot have a nervous breakdown because you happened to see an automobile accident. You cannot make more of it than anybody would make of it.' (Sacks 1984b: 426-7)

The point that Sacks is making here is that there are 'right' ways and 'wrong' ways of going about doing descriptions. To describe something as it normally would be described is to display a competence to describe, and to assert a validity for the description provided. We have already seen the importance of the constraints associated with describing extraordinary events in Jefferson's work on 'normalizing devices'.

Sacks' point is that there are 'correct', or normatively prescribed ways to construct descriptions. However, we may formulate a more elaborate version of this argument: where a description of an event or a state of affairs is produced, and further information is then reported and appears, loosely, as a form of response to the items mentioned in the previous utterance, then those two items should be described consistently. For example: 'I saw a terrible car crash and I was really upset by it' or 'It was a beautiful morning and it made me feel very happy' are consistent in that the description of the response to, or consequence of, the first part, is designed to correspond with the descriptive work done in that first part. To tie in with Sacks, then, we might say that there is a limit to what one is entitled to do with a description once it has been characterised in a certain way. Or, more formally, it may be a maxim that, in building descriptive sequences which contain some statement which is hearable as a result of or response to the previous part of those sequences, those sequences of utterances are to be designed to

display their consistency. That is, produce the response or consequence part to display what the speaker is entitled to say given the construction of the first part.

Bearing this in mind, we may reconsider some of the earlier parts of the target data.

5 I heard a lovely (.3) s:ound
6 like de ↑ de ↓ dede ↑ dedede ↓ dededah
7 just a happy (.) little tu:ne (.5)
8 a:nd >of course<
9 I tore apart ma window
10 I tore apart the window frame
11 I >did Everything<
12 to find out what the hell's causing that

We have seen in previous sections that the speaker does considerable work to construct a specific description of the noise, and then does further work to construct a version of her reaction. That is, in lines 5 to 11 there is a report of a state of affairs and then a report of one of the consequences of it. Furthermore, the speaker focuses on the pleasant, happy qualities of the sound: it is no more than just a 'little tune', for example. However, in describing her search for the cause she emphasises the urgency and extensiveness of her endeavours. Thus, there might appear to be an inconsistency, then, between the design of the description of the noise, and the design of the search for the cause of it. That is, the way she has reported her response to the noise is inconsistent with the way she characterised the initial stimulus to which her search was a response.

There is some evidence from the trajectory of the target data that suggests that this inconsistency is a matter of practical concern for the speaker. In line 12 she provides a reason for her search: to

find out the cause. In line 13, however, she embroiders this reason by providing the hypothetical example, thereby making a stronger case for her response. The additional material provided in the hypothetical example reveals that the nature of the noise - its character as something which is selectively perceived - is now elevated to the forefront of the account, at the expense of its musical and tuneful attributes. That is, she introduces material about the phenomenon which makes the urgency of her reaction quite explicable. Thus, the deficiency to which this reparative work was addressed lay in the discrepancy between the description of the noise and her reaction to it.

Focusing on the mysterious quality of the sound provides a warrant for the the form of the description used to characterise the search for the cause of the sound. Doing this reparative work, however, itself produces a further problem for the speaker: re-orienting the story from the trajectory initiated in the repair of its problematic aspects back to that established prior to the corrective work. To do this the speaker furnishes the utterance in lines 17 and 18. By re-emphasising the material-cause hypothesis this utterance meshes with the concerns of the speaker prior to the hypothetical example: to build a description of her early encounters which reveal her to have arrived at any normal person's conclusions about the nature of the phenomenon.

By way of a summary to this section we can re-instate the problem with which we began: that the speaker engages in the apparently contradictory business of emphasising the material-cause hypothesis immediately after having built an elaborate example of the appearances of the noise which points strongly to a paranormal-cause

hypothesis. It has been argued that a maxim connected with the construction of descriptions is that, where the sequence of utterances deal with a state of affairs and a consequence of, or response to those states, there should be a consistency between the terms employed to refer to both parts of the description. It is not suggested that this is a 'rule' of speaking; the data presented here indicate that it is not an unyielding constraint upon the construction of descriptive remarks. However, it is a constraint to the extent that the breach of this 'maxim' becomes an accountable matter for the speaker(s) involved. In the target data we can see that the speaker orients to this 'maxim' in the manner in which she attempts to repair a breach of it. The initial attempt to address the perceived inadequacy of her account subsequently 'sidetracked' the trajectory of her narrative, and this then became a problem to be resolved. This was accomplished through the utterance analysed in this section. Thus, the problem and the solution are inextricably tied with the speaker's analysis of the moment-by-moment production of her account, and the conventions associated with descriptive consistency.

4 Conclusions

Through this analysis we have explicated some of the resources which the speaker employs to build this sequence of utterances, and it is useful to summarise these. Firstly, the speaker orients to normative conventions associated with listing practices to accomplish descriptions which convey specific inferable properties. So, for

example, in constructing a description of her initial impressions of the phenomenon, she uses a three part list to emphasise the way in which she first perceived it during its early manifestations. Similarly, in her report of the search she combines the same listing practices with an extreme case formulation to convey the urgency of her search.

Throughout this sequence the speaker displays a concern to portray herself as having behaved like any normal person during her initial encounters with the phenomenon, and her response to it. That is, listing and formulating practices are employed to display her occasioned social identity as a 'normal', 'ordinary' person. Thus, another set of resources used by the speaker are tacit, common-sense understandings about the organised ways in which inferences about people are drawn on the basis of their category membership.

Finally, through the explication of the speaker's analyses of her own prior talk we have gained a preliminary insight to one convention which informs a specific class of descriptive practices. Moreover, we have observed the ways in which the speaker explicitly attends to, and does reparative work for, a breach of this maxim in the course of her account.

Thus, the speaker is attending to specific particular tasks which are generated in the course of the account of her experience: building inferences about herself, providing the character of the noise, occasioning a social identity, and so on. These tasks are addressed against a background of, and informed by, wider, culturally-available knowledge. Using Jefferson's (1984z) analysis of the 'At first I thought....but then I realised' device, it was argued that the conventions associated with paranormal experiences

assures the speaker of an inauspicious environment in which to report a personal experience of this type. That is, the speaker's practical reasoning as to the possibility that her account may receive an unsympathetic hearing informed the construction of the section analysed in this chapter.

This raises an interesting issue, which may be illustrated by reference to some ethnographic detail. The account from which this extract was taken was provided by a woman who is a professional medium. That is, she earns money by talking to the dead on behalf of the living. According to the information she provided in the interview, her life is populated by numerous encounters with a range of elementals, demonic and angelic forces, and spirits of various kinds. For her, then, these events are utterly normal. By virtue of the fact of her clairvoyant abilities, these experiences are a routine and unexceptional feature of her daily life. She realises, however, that for other people, these would be treated as anomalous experiences.

In the interview the speaker emphasises that these experiences are a recurrent and normal feature of her life and work. Thus, we might reasonably expect that her description of specific incidents would reflect the fact that she treats them, or claims to treat them, as ordinary events. Yet close examination of the details of this sequence reveals that she is orienting to norms and conventions regarding paranormal experiences which she would reject as having no relevance to her. Thus, there is a discrepancy between what she would say is normal and acceptable to her, and what sorts of issues and concerns actually inform the descriptions she makes. It appears that, despite claiming that these experiences are normal, she orients

to the wider, socially-organised conventions regarding the inauspiciousness of reporting paranormal experiences, and the cultural conventions which are associated with paranormal experiences.

In earlier chapters we discussed some of the critical arguments made against the way that traditional sociological or ethnographic approaches treat accounts of events as in some way 'mirroring' those events. In the light of the discrepant relationship between the speaker's articulated attitudes and beliefs, and the reasoning processes which informed these specific utterances, some observations are relevant.

Ryle (1949: 28ff.) provided a distinction between two types of knowledge: 'knowledge that', which refers to the kind of information which can be acquired through conscious learning, and 'knowledge how', which refers to tacit and commonsense skills. In this analysis we have explicated some of the 'knowledge how' on which the speaker has relied to construct this section of her account. We may note that this knowledge is inextricably tied to the interactional environment in which the account is made, and also reflects the speaker's reasoning about the wider conventions associated with the type of experience she is claiming to have had. Thus, it is clear that what is relevant in this extract are not the broader classifications and categories to which the speaker may consciously assign herself, or the attitudes and beliefs to which she explicitly orients, but her reading of the practical, moment-by-moment production of the account.

Two themes have run through the analytic sections presented above, and by way of a conclusion I want to discuss briefly how these issues

may inform subsequent analyses. First, the speaker is engaged in the business of reporting an experience which actually happened: that is, she is making factual claims about an event which was external to her. The analysis revealed, however, that the speaker is orienting to the possibility that her account may receive an unsympathetic hearing: that the recipient may try to locate a normal explanation for the experience, thus undermining the claimed objectivity of the phenomenon.

In ordinary conversation there are circumstances in which an account may receive an unsympathetic hearing, and thus speakers use various resources to display the 'out-there-ness' of the phenomenon or event they report (Pomerantz 1986; Potter and Wetherell 1988; Smith 1978). Thus, some issues for further investigation are the procedures by which speakers display the external and factual character of the phenomenon they are reporting.

Second, the particulars of the account reported in the target data are the speaker's memories of those events, and we noted that these are reconstructions. That is not to say that the speaker is lying, or subject to declining memory facilities. Rather, it implies that descriptions of memories, like the descriptions of the phenomenon and the subsequent reactions to it, are composed by the speaker with a view to pragmatic circumstances at the time. The relationship between memory formulations, and the dynamic and constructive character of talk-in-interaction, will be explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

A DEVICE FOR RECALLING PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES

1 Introduction

Accounts of encounters with paranormal phenomena are narrated recollections of dramatic personal experiences. In the following data extracts the speakers are describing some features of their memory of their first encounter with the anomaly on which they are reporting.

(1) DN 22:159 (The speaker is providing a description of one of a series of encounters with poltergeist phenomena.)

1 S I said do you want some more tea
2 >oh yeah ah said< oh:: dear the pot's
3 empty I'll have to go and make some more
4 so ah grabbed the pot and the kitchen
5 was on the floor above an ah (.)
6 went up (.9) flew up the stairs
7 in all this sunlight an (.)
8 lovely place it was (.2)
9 anyway I got to the kitchen door
10 an as ah 'hh
11 I had the teapot in my hand like this
12 and I walked through the
13 kitchen door (.5) 'hhh
14 X as I was going through the doorway hh
15 (.7)
16 Y I was just (.) jammed against
17 the doorpost (.3) like this
18 with the teapot stihl h stuhhck
19 out in front of me
((continues))

(2) MD 2:9 (At the time of the experience the speaker had been thinking about the nature of conversion to religious faith through direct encounter with the numinous.)

1 S because yuh get yer blindin' light
2 on the road to Damascus
3 sort u(f) thing un eh 'hh (.6)
4 there's no problem (so you)
5 yuh know as far as you're
6 concerned you measure all things
7 according to that experience
8 the experience was exterior
9 to yourself an' so therefore
10 (1.3)
11 yuh viewed it h (.6)
12 as a star:t (.5) (y'know)
13 >yeah<
14 X I were just thinkin'
15 (.7)
16 er:m:
17 Y and then suddenly
18 (.)
19 I was aware of
20 (1)
21 almost (.) the sensation was almost
22 as if a veil was lifted
((continues))

In both these extracts the speakers are able to formulate a recollection of what they were doing just before the onset of their first experience of the phenomenon. In extract (1) the speaker claims that he encountered an invisible presence which forcibly pressed him against a door frame. He describes this as happening 'as I was going through the doorway' (line 14). In extract (2) the speaker reports that his activity prior to his first awareness of the onset of a mystical experience was 'just thinkin'' (line 14).

A preliminary observation concerns the way in which these recollections have been constructed. Both speakers employ the same two part format by which to introduce into the account the first experience of their respective phenomena. This format can be identified as 'I was just doing X....when Y', where the 'X' component

is used to describe the speakers' activities at the time, and the 'Y' component reports the speakers' first awareness of phenomenon. For example, from extract (1) the speaker claims that 'as I was going through the doorway' ('I was just doing X...') he was 'just (.) jammed against the doorpost' ('...when Y').

'Going through' somewhere and 'thinkin'' something, furthermore, seem like the type of routine or everyday activities which are not in normal circumstances immediately memorable or notable. These extracts, then, suggest that the speakers can recall the mundane circumstances prior to the onset of their experience.

These data indicate certain consistencies in the way that these speakers have described their first awareness or experience of a paranormal phenomenon. They recall their routine activities immediately prior to the event, and they employ a two part format by which to describe their initial perceptions of the event.

Before proceeding to an analysis of this format it is important to note that these characteristics are not peculiar to accounts of paranormal experiences. For example, it occurs in the following data. This extract is taken from a telephone conversation between two sisters, Emma and Lottie. Lottie has just returned from holiday during which she visited her friend and her friend's new husband, Dwight.

(3) NB:IV:10:R:20-21:Standard Orthography

1 L Yeah you just got to be care We:ll see:
2 *hh ↑Dwight only has (.2) u-one: ga:ll
3 bladder?
4 (.7)
5 E °Mm [*hm, °
6 L He ha↑d e-and then ↑he has to be
7 careful what he eats he can't eat anything

8 greasy you [know?
9 E [°Mm-° °Mhm:,°
10 L Go:d what a ma:n he was out there this:
11 morning and he (.) They have these
12 great big o:live trees a:ll over
13 you kn [ow hhh
14 E [Mm: hm,
15 L 't'h An:d the ↑wind was so ba:d that
16 the the th- (.) the branches were
17 hitting the hou:se and (.) God (.3)
18 *uh:: I got up abou:t (.) X
19 ↑well it was about ei:ght o'clock,
20 E M m [hm:
21 L 'hh [and HERE HE'S UP THERE s:awing tho:se Y
22 o:ff you know?

Early in this account of Dwight's activities Lottie says 'Go:d what a ma:n' (line 10). She then goes on to tell a story to illustrate some of his exceptional qualities, culminating in her description of his early morning tree-shearing prowess (lines 21 and 22). What is interesting is that this story is presented as an account of an unusual event - a man with physical problems getting up early in the morning to shear the branches of a tree. Before producing a description of Dwight's unusual behaviour, however, she provides a report of her activity at the time: 'I got up abou:t (.) well it was about ei:ght o'clock,' (lines 18 and 19).

There are a number of similarities between extract (3) and extracts (1) and (2). Firstly, the event upon which she is reporting-getting up early in the morning to remove offending branches from a tree - is produced as one which is unusual and out-of-the-ordinary. Secondly, she prefaces her first reference to Dwight's extraordinary behaviour with a description of her circumstances at the time she witnessed this event - she had just 'got up in the morning'. Thirdly, Lottie packages her first perception of Dwight's unusual behaviour in the two part format identified as 'I was just doing

X.....when Y'. This would suggest that this is a recurrently used device through which speakers relate dramatic events.

Further evidence to support this comes from the following passage which is taken from McGuinniss' (1983) analysis of Captain Jeffrey MacDonald, the American Army doctor whose wife and two children were murdered in their home in February 1970. MacDonald told the police that a group of drug-crazed hippies broke into his house and began to assault him, knocking him unconscious. He claimed that upon regaining consciousness he discovered the mutilated remains of his wife and two young daughters, and immediately alerted the military police.

From an early stage in the subsequent investigation the police suspected that MacDonald had committed the murders. For several weeks after the attack, however, they had insufficient evidence to charge him, and, therefore, he was not taken into custody.

In the course of his research McGuinniss conducted numerous recorded interviews with MacDonald. In the following extract MacDonald describes the occasion on which he first learned that he was named as the prime suspect. This happened during a mealtime in the Officers' Mess at his army camp.

'I was standing in line getting food, [X] and I had just gotten through the cash register area and was beginning to sit down, [Y] when they had a news bulletin that Captain Jeffrey MacDonald, the Green Beret Officer from Fort Bragg who six weeks earlier had claimed that his wife and children were brutally beaten and stabbed by four hippies, was himself named chief suspect.

And I remember the truly - I don't mean to use cliches, but I don't know how else to explain it - the room was spinning again.' (McGuinniss 1983: 168)

In this passage MacDonald describes hearing for the first time that he was considered to be responsible for the savage murder of his entire family. Receiving such news is obviously a traumatic experience.¹ In describing this event he displays similar characteristics found in the previous data. For example, he is able to recall what he was doing immediately before receiving the news: he had 'just gotten through the cash register area and was beginning to sit down'. Furthermore, this activity is clearly not the type of event which would normally be reported in ordinary conversation. Indeed, 'beginning to sit down' seems conspicuously routine. Finally, the activity he cites prefaces his description of the first time he heard the traumatic news.

As final evidence that these observations are not restricted to accounts of paranormal events, it is useful to consider psychological studies of the extent to which people recall the details of their circumstances at the time of dramatic experiences. For example, in recollections of either hearing about, or witnessing, political assassinations. In 1899 F. W. Colegrave asked subjects to try to recall when they first heard the news that President Lincoln had been assassinated, an event which had happened thirty-three years before the study (Colegrave 1982 [1899]). His respondents were able to provide detailed information of their circumstances at the time. For example:

¹ Presumably, if he had committed the murders, then he would then know that the authorities were on to him; if he didn't do it, then he would know that he had been charged of a crime of which he was innocent. Either way, hearing such news would be traumatic.

- X 'I was standing by the stove getting dinner:
Y my husband came in and told me.'
- X 'I was setting out a rose bush by the door.
Y My husband came in the yard and told me. It
was about 11 o'clock.'
- X 'I was fixing fence [sic]...
Y Mr. W came along and told me.'

(Colegrave 1982: 42)

These results suggested that these individuals were able to recall perfectly well that moment from over thirty years before when they first heard of the President's murder. (See also Pillemer 1984; Yarmen and Bull 1978) Moreover, it is clear that the type of activities they recalled are similar to the range of circumstances reported in data on accounts of extraordinary experiences. That is, routine activities are recurrently mentioned: 'standing by the stove', and 'setting out a rose bush' for example. Furthermore, these memories display the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format. These similarities are interesting in the light of the fact that they were produced in written, rather than spoken, reports, and elicited from people who lived over one hundred years ago in a different culture to our own.

Colegrave's results led him to conclude that there is a psychological facility by which such recollections can be formed. He attributed the ability to form such recollections to the abiding and durable quality of vivid experiences. That is, the sheer novelty or drama of the event ensured that the mundane, routine and trivial features of the speaker's environment at the time were stored in memory.

Within contemporary cognitive psychology there continues to be an

interest in the character and cause of memories of dramatic events, and the un-eventful circumstances of the experiences which are also recalled. One psychological explanation will be considered shortly. Firstly, however, it is necessary to state briefly why work in cognitive psychology need be addressed at all.

The present study of this class of memory formulations concerns two related issues: their character as socially-organised devices, and the interactional concerns which inform their design and use in the production of spoken reports of paranormal experiences. Colegrave's research, albeit dated, suggests strongly that the features of this device can occur in contexts other than spoken accounts of the paranormal. This in turn could be taken as evidence for the operation of a psychological process by which memories of this type are recorded, stored and produced. If it is the case that the production of this class of memory formulation occurs as the product of psychological, cognitive or neurophysiological operations the scope for sociological investigation becomes limited. For example, conversational rememberings of the type displayed in the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format can then be accounted for by reference to determining cognitive facilities. That is, there are fixed representations in the brain which can be recalled - 'read off' - in the appropriate place when people are making accounts of their experiences. Furthermore, it could stand as evidence that the social and interactional circumstances in which these devices are used are of little consequence when compared to the the underlying processes which govern the form and use of the device. In short, the appearance of this device might be regarded as no more than the epi-phenomenon of determinant cognitive events. An assessment of

psychological analyses of this device, therefore, is a necessary preliminary to an attempt to furnish a sociological account.

In the following section Brown and Kulik's (1977) neurophysiological explanation will be discussed. Their work is important in two respects. Firstly, it provides a particularly strong case for the operation of distinctly cognitive procedures: the type of memory they study is regarded as being largely exempt from processes of distortion and reconstruction which occur in other types of memory recollections. Secondly, a critical examination of their position permits the introduction of a number of analytic issues which will be explored in later sections of this chapter.

2 Psychology and the recollection of dramatic events

Brown and Kulik (1977) begin by noting that their own personal recollections of the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 are qualitatively different from other types of memory. They have

'a primary "live" quality that is almost perceptual. Indeed, it is very much like a photograph that indiscriminately preserves the scene in which each of us found himself when the flashbulb was fired.' (Brown and Kulik 1977: 74)

Hence, Brown and Kulik call these 'flashbulb' memories, and claim that they occur not only in the recollection of receiving dramatic news, but in any case where the individual has a particularly unusual experience. They argue for the following explanation.

When the dramatic incident originally happens the individual

concerned recognises the novelty or import of the event. This recognition occurs at a conscious and unconscious level. For example, a novel experience may result in an unusual pattern of neuronal stimulation and firing. Processes within the reticular cortical system assess this novel experience to determine if it has any biological or emotional significance for the individual. If it is decided that this is the case, a neural mechanism is triggered which automatically registers and records, not only the stimulus event, but also any other information which is being processed at the same time, such as routine, everyday activities. This accounts for the ability of people to recall their seemingly inconsequential behaviour at the time of extraordinary experiences.

If this theory is correct it provides an explanation for the association between speakers' reference to the paranormal phenomenon they experienced and their formulations of their state when it occurred. That is, psychological mechanisms operated to record all information being processed by the brain at that time. This information was indelibly ingrained in cognitive mechanisms, and is thus available to speakers when recalling their experience in the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format.

There are, however, a number of objections to the explanation proposed by Brown and Kulik. Firstly, as Neisser (1982b) points out, flashbulb memories can be incorrect. This casts doubt on the utility of the photographic or flashbulb metaphor which prompted Brown and Kulik to look to psychological processes for an explanation.

Secondly, some events become noticeable or traumatic only in retrospect. This is illustrated in the following extract.

(4) ME B 10

1 S I mean a simple example which
2 everybody's had something similar
3 to 'hhhh I was living in uhm (.)
4 inglan years ago:
5 and all of a sudden
6 X I was sitting in bed one night (.)
7 getting ready to go to sleep (.)
8 Y and I decided to write to a friend
9 I hadn't seen for four years (.)
10 in Massachusetts (.) a:nd
11 I found myself congratulating her
12 on (.) the engagement of her oldest
13 daughter (.3) I said congratulations
14 Miriam's getti- Miriam's gotten
15 engaged (.5) ar:hm and
16 I sent the letter (.7) and eh (.)
17 er: ah I I felt totally (r) (.)
18 right in doing so (.5)
19 ah mean i(t) it was just as
20 normal to me to know that
21 her daughter had just gotten
22 engaged as to know that I've got
23 five fingers on my right ha:nd
24 'hhhh an eh hh she wrote back
25 to me hhh in total chaos
26 saying (.) how the Hell did
27 ↑you know she started the letter
28 huhh hah↑ 'hh she said
29 I received your letter at nine
30 o'clock in the morning (.)
31 and you were congratulating me
32 on (.) Miriam's getting engage:d:
33 and I said what the Hell is
34 she talking about 'hhh
35 at twelve o'clock that morning (.)
36 she walked in and announced
37 her engagement
((continues))

In this extract the speaker reports on an impulse to write to a distant friend to congratulate her on the engagement of her daughter. The report of this impulse is constructed in the 'X...then Y' format. Furthermore, the activity she describes prior to her decision to write the letter is uneventful and routine: she was 'just sitting in bed one night (.) getting ready to go to sleep ' (lines 6 and 7). Later on, the speaker goes on to report that her friend's

return letter revealed that, at the time the speaker was celebrating the engagement, no-one knew anything about it, including the speaker's friend, Miriam's mother. The daughter announced the engagement after the speaker's letter had arrived. Thus, the impulse to write was based on a precognition of an impending event.² At the time of writing, then, there was nothing dramatic about her decision to write the letter which could have triggered the psychological and neurophysiological processes postulated by Brown and Kulik's explanation. In short, nothing had happened which was at that time known to be unusual by which we can account for the speaker's ability to recall that she was 'just sitting on the bed' before the extraordinary event.

The following data provides further disconfirmation of Brown and Kulik's theory. In this extract the speaker is describing an incident which happened in his early childhood, some forty years prior to the interview in which he produced this account. At the time of the experience he was suffering from a severe attack of pneumonia. In the first part of the extract he is describing the effects of this illness on his sleeping habits at that time.

(5) BY 3:13

1 S so:: anyway (.5) when you're in bed
2 that length o' time you don't sleep
3 regular hours like (.3)
4 when you normally go to bed at night
5 yuknow if you've been up all day
6 you go to bed you go to sleep (.)

² There is evidence to suggest that the speaker's formulation of her activity is done in spite of of her subsequent knowledge that it transpired to be of consequence: in line 5 she begins to preface a reference to her decision to write with 'all of a sudden', which seems to indicate strongly that the speaker had classified the impulse as significant in the light of later events.

7 'h h h h an' you wake up in the morning (.)
8 X an' I musta bin do:zin there or
9 something (.) unuhr:
10 Y suddenly this: light
11 a very small light (.)
12 must've started playing (.)
13 s:i:lly devils
 ((continues))

The speaker introduces a reference to the phenomenon with the state formulation 'an I musta bin do:zin there or something' (line 8). This recollection of his activity at the time of the experience, however, seems to be qualified by his comments 'musta bin...' and 'or something...'. That is, he appears to be lacking a precise recollection of the routine circumstances which were disrupted by the phenomenon. Yet according to the Brown and Kulik explanation, the mechanical operation of neurophysiological processes should have ensured that this information was stored in his memory.

Despite a lack of a clear recollection of his activities at the time of the experience, the manner in which he qualifies his state formulation suggests that he is providing a description of that type of activity in which it is likely he would have been engaged. The provision of this 'candidate' description implies that the speaker recognises, and responds to, a cultural convention to furnish an example of this class of utterance.

There are some further problems with the Brown and Kulik explanation, and these concern the relationship between the activity used in constructing a description of the circumstances of the experience, and the nature of the phenomenon or event being reported. In extract (1) the speaker's experience consisted of being pressed against the frame of a door by an invisible agency. His state formulation was 'as I was going through the doorway' (line 14).

There is a 'fit' between the activity selected and the type of experience he had. This occurs also in the following extract.

(6) LE 4:29 (The speaker's husband had been a pilot in the R. A. F. He had a military funeral service which was held in an aeroplane hanger.)

1 S an I went in there (.) er:m:
2 w-with my mother in law and uhm: (.4)
3 friends that were with me
4 (1.3)
5 'hhh (.)
6 X and I was just looking at the coffin
7 Y and there was David standing there (.3)
8 he was in Blues
9 (1)
10 'hh he wasn't wearing his hat
11 his hat was on the coffin
12 and he was there
((continues))

Here, the speaker's saw an apparition of her recently deceased husband standing next to his coffin at his funeral. Her state formulation is 'I was just looking at the coffin' (line 6). In this extract, and in extract (1) there is a relationship between the speaker's recollections of the experience and the circumstances at that time. This is even more strikingly illustrated in extract (3). The speaker provides a description of her circumstances which reveal what time of day it was when she observed the extraordinary behaviour of her friend's husband: 'I got up abou:t (.) well it was about ei:ght o'clock' (lines 18 and 19). What made this behaviour so extraordinary, however, is that, despite Dwight's health problems, he was up and active so early in the morning. By introducing this information into her description of the circumstances at that time the speaker is able to provide material from an inspection of which a recipient can come to see what was so out-of-the-ordinary. Indeed,

the provision of this feature of the speaker's circumstances furnishes a warrant for her description of this behaviour as unusual and notable.

In these extracts, then, there is a contingent relevance between the activities indexed in the first part of the format, and the paranormal or unusual event referred to in the second. That is, the activities reported in the first part are not coincidentally related to the subsequent experience: it is not that they are mentionable because they were happening, and then something extraordinary happened. Rather, the descriptions of these activities are designed to elevate features of the speakers' experiences made relevant by the subsequent event. They attain a reportable status by virtue of what the event turned out to be.

The contingent relevance between the two parts of the device is difficult to account for in terms of a flashbulb metaphor. If the brain records all information being processed at the time, why is it that the eventual description of the speaker's activities at the time should so neatly dove-tail with the phenomenon which had been experienced ?

According to the Brown and Kulik hypothesis, the information which is recalled in recollections of dramatic events is 'accidentally' stored - that is, the brain just happened to be processing it - when the events originally occurred. However, the brain is monitoring a considerable array of information at any one time: peripheral visual images, aural input, the sensations from skin contact, olfactory sensations, the speaker's biological and emotional state at that moment and so on. Therefore, any actual memory formulation is a selection from a range of possible features recorded by the

'flashbulb' operations of the brain. Thus, even if we accept Brown and Kulik's flashbulb metaphor, it is still difficult to account for the selection of one specific feature from the total quantity of information dormant in the brain.

Furthermore, the psychological study of this class of memory formulation has primarily employed written examples. There has been little attention given to occasions in which these formulations are produced in the course of naturally occurring talk. This position is perfectly legitimate for psychological research given that the object of such investigations are the underlying and determining cognitive procedures which are operating. The examples of these formulations which occur in accounts of paranormal experiences, however, display features which do not seem to be explicable solely in terms of cognitive procedures. For example, the contingent relevance between the speakers' activities at the time, and the event to which these activities were prior. This observation suggests that these formulations are designed. This in turn invites analysis of the methods by which they are designed and constructed, and also the tasks these formulations are designed to accomplish. These issues can only be explored through analysis of formulations produced spontaneously in accounts of paranormal experiences.

Neisser (1982b) proposes an alternative explanation for the occurrence and organisation of these types of memories. Rejecting the idea that there is a neural or chemical basis for them, he argues:

'they seem to be like narrative conventions....News reporters and novelists, mythmakers and autobiographers have a fairly consistent idea of how events should be described, of what readers and listeners want to know. Everyone in our culture is at least roughly aware of these conventions. In effect we have a schemata for the arrival of important news....' (Neisser 1982b: 47) [original emphasis]

Neisser's argument is that, when making reports about dramatic personal experiences, speakers rely on culturally-available conventions which inform the ways that accounts are produced. This argument has two immediate implications.

On a positive note it suggests that the investigation of the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format does not have to answer to the 'facts' of cognitive procedure which are deemed to govern its organisation and content. This is not to claim that such cognitive procedures do not exist, or that they are unimportant. Neisser has indicated merely that there is a social dimension to them, a feature obscured by the emphasis upon cognition and neurophysiology.

In doing this, however, he implies too strongly that the use of this class of memory formulation results from exposure to culturally-available procedures for the arrival of dramatic news. That is, it is implied that the production of this device in accounts of extraordinary experiences is a form of ritual activity. They are produced this way simply because this is the way that members of a culture have learned to present information of this kind. Criticisms which applied to Brown and Kulik's explanation, therefore, are also pertinent to this position. For example, it is difficult to explain the descriptive 'meshing' between the two parts of the format.

To produce a more satisfactory account, therefore, it is necessary to consider the 'I was just doing X...' format as an environment in

which distinctly interactional concerns are mediated. That is, we will consider how speakers use this format to accomplish specific tasks in the course of producing verbal accounts of paranormal phenomena. Analysing the functions mediated through this device permits us to retain Neisser's insight as to their character as culturally-available resources, while at the same time providing an empirical basis in which to explore the fine detail of their organisation.

3 State formulations

In the following extracts there are more examples of way in which speakers produce descriptions of their activity immediately prior to their initial encounter with an anomalous phenomenon.

(7) WER 52 (the speaker is providing an account of a series of apparitions and associated poltergeist activity.)

1 S so I I think I remember I 'ad a dish
2 in hand I was out in the kitchen
3 it was different like (.) yu know (.)
4 to this sort'uve flat (.5)
5 an it was like a (.) big entrance hall (.7)
6 with one (.) door (.5) and then it came
7 straight the way through
8 there was a door there and a
9 door there (.5) a door there
10 an (.5) it was a kitchen
11 (1)
12 and I was right by this unit part
13 (1.5)
14 an (.)
15 X I were lookin out that way
16 Y an it seemed to be like a figure↑ (.)
17 coming through that ha↑ll (.7)
18 all I could see was ah (a)
19 the top part
(continues)

(8) LE 5:39 (The speaker had her husband's funeral service video recorded for relatives who were unable to attend the ceremony.)

1 S I also wanted it video'd for my
2 children: who were
3 (1.7)
4 two and four at the time
5 and they didn't come to the funeral
6 (2.4)
7 and so perhaps a wee:k later
8 (1.3)
9 >must've bin about< a week afterwards
10 'h I:: (.5) put the recording on
11 and was: (.5) watching it
12 I was obviously extremely upset
13 (.8)
14 X and I was sat on a chair
15 (.)
16 uhnd
17 (.5)
18 Y when I looked down David was (.)
19 kneeling at the side of me
((continues))

(9) VA 1 100 (The speaker has been providing the background for her experience, which occurred at work. She has just stated that she worked very early in the morning.)

1 S I got there very early
2 in the morning simply because
3 my mother was ill at the time
4 with cancer 'h
5 and I used tuh have to
6 nurse her so I (.3) got
7 there early to do the work (.5)
8 X 'hh as I went up (.) one of
9 the staircases with all my (.)
10 cleaning equipment (.3) um::
11 (1)
12 Y a man (.) pushed passed me
13 (1)
14 he was spirit it w-
15 or whatever you want to call it
((continues))

(10) HY 14

1 S I was in that state between (.)
2 sleeping and waking I was not
3 asleep (.) butch ya know in that

4 very relaxed (.3) state (.5)
 5 X a:nd I was >thinkin' to myself<
 6 Y au:GHh:: I'm cold (.7) y'know
 7 a:nd the bedclothes (.3)
 8 came up from the
 9 bottom of the bed
 10 (1)
 11 and covered me
 12 (1.3)
 13 without me (.) taking any
 14 kind'uve (.) action whatsoever
 ((continues))

(11) ME B 88

1 S I had ear plugs in my ears
 2 cz I couldn't stand all the
 3 noise I had (.) dark glasses on
 4 >because I didn't want
 5 to see anybody<
 6 X an' I was standing right there
 7 on the platform (.7) waiting for
 8 this damned train to come (.)
 9 Y all of a sudden
 10 (2.3)
 11 I (.) I began to feel as total
 12 totally (.) absolutely (.)
 13 insubstantial that is
 14 I had no bodily feeling
 ((continues))

The first observation to make is that, in describing the circumstances surrounding their first perception of the phenomenon, speakers provide information which attends to more than one issue. For example, it is possible to use the first part of the 'I was just doing X....' format to refer either to an activity or a place: in extract (7) the speaker produces the description 'I was sat in a chair'. This utterance provides information which addresses both the location of the speaker - on a specific chair in the room - and what she was doing at the time - sitting. The same is true of the description provided by the speaker in extract (8). In this case the speaker's formulation is 'as I went up (.) one of the staircases

with all my (.) cleaning equipment' (lines 8 to 10). This utterance can be used either to place the speaker on the staircase, or to locate that she was going up it at the time of the experience. Therefore, instead of attempting to characterise these descriptions in terms of one overriding feature, it is more useful to refer to the first part of the 'I was just doing X....' format as the speaker's state formulation.

It has been noted in passing that the activities reported in state formulations, for the most part, seem on first inspection to be routine, bland or commonplace: in short, unexceptional. Moreover, in addition to this, these descriptions portray a minimal character of the activity to which they refer. For example, in extract (6) the speaker's state formulation is 'I were lookin' out that way' (line 15). In extract (9) the speaker claims that, prior to her first awareness that something strange was happening, she 'was >thinkin to myself<' (line 5). Finally, in extract (8) the speaker claims her first encounter with the phenomenon occurred as she 'went up (.) one of the staircases' (lines 8 and 9). 'Lookin', 'thinkin' and 'went' gloss only the broad character of the speakers' actions at the time.³

The recollection of inconsequential events was treated as significant in the Brown and Kulik model, insofar as it was assumed that only by virtue of the occurrence of an extraordinary event was it possible to be able to recall mundane aspects of the circumstances. This suggests that Brown and Kulik recognised the unexceptional nature of the circumstantial events described in what they termed flashbulb memories. It is not at all clear, however,

³ We may note that the 'unreportable' character of these activities may in part stem from the fact that so much of everyday life could be legitimately glossed by these terms.

that the activities and events reported in the first part of the device identified here can be treated as being literal descriptions of the state of affairs in the world to which they purportedly refer.

In Chapter Two it was argued that any description is inevitably a selection from a range of available possibilities. Thus, the state formulations in the 'I was just doing X....' device are also composed of items selected in preference over other items. The blandness or inconsequentiality of the speakers' recollections of their circumstances at the time, therefore, may in fact be the result of a preference for the selection of words through which to construct a description of these memories, rather than a reflection of a fixed set of internal images. In the next section we will focus on the ways that speakers select certain items with which to build their state formulations.

4 The mundane environment of paranormal experiences

In this section we will see that speakers design their state formulations to provide for the unexceptional character of their activities at the time. The first source of evidence emerges when specific data extracts are considered in detail. This exercise is somewhat unsatisfactory insofar as it considers what is excluded from the account, rather than what is actually present in the data. Thus, it cannot be treated as providing more than guidelines as to the procedures by which specific utterances are composed.

We will start by examining extract (6).

(6) LE 4:29

1 S an I went in there (.) er:m:
2 w-with my mother in law and uhm: (.4)
3 friends that were with me
4 (1.3)
5 'hhh (.)
6 X and I was just looking at the coffin
7 Y and there was David standing there (.3)
8 he was in Blues
9 (1)
10 'hh he wasn't wearing his hat
11 his hat was on the coffin
12 and he was there
((continues))

In this extract the speaker is reporting on one of the first of a number of experiences involving the apparition of her dead husband. This occurred during the funeral service held for him in an R. A. F. areoplane hanger. The actual state formulation she provides is 'I was just looking at the coffin' (line 6). There are a number of relevant observations to be made about this description. First, it excludes reference to a massive array of potentially reportable features of her environment. For example, she does not report information about her non-physical environment; for example, she does not furnish a state formulation such as 'and it just went quiet and then...' or 'and it just turned cold when suddenly...'. Furthermore, she does not mention where the coffin was in relation to the aeroplanes situated at either side of it. Nor does she indicate her physical position in relation either to the coffin or to other people at the funeral. Moreover, she makes no reference to her emotional state. Indeed, given the range of features that she could have legitimately selected from which to build a state formulation, the activity of 'just looking' seems particularly bland.

According to Brown and Kulik's explanation the brain records, and

thereby makes available for subsequent recall, the mundane details of the circumstances at the time of extraordinary experiences. Yet in this single extract it is clear that the speaker produces as mundane a description as is possible. In the way she 'brackets in' only certain aspects of her environment she constructs a routine state formulation in spite of the emotive and traumatic circumstances at the time.

A second source of evidence emerges in extracts where speakers themselves overtly display a preference for the way in which their state formulations are constructed. In this respect the following data is useful not only because we can see the speaker selecting items to build the mundanity of his activities at the time, but also because it illustrates the kind of descriptive items which are rejected in the production of state formulations.

(12) DN 22:162

1 S I had the teapot in my hand like that
2 and I walked through the kitchen door
3 (.5)
4 X 'hhh as I was going through the doorway hh
5 (.7)
6 Y I was just (.) jammed
((continues))

In this extract there are two descriptions of the same event: 'and I walked through the kitchen door' (line 2), and 'as I was going through the doorway' line (4). Only after the second description of his circumstances does he go on to refer to the phenomenon. This implies that the speaker did not want the first utterance to stand as a state formulation, and, therefore, that he orienting to a preference for the design of this description.

In the first utterance the speaker selects to describe his physical progression into the kitchen as 'walked'. He then subsequently amends this and characterises himself as 'going through'. Although both utterances address his physical movement there is a subtle distinction in that the first attends directly to the means of ambulation: a description of how he got into the doorframe. The second refers more generally to the action of movement rather than the method whereby that movement was achieved. It is also noticeable that there is a change in the tenses through which the activity is described: from 'walked' to 'going'. This shift is from a 'passive' to an 'active' past tense. (This will be discussed later in more detail.)

In this extract, then, the speaker provides alternative descriptions of two separate features of his circumstances at the time of the experience: his movement and his location. In both cases the first, specific version is replaced by a more general reference, suggesting that the speaker is orienting to a preference to use bland and unexceptional descriptive items from which to construct his state formulation. From the range of possible options he actively selects specific words, the use of which is intended to provide for, rather than merely reflect, the mundane character of his circumstances.

This extract is useful insofar as it permits an analytic inspection of the methodic character of the speaker's reasoning about what should and should not be used in a state formulation. Fortunately this data is not the only material which contains occasions in which speakers exhibit the method employed when constructing the first part of the 'I was just doing X...' device. In some cases, speakers use state formulations to provide upshots or

gists of their prior talk. This material will be examined in the following section.

5 State formulations as gists and upshots

In this section we will consider state formulations which are constructed so as to provide a summary of some aspect of the speakers' own prior talk. In the way that these summaries are produced speakers display the practical reasoning which informs their design. An analysis of these procedures further confirms that the speakers actively provide mundane, bland glosses of previous stretches of talk in which they deal with traumatic or evocative material.

In the following extract the speaker provides an account of the circumstances leading up to his experiences, and then describes the onset of the experience through the 'I was just doing X...' format.

(13) MD 1:1

1 I well what s- sort of experiences
2 have you had
3 (1.4)
4 S er:m:
5 (2.3)
6 >ah suppose<
7 (2.7)
8 the one that sticks in me mind
9 most was (.) when I had (.)
10 I was working a(h)-
11 I used tuh have a workshop
12 where I used to make
13 furniture (.4) I'm a
14 wood cab- cabinet maker by
15 trade 'hhh and I'd walked
16 down t(t)- village to get
17 some cigarettes 'cos at that
18 time I used to smoke (.4)

19 un I was thinkin' about religion
 20 un eh (.5) I was thinkin' well (.4)
 21 () on the lines of it (.3)
 22 i(t)- i- must be very easy
 23 to be Saint Paul because
 24 yuh get yer blindin' light
 25 on the road to Damascus
 26 sort u(v) thing un eh
 27 'hh (.6) 'you've no problems'
 28 ('so you') yo:u: know
 29 as far as you're concerned
 30 you measure all things
 31 according to that experience
 32 the experience was exterior
 33 to yourself an' so therefore
 34 (1.3)
 35 you viewed it (.7)
 36 as a star:t
 37 (.5)
 38 (>'yu know<')
 39 yeah
 40 X I were just thinkin'
 41 (.3)
 42 er:m:
 43 Y and then suddenly (.)
 44 I was aware of
 45 (.7)
 46 almost (.) the sensation was
 47 almost as if a veil was lifted
 ((continues))

It is noticeable that the speaker talks for a considerable stretch before producing the first part of the device. Much of his talk concerns his reflections on religious conversion through direct encounter with mystical, religious forces. These meditations are summarised by the state formulation 'I were just thinkin'' (line 40).

'I were just thinkin'' is related to the previous stretch of talk insofar as it attends to and describes the speaker's activity. That is, it provides a version of the sense of the prior talk. While retaining the activity 'thinking', however, it deletes the specific features of the speaker's contemplations. That he had been explicitly considering direct confrontation with the numinous, for example, is not adumbrated by the truncated state formulation. The

speaker's method for providing this description, therefore, involves the active rejection of a range of potentially storyable items in preference for a minimal and mundane version.

Heritage and Watson (1979) explored the ways in which participants in news interviews formulate versions of prior talk, and the interactional tasks accomplished through these formulations. They identified two methods by which speakers can reflexively constitute the character of the preceding talk, and these are illustrated in the following extracts.

(14) (This extract comes from a face-to-face interview with the 'Slimmer of the Year' which was relayed on the radio.)

1 S You have a shell that for so long
2 protects you but sometimes
3 things creep through the shell
4 and then you become really aware
5 of how awful you feel. I never
6 ever felt my age or looked my age
7 I was always older - people took me
8 for older. And when I was at college
9 I think I looked a matronly fifty.
10 And I was completely alone one weekend
11 and I got to this stage where I
12 almost jumped in the river.
13 I just felt life wasn't worth it any
14 more - it hadn't anything to offer
15 and if this was living
16 I had had enough
17 I You really were prepared to commit
18 suicide because you were
19 a big fatty
20 S Yes, because I - I just didn't
21 see anything in life that I had
22 to look forward to....

(Heritage and Watson 1979: 132)

At the stage where the speaker has introduced her thoughts about suicide the interviewer interjects and asks the question 'You really were prepared to commit suicide because you were a big fatty' (lines

17 to 19). Here the interviewer uses material provided by the speaker to form the basis of his question. He provides a summary assessment of what she had been saying, drawing out the 'gist' of her remarks - namely, that her obesity led to a suicidal depression.

(15) (This extract comes from a radio interview with Mr. John Gouriet (G) after his successful application to the Court of Appeal for leave to take out an injunction against a boycott of mail to South Africa planned by the Union of Post Office Workers.)

- 1 I If occasion - if occasion rises again
2 will you take similar action ?
3 G Well we have never hesitated so far
4 to er take action where
5 freedom is being abused.
6 I So there might be another occasion
7 on which you will use the law
8 against unions
9 G Not necessarily against unions
10 but against any body which has
11 become over mighty er and is abusing
12 its responsibilities

(Heritage and Watson 1979: 134-5)

In this extract G, in response to the interviewer's first question, makes the statement that he has never refrained from action in those circumstances where he feels freedom is being abused. The interviewer's next question (lines 6 to 8) takes this assertion and draws implications from it, using these as the core of the question. Thus, the interviewer addresses his remarks to the 'upshot' of G's previous comments.

Heritage and Watson note that gists and upshots allow speakers to do a combination of three things. By formulating prior talk in this way certain features of it can be preserved, some deleted and others transformed. For example, from extract (14) the interviewer's phrase 'a big fatty' preserves the essential feature of the speaker's prior

descriptions - her weight problem. At the same time, the way in which the issue is described ensures that it is transformed; for example, 'a big fatty' does not invoke the seriousness of the problem as revealed by the speaker. Indeed, this re-characterisation of the problem serves to delete the more depressing implications and consequences associated with obesity.

In the following extract the speaker provides a lengthy account of his psychological state at the time of his sighting of a series of unidentified aerial objects. In illustrating his thoughts and feelings he produces extensive descriptions of a range of personal problems. After this descriptive work he constructs a state formulation which also furnishes the upshot of his prior talk (line 147).

(16) WIR 1:7

1 S I was (at) art school at
 2 the ti:me
 3 (.3)
 4 I you were in art school yeah (.3)
 5 mm
 6 (.5)
 7 S er do you want the psychological
 8 frame of mind I was in at that
 9 time
 10 I yes: that would be (.)
 11 very er (.) helpful
 12 (.2)
 13 S er:m: (.2) undergoing
 14 (1)
 15 sort of fus- frustrations for being
 16 in an art school because (.4)
 17 therefore you have to create
 18 a::nd (.5) if there's a sort
 19 of policy at the art school
 20 is (.3) of a specific (.4) policy which
 21 is at that time hard line
 22 abstractionism and 'hh any
 23 figurative work was very much
 24 frowned upon
 25 I [°mm hm°
 26 S I felt (.4) that there was sort

27 of like a policy to tow (.3) and in
 28 this climate of (.5) of: >°sort uv°<
 29 creative (.3) miasma was above my
 30 head that I couldn't (.) break out
 31 so there was a whole group of us
 32 that w(uh) (.) very frustrated
 33 with the art school
 34 (.2)
 35 I mm hm
 36 S °because° it wasn't really
 37 wanted (.) in th- in Winchester
 38 itself
 39 (.)
 40 I m [m hm
 41 S [it was er er a >°sort uv°<
 42 a s- an afterthought (.2) stuck
 43 onto into the marshlands of
 44 of literally the Winchester
 45 I [mm hm
 46 S [() hundred feet into
 47 the marshland (.) stuck a
 48 w(a)- art sc- art school there (.5)
 49 a::nd (.7) >you know< i(t) it was
 50 a very unviable feeling that th-
 51 the ar(t) th- th- th- this little
 52 twee toytown of a place (.4)
 53 really wasn't (.6) didn't want
 54 these these aliens huhh h to
 55 put it a better way
 56 I [°mm°
 57 S [w(in)- sort of artists creative
 58 people so (.3) ehm erm erm
 59 (1)
 60 so there was (>some<) certain
 61 people who felt that I had
 62 affiliated with (.) and we
 63 joined together one evening (.4)
 64 er er (.) and and an my girlfriend
 65 had just had an abortion
 66 (1)
 67 and I'd just (.) had a cruder
 68 sort of psoriasis (.2) sort of
 69 episode at the time which wa:s
 70 (1.5)
 71 aggravating the whole frame of
 72 mind and so: (.3) I think psy-
 73 psychologically I was
 74 psychosomatically
 75 (1.4)
 76 exhibiting symptoms of stress
 77 anyway [so
 78 I [mm hm
 79 (.3)
 80 S and and to try to create on
 81 top of all that I think was er
 82 ehm is too much to ask for so (.3)

83 we: I think just wo- burst out of
84 the place we went (.) wandering
85 across right across the (.)
86 the water lake the water meadows
87 (.2)
88 I mm hm
89 S a:nd
90 (1.3)
91 wandered out to the hill: (.3)
92 on: a (.3) S:unday evening 'hh (.)
93 all the time (.) I was aware of the
94 th- th- th- th- the school called
95 (Whicker's) school which is like a sort
96 of (.) the: public school (.)
97 I [mm
98 S [of the of the south (.) really
99 very privileged people all playing
100 cricket and we wandered past them
101 and we saw (.3) the whole (.)
102 crass class system 'hh and it
103 was all we saw it all in
104 perspective it was like (.3)
105 a very (.) m::editive clear
106 perspective type walk where we
107 we could s:ee the: >th- th- th-<
108 the class structure as as its
109 as its very
110 (1)
111 obvious
112 I mm [hm
113 S [and we were (.7) dishevelled
114 diskempt unkempt (.7) people all
115 wandering round three of us wandered
116 past them up the hill (.3) called on (.)
117 a friend called Jim who was (.5) over
118 (Middlesex) area (.) north (.4)
119 °wandered° (.5) right up up to
120 the other side of er:m: (.3)
121 Saint
122 (2)
123 erm (.5) I didn't got there on
124 Saturday by the way I said I
125 ws going to go there (.7)
126 erm: I >can't remember the name<
127 but it was S:aint Hilda's (.)
128 quite a sort of hallowed ground (.3)
129 for some people because there's a (.4)
130 circular
131 (1.3)
132 maze like thing on the top which
133 you can wander through
134 I it's an ancient (.) place is it
135 S it is an ancient pla [ce
136 I [yeah I see
137 S it's been refurrowed all these years
138 yuh know

139 I oh yes
140 S follow it (.) f- in a sort of spiral
141 s- shape [on top of it
142 I mm
143 (.3)
144 S but there was another (.) brow
145 another hill which we went up to
146 (.4)
147 X and we were contemplating our
148 state of mind at about (.2) two
149 o'clock in the morning
150 (.)
151 I mm hm
152 S three of us (.4) looked across the
153 north (charkum) where (.3) we
154 know that th- I know contact
155 w(i)- j- wi- wi with ah a j(a)-
156 Joyce Bowles case
157 (.2)
158 I oh Joyce Bowles yeah
((continues))

The utterance 'and we were contemplating our state of mind at about (.2) two o'clock in the morning' (lines 147 to 149) does not lead directly to a description of the anomalous event. The speaker does appear to start a report of his first awareness of the phenomenon in that he identifies the area of land above which the UFOs were sighted. This area is significant for another series of sightings, and the speaker makes a reference to this; consequently he fails to complete the second part of the device. Despite the lack of a fully-developed example of the format, however, the description in lines 147 to 149 can still be treated as a legitimate state formulation.

The speaker introduces a number of issues which are sources of personal anxiety: his relationship to his art school (lines 13 to 33); his relationship to Winchester by virtue of his identity as an art student (lines 36 to 58); his girlfriend's abortion and his medical problems (lines 64 to 69) and his attitudes towards the

class system (lines 93 to 111). The speaker thus goes to considerable lengths to provide material which indicates that, at the time, he was at least unsettled. Yet his state formulation summarises this prior talk by focusing on the act of contemplation, and thereby discards the more graphic aspects of his account.

In extracts (13) and (16), there is a similar phenomenon. In both cases the speakers draw attention to the non-ordinary character of their activities or state at the time. In (13) the speaker reveals that he had been thinking about the effect on personal faith resulting from an encounter with a numinous force; in (16) the speaker provides a detailed account of the reasons for his unhappy frame of mind. Having provided this information, both speakers extract the gist of it in the course of producing a state formulation. In both cases they discard explicit reference to the emotive or disturbing character of the issues they raised in their talk; furthermore, they provide a routine or 'mild' description of the act of thinking itself. Therefore, in the course of extracting the gist of prior talk so as to construct state formulations, both speakers display a method of utterance design which provides for, rather than reflects, the routine and bland character of their circumstances.

In the following data the speakers draw the 'upshot', or consequences which resulted from events described in their prior talk.

(17) LE 1:6 (the speaker is describing the circumstances in which she first encountered the spirit of her deceased husband. This occurred shortly after she had been informed by two representatives of the R. A. F. of his death in an aircraft accident.)

1 S a::n:deh (.) they drove me (.)
2 to (.) Angelsey
3 (1.5)
4 a:nd
5 (.5)
6 X we were all sat round
7 (.)
8 ehm
9 in a room
10 (.6)
11 Y and I knew >thut< (.3)
12 I know it sounds silly but
13 I knew that David was there
14 he was behi:nd me 'hhh
((continues))

(18 [8]) LE 5:39 (The speaker had had her husband's funeral service video recorded for relatives unable to attend the ceremony.)

1 S I also wanted it videod for my
2 children: who were
3 (1.7)
4 two and four at the time
5 and they didn't come to the funeral
6 (2.4)
7 and so perhaps a wee:k later
8 (1.3)
9 >must've bin about< a week afterwards
10 'h I:: (.5) put the recording on
11 and was: (.5) watching it
12 I was obviously extremely upset
13 (.8)
14 X and I was sat on a chair
15 (.)
16 uhn:d
17 (.5)
18 Y when I looked down David was (.)
19 kneeling at the side of me
((continues))

(19 [5]) BY 3:13 (At the time of the experience the speaker was suffering from a severe bout of double pneumonia, from which, it later transpired, his doctor had not expected him to recover.)

1 S so:: anyway (.5) when you're
2 in bed that l:ength o' time
3 you don't sleep regular hours

4 like (.3) when you normally
 5 go to bed at night yuknow
 6 if you've been up all day
 7 you go to bed you go to
 8 sleep
 9 (.)
 10 'hhhh an' you wake
 11 up in the morning
 12 (.)
 13 X an' I musta bin do:zin' there
 14 or something
 15 (.)
 16 unuhr:
 17 Y suddenly this: light
 18 a very small light
 19 (.)
 20 must've started playing
 21 (.)
 22 s:i:lly devils
 ((continues))

In extracts (17) to (19) speakers produce innocuous upshots from material provided prior to their use of the 'I was just doing X...' format. In (17) the speaker says 'we were all sat round (.) ehm in a room' (lines 6 to 9); this is an upshot from her having been met by representatives of the R. A. F. and driven to her husband's camp. In the light of emotive events which she had just experienced, and which she had just described in the account, this utterance is conspicuously routine. Similarly, in (18) the upshot of the speaker's prior talk about the video recording of her husband's funeral service is 'I was sat on a chair' (line 14). It is noticeable that earlier in the account the speaker had already provided one upshot of the talk about the video: 'I:: (.) put the recording on and was: (.5) watching it', after which she makes an explicit reference to her distress on that occasion (lines 10 to 12). Instead of moving directly to a description of her first perception of the apparition, however, she produces a mundane state formulation. Finally, in extract (19) the speaker's state formulation is 'an I

musta bin do:zin' there or something' (lines 13 and 15) is adduced as an upshot of his disrupted sleep patterns. Thus, on those occasions in which speakers use their state formulations to provide summary assessments of aspects of their own prior talk, the method they employ transforms the previous material so as to provide a mundane version. That is, speakers have designed their utterances specifically to furnish precisely these glosses of their own talk.

This section has considered gists and upshots to show that bland state formulations are not merely descriptions of fixed mental representations. This material can also be used to support a more general point - that the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format is oriented to by speakers as an environment in which interactional business is mediated.

Heritage and Watson's (1979) paper dealt with gists and upshots which appeared in interview interaction. They state that, in the data they studied, formulations derive some of their properties from the speech exchange system in which they are embedded. For example, a gist or an upshot may be employed by a participant to phrase a question in such a way that it prompts some further comment. In so far as any formulation is inextricably tied to a turn-by-turn exchange system, however, the recipient has the option of challenging or rejecting the assertion or position which is achieved through it. That is, although an acceptance may be a preferred response, the provision of a formulation in an interactional setting is constrained by the possibility that it may receive a dispreferred response, such as disagreement. Any formulation, then, is produced for inspection by the recipient, and the recipient has the option of rejecting it in

a next turn utterance. Until a formulation has been sanctioned in by the recipient in the next turn, it stands as a candidate reading of that part of the conversation to which it refers.

Heritage and Watson state that any formulation glosses, and thereby accomplishes a sense for, the indexical properties of the talk for which it stands as a formulation. However, formulations themselves are constructed through indexical items, and thus cannot be treated as definitive readings of any part of the trajectory of a conversation. This is apparent inasmuch as it is possible for one participant to disagree with the gist or upshot of her talk provided by another. In extended, multi-unit, single speaker turns, however, the properties of formulations are subtly amended.

First, formulations in extended turns are not designed to be assessed by the recipient in the same way as those which occur in conversational interaction. In two-party talk a gist or an upshot may be the vehicle for a range of interactional events such as asking a question, being rude, displaying an interpretation of the other's talk, or simply exhibiting the speaker's current understanding of the trajectory of the conversation. By virtue of the fact that they display a version of the sense of the other's talk, they invite the other to reconsider their prior talk in the light of the version of that talk accomplished in the formulation. In extended multi-unit turns, however, the speaker is recasting the character of their own talk. That a state formulation has been produced does not demand the explicit attention of the recipient. This is not to claim that they have no interactional basis: the interactional importance lies in the way in which a speaker can publically exhibit the manner in which they made an assessment of their own prior talk.

In the data considered here the speakers have transformed sections of their previous utterances to draw out the mundane character of the features discussed, thus exhibiting an understanding that state formulations are conventionally designed to reveal their routine character. In so far as this method is available for analytic inspection by a professional analyst, it is also available for the recipient at the time. By displaying that they have interpreted the salient features of the account in this way, the speakers explicitly demonstrate that this is their preferred method to employ when producing a state formulation. That is, the speaker shows the recipient how it has been accomplished. Moreover, insofar as the formulation is a commentary on their own prior talk, and not one put to them by someone else, the speakers are able to demonstrate their subscription to this method. Thus, it is not merely that they are doing formulations in this way, but that they are displaying their reasoning that it is appropriate to do them in this way for that occasion. And it is precisely this feature of formulations embedded in multi-unit turns that ensures their importance as environments through which a variety of interactional tasks can be accomplished.

We saw in the last chapter how, in the course of producing a verbal account, a single speaker oriented to the inauspiciousness of reporting paranormal experiences, and how her descriptions were designed with respect to tasks generated in the course of making such a report in this type of environment. One feature of the inauspiciousness of reporting anomalous events is that, due to the prevailing skepticism, recipients may try to formulate explanations of the reported experiences so as to recast them as ordinary. That is, simply reporting such an experience may be sufficient to warrant

the ascription of unfavourable characteristics to the individual concerned. The speaker's circumstances - background, mental health, personality, beliefs and values, and so on - can then be investigated to reveal what it is that leads them either to believe that they have experienced what they claim, or to report such an experience.

In data extracts (13) and (16) to (19) the speakers provide not only an account of their experience, but also a vast array of information about themselves. From an inspection of precisely this material a recipient may draw an alternative account of the experiences, such that it is possible to reject the speakers' claims. For example, in (13) the speaker reports that he had been thinking that religious conversion with a numinous force provides the experient with a degree of certainty regarding the basis for faith. His subsequent experience was exactly that type of revelatory mystical encounter. On the basis of this it would be entirely feasible to suggest that the speaker's experience was, in some way, a form of self-fulfilling prophecy: the experience was the product of his implied wish to have some objective and external verification of his faith. In extract (16) the speaker deals at length with the reasons behind his dissatisfaction at the time of the experience. This material could provide the warrant for the assertion that the experience was one way in which the speaker could obtain some measure of self-esteem. In extracts (17) and (18) the speaker's perception of the apparition of her dead husband could be explained by reference to the trauma resulting from his sudden death. The first experience occurred very shortly after first being told of his accident. The second experience occurred while she was watching a video reording of her husband's funeral service; indeed, in this account she goes as

far as to state explicitly that she was upset. From these sets of information a recipient can infer that the actual apparitions were no more than hallucinations resulting from the speaker's obvious distress. Finally, in extract (19) the speaker has stated that his experience happened while he was seriously ill. From this it is possible to infer that it was due to an illness-induced delerium, and not an external phenomenon.

In each case the speakers have provided material in which could be found evidence which might cast doubt on the veracity of their accounts. The provision of a state formulation, constructed through a gist or an upshot, permits them to do work which is designed to counter this possibility. First, the description of the routine circumstances at the time ensures that the first reference to the actual phenomenon is not introduced directly after the speakers' prior talk. That is, the material which could support an alternative explanation for the experience is not provided as an immediate context for the introduction of the phenonemon itself. Second, in these extracts the speakers have reformulated their prior talk so as to bring its routine character to the recipient's attention. By emphasising the mundane character of the prior talk they have also amended it, thereby defusing the possibility that damaging inferences could be drawn from it. Third, in ordinary conversation formulations can be challenged. That is, there are dispreferred responses to the actions accomplished through them, and these may be displayed in the recipient's next turn. In multi-unit extended turns formulations are not produced in a turn-taking system: there is no next slot in which the adequacy of the formulation can be assessed. Consequently, these gists and upshots are, for all practical

purposes, definitive (routine) readings of the speakers' prior talk. Finally, we have seen that state formulations are organised to reveal the the mundane nature of the speaker's circumstances; therefore, organising descriptions in this way permits speakers to display further their competence to report upon such events. That is, they engage in a form of 'normalizing' (Jefferson 1984) in which they explicitly display their recognition of the way that such experiences are conventionally made available for public inspection.

This section has considered state formulations which are constructed through gists and upshots of the speakers' prior talk. Insofar as these are occasions in which speakers provide an implicit assessment of their own prior talk, the manner in which these are produced reveals the concerns informing the production of the first part of the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format. Analysis of the method by which these are accomplished indicates that speakers manufacture their descriptions so as to provide for the routine character of their circumstances at the time. It is not possible to claim conclusively that all state formulations are informed by a similar set of concerns. This analysis, however, provides strong evidence that the nature of the descriptions are practical accomplishments in the course of the interaction, and not determined by a series of fixed mental representations.

There are some further points. These data suggest the speakers may be engaging in a form of normalizing activity through the use of the 'I was just doing X....' format. Furthermore, the speakers have used this device to attend to, and defuse, potentially damaging inferences which are available in their prior talk which could be

used as the basis for the rejection of the alleged 'paranormality' of the story. This work is accomplished in the speakers' construction of the device, which suggests that it may be oriented to as an environment which can usefully be exploited for precisely these purposes. This points to the social dimensions of this sequence, and in the next section these dimensions will be explored further through analysis of some organisational aspects of the device.

6 The sequential implicativeness of state formulations

In the previous two sections it has been argued that speakers work to produce the routine character of their circumstances immediately prior to their first awareness of the onset of a paranormal phenomenon. In this section we will consider one of the broader interactional consequences of state formulations. This will be done through an investigation of features in the organisation of the first part of the 'I was just doing X....' device.

Data extracts used previously have provided the following state formulations:

- (1) DN 22:159 'as I was going through the doorway'
- (2) MD 2:9 'I were just thinkin''
- (4) ME B 10 'I was sitting in bed one night'
- (5) BY 3:13 'an' I musta bin do:zin there or something'
- (6) LE 4:29 'and I was just looking at the coffin'
- (7) WER 52 'an (.) I were lookin' out that way'
- (8) LE 5:39 'and I was sat on a chair'

- (9) VA 1 100 'as I went up (.) one of the staircases'
- (10) HY 14 'a:nd I was >thinkin' to myself<'
- ((11) ME B 88 'an' I was standing right there on the platform'
- (16) WIR 1:7 'and we were contemplating our state of mind'
- (17) LE 1:6 'a:nd (.5) we were all sat round (.) ehm in a room'

So far it has been argued that these formulations focus specifically on the mundane character of the speakers' circumstances, and that this is actively constructed through the selection of descriptive items. A further feature of these utterances is that the events described in them are distinctly uneventful. That is, the activities reported would not, in ordinary conversation, merit the status of storyable or reportable experiences. Indeed, it is possible to speculate that in certain occasions formulations such as these might be deployed by speakers to reveal the 'doing nothing' character of their situation.

In one of his early lectures Sacks (1984b) proposes that there are powerful constraints upon making an 'epic' of one's life. That is, 'normal' people do not regard the routine detail of everyday life as the proper subject of intense interest. Only those sanctioned by their artistic or creative occupations, such as painters and writers, can legitimately display that they observe the everyday world to seek its strangeness and complexity:

'I think it is not that you might make such observations but not include them in the story, but it is the cast of mind of doing "being ordinary" is essentially that your business in life is only to see and report the usual aspects of any possible scene. That is to say, what you look for is to see how any

scene you are in can be made an ordinary scene, a usual scene, and that is what that scene is.' (Sacks 1984b: 416) [original emphasis]

Furthermore, that this constraint is sufficiently powerful to influence the ways in which reports of genuinely extraordinary events are made:

'That is to say, the rights to have an experience by virtue of, say, encountering something like an accident, are only the rights to have seen "another accident," and to perhaps have felt for it, but not, for example, to have seen God in it. You cannot have a nervous breakdown because you happened to see an automobile accident. You cannot make much more of it than anybody would make of it.' (Sacks 1984b: 427) [emphasis added]

As Sacks says, 'it is really remarkable to see people's efforts to achieve the "nothing happened" sense of really catastrophic events' (1984b: 419).

Sacks and Jefferson show that speakers can describe events to provide for their character as 'normal' events of this type. In the data on state formulations, however, there appears to be a different phenomenon. In the extracts analysed here speakers are making a point of explicitly providing for, and thereby drawing attention to, the routine character of their activities. Thus, instead of making 'nothing out of something', they are actively engaged in the business of making 'something' - that is, a reportable event - 'out of nothing'. As there are general constraints upon doing precisely this type of activity there must be some special warrant for the speakers to construct conspicuously bland state formulations. To explore this we need to summarise the essential features of the 'I was just doing

X....when Y' device.

This device is a sequential, two-part structure. The 'X' components - the state formulations - present the mundane and routine activities at the time of the occurrence of a paranormal experience. Whereas psychological approaches might look to the cognitive basis for these recollections, we have seen that they are constructed by speakers in the course of their accounts. We may infer, then, that speakers are orienting to, in Neisser's (1982b) terms, cultural conventions regarding this type of news. That is, state formulations are designed to be recognisable as having the character of events which, it is conventionally held, are recallable by virtue of their association with extraordinary events. However, by using this device speakers not only display their knowledge of these conventions: they are able also to use them as a resource in the production of their accounts. The basis for this is that, in the same way that the speaker draws upon culturally-available knowledge to produce a state formulation, so the recipient's interpretation of the subsequent utterance will rely on the same sets of culturally-available procedures.

When a routine state formulation is produced the recipient can examine it to infer that it implicates a storyable event: the type of dramatic event by virtue of which it is conventionally recognised that routine activities accrue a storyable status. Therefore, the first part of the 'I was just doing X...' device is predictive. There are two sources of evidence for this.

In the following data extracts there are indications that recipients recognise that state formulations are sequentially implicative. Note that after the provision of the state formulation,

and just before the first reference to the speaker's paranormal or extraordinary experience, the recipients interject a minimal token of continuation or encouragement.⁴

(20) FR 21/22 (The speaker is reporting an experience which occurred while she was working late one night.)

1 S and ur: I've got a pi:le
2 (.4)
3 of er envelopes to file
4 (.5)
5 and I was down X
6 (1)
7 right down
8 (.5)
9 bending down.
10 I °mm hm°
11 S and I thought this other Y
12 lass there were only
13 two of us working over
14 °Francis°
15 (.5)
16 °hhh an I thought
17 (1)
18 this this
19 (.7)
20 uh a peculiar sensation
21 that she wanted to come by
((continues))

(21) WIR 6:42

147 and we were contemplating our X
148 state of mind at about (.2) two
149 o'clock in the morning
150 (.)
151 I mm hm
152 S three of us looked across the Y
153 north (charkum)
((continues))

⁴ Parenthetically, it is worth noting that these minimal continuers are produced by three different participants, and is not an idiosyncrasy peculiar to one speaker. I am responsible for the one in extract (20); an amateur UFO investigator sent me the taped interview from which extract (21) is taken (see the Appendix for information about data sources), and Emma is responsible for the third.

(22) NB:IV:10:R::20-21:Standard Orthography

15 L 't'h An:d the ↑wind was so ba:d that
16 the the th- (.) the branches were
17 hitting the hou:se and (.) God (.3)
18 *uh:: I got up abou:t (.)
19 ↑well it was about ei:ght o'clock, X
20 E M m [:hm:
21 L 'h [and HERE hE'S UP THERE s:awing tho:se Y
22 o:ff you know?

The interactional significance of utterances such as 'mm hm' has previously been investigated in conversation analysis. Schegloff (1981) revealed the manner in which speakers can employ minimal continuers to facilitate the on-going and orderly character of talk-in-interaction. More relevant to these data is Jefferson's (1984b) paper. In this she explicates the use of 'mm hm' to display 'passive reciprocity', by which the a recipient of some piece of talk can propose that the current speaker shall go on talking. While this feature of 'mm hm' is clearly available in extracts (20) to (22), it may not be the case that this is all it is doing. The placement of 'mm hm' directly after the speakers' routine state formulations suggests that recipients recognise that the speaker has more to tell - namely, the extraordinary event by which the non-storyable item gains a storyable status. The recipient's placement of these minimal continuers displays a sensitivity to a feature of the 'context' - the bland state formulations which constitute the immediately prior trajectory of the account.

The second line of evidence concerns the resources speakers use and display to facilitate the recipients' recognition that one event is contingent upon another. When constructing routine state formulations speakers have a choice between verb tenses. They can employ an 'active' past tense, as in 'walking', 'looking' 'standing',

for example; or they can employ a 'passive' past tense, as in 'walked', 'looked' 'stood'. The former tense preserves the active, on-going quality of the action being described; this character is lost when a passive past tense is used to refer to an activity. In the following data there is evidence that speakers display a preference for the use of one verb tense over the other.

(23 [12]) DN 22:162

1 S I had the teapot in my hand like that
2 and I walked through the kitchen door
3 (.5)
4 'hhh as I was going through the doorway hh
5 (.7)
6 I was just (.) jammed
7 against the doorpost
((continues))

(24) ME A 10:86

1 S but my experience was
2 I got to a certain point in
3 the (.3) s:circle and the chant
4 we kept going round slowly
5 in a circle without stopping
6 'hh all of a sudden
((continues))

In extract (23) the speaker formulates the activity 'walked through' (line 2), which is then displaced by 'was going through' (line 4). In (24) the speaker replaces 'I got to a certain point in the (.3) s:circle' (lines 2 and 3, with 'we kept going round' (line 4). In both extracts the speakers provide two consecutive utterances which deal ostensibly with the same material - their activity at the time. In both instances the information in the first utterance is re-packaged in the second. The reformulated utterances, however, employ an active past tense, whereas the first versions employ a

passive tense formulation.

In the next extract the speaker does not re-formulate her prior talk; rather, she produces two distinct utterances. The second of these stands as her state formulation; the first, however, is a candidate insofar as it provides a mundane description of her activities.

(25) WER 55

1 S there was a door there and a
2 door there (.5) a door there
3 an (.5) it was a kitchen
4 (1)
5 [1] and I was right by this unit part
6 (1.5)
7 an
8 (.)
9 [2] I were lookin' out that way
10 an' it seemed to like a figure↑ (.)
11 coming through the ha↑ll
((continues))

The speaker's utterance 'and I was right by this unit part' (line 5) provides a bland formulation of her activity. In the way that it is constructed it shares features of the state formulations listed above. It is not used, however, as the first part of the 'I was just doing X....' format. To do this the speaker makes the utterance 'I were lookin' out that way' (line 9). In this case the second bland formulation displays an active past tense, whereas the former does not.

The following passage is taken from Hufford's (1982) investigation of 'Old Hag' phenomena; in it the speaker produces two versions of his initial perceptions of the onset of the experience.

'I'd come back from a lab of some sort, I had so many I'm not sure which one it was, and now I crashed.... That was approximately four o'clock in the afternoon. I was really dead tired. I was really dead tired. I fell into a very deep sleep that day....I remember, you know it was a really deep sleep.

But what woke me up was the door slamming. "OK," I thought, "It's my roommate," you know, my roommate came into the room....I was laying on my back, just kind of looking up. And the door slammed and I kinda opened my eyes. I was awake. Everything was light in my room.' (Hufford 1982: 58) [original emphasis]

Here the speaker begins to describe his experience: 'But what woke me up....' to 'my roommate came into the room'. He then pauses (indicated by the consecutive full stops), after which he repeats this information, but now constructed in the 'I was just doing X....' format: 'I was laying on my back, just kind of looking up. And the door slammed....'. That is, this speaker had started to describe his experience without using the format conventionally employed to report dramatic news. He stops to re-package the information he has already provided and his subsequent state formulation employs active past tenses: 'laying' and 'looking'. In the amended version, then, his first choice of format favours active, rather than passive, past tenses.

Speakers are orienting to the provision of a non-storyable item as warranted by virtue of its association with another, reportable event. A past active tense preserves the on-going character of the actions so described, and thereby highlights its relationship to another event. That is, routinely, active past tenses are not employed unless the speaker wishes to draw attention to some other event which occurred while that activity was taking place. An active past tense clearly displays to the recipient that the activity described in this way is contingent upon some as yet-unstated

occurrence, thereby reinforcing the expectation for the provision of the relevant notable event.

In this section we have observed how the first part of the 'I was just doing X...' format interactionally generates an expectation that the speaker will then use the second part to refer to a momentous event. In the following sections data will be analysed to reveal some of the ways in which speakers can exploit precisely this property of the device in the course of describing their paranormal experiences.

7 Normalizing the paranormal

Through the use of the 'At first I thought...but then I realised...' device (Jefferson 1984b) speakers clearly claim membership of the category of 'normal' people. In this section we examine one method by which speakers may engage in a more implicit form of normalizing. In the following extract the speaker displays that she is using the 'I was just doing X...' format by providing a bland state formulation. Instead of then making an explicit reference to a paranormal phenomenon, however, she furnishes a description of apparently normal happenings.

(26 [4]) ME B 10

- 1 S I mean a simple example which
2 everybody's had something similar
3 to 'hhh I was living in uhm (.)
4 inglan years ago:
5 and all of a sudden
6 X I was sitting in bed one night (.)
7 getting ready to go to sleep (.)
8 Y and I decided to write to a friend

9 I hadn't seen for four years (.)
10 in Massachusetts (.) a:nd
11 I found myself congratulating her
12 on (.) the engagement of her oldest
13 daughter (.3) I said congratulations
14 Miriam's getti- Miriam's gotten
15 engaged (.5) ar:hm and
((continues))

In this account the speaker reports that she had an impulse to write to a distant friend to offer congratulations. Her state formulation is 'I was just sitting in bed one night (.) getting ready to go to sleep' (lines 6 and 7), and the event she prefaces with it is 'and I decided to write to a friend' (line 8).

In the data so far analysed speakers have used the second part of this device to talk about their first awareness of the onset of the phenomenon, by virtue of which the events described in the first part acquire a reportable status. Yet deciding to write to a friend is hardly the same class of event as, for example, seeing an apparition of a recently deceased spouse. Initially, then, the speaker's use of this format seems to deviate from the pattern hitherto established. It transpires, however, that the speaker's knowledge of the engagement of her friend's daughter was acquired before an engagement had been announced. Thus, the speaker had had a premonition of the engagement.

The following data provide further examples of the way the second part of the device can be used to refer to apparently inconsequential events. As in extract (26 [4]), however, in these accounts it subsequently transpires that there is something anomalous about the event reported in the second part of the device.

(27) ME B 1:21

1 S another experience is uhm: (.7)
2 I had read Jonathon Livingstone
3 Seagull (.) and all of a sudden
4 my friend A:nna in Boston
5 Massachusetts came to mind
6 I >sa- I must< get this (.) 'h
7 book to her she'd lo:ve
8 thi:s boo:k: and for some
9 reason I couldn't get her
10 out of my mind I hate writing
11 letters I hate (.) particularly
12 sending anything in the mail
13 packaged overseas cos' you gotta
14 (s-) p(ep)- tape it so w:ell
15 an 'hh I bumble the practical
16 things I hate all that stuff
17 'h but anyway I managed to
18 get down the post office
19 I got the book I I wrapped
20 it up properly I got all the
21 sta:m:ps and to me that was a
22 gr:e:at effort 'h (.3)
23 X and just as I was giving
24 it to the man at the
25 post office he knew me (.5)
26 Y he said oh by the wa:y er
27 we have a package from you
28 from America
((continues))

(28 [20]) FR 21/22

1 S and ur: I've got a pile
2 of er envelopes to file
3 (.5)
4 and I was down X
5 (1)
6 right down
7 (.5)
8 bending down.
9 I °mm hm°
10 S and I thought this other Y
11 lass there were only
12 two of us working over
13 °Francis°
14 (.5)
15 'hhh an I thought
16 this this
17 (.7)
18 uh a peculiar sensation
19 that she wanted to come by
((continues))

(29) VA 1 4:39

1 S my husband and I
2 had a shoe repair shop
3 and we lived above it (.5)
4 the kitchen was downstairs (.)
5 and we (.3) had a room (.)
6 at the back also (.4)
7 on one occasion
8 X I opened the kitchen door
9 that led to the hall
10 (.)
11 and the doorway into the shop
12 (.7)
13 Y an' I saw a man in white
14 coat go up the stairs
((continues))

(30) AY 9 (In this extract the speaker is a policeman. He is reporting an incident which occurred while he was on duty in the early hours of the morning, driving through a local village.)

1 S it was:: (.) it was not a stop
2 check on a night y'know
3 yuh jus drove past it
4 we'd 'ad a lot uv thieves (.)
5 yu know a couple of years ago
6 so °yus:° (.) y'know (.)
7 look for any strange
8 vehicles really
9 (1.3)
10 X un driving fairly slowly
11 having checked the school
12 (.3)
13 on the other side of the road
14 (1)
15 er:m:
16 (1)
17 Y un something caught me eye
((continues))

In each of these cases there is a normal event reported in the second part of the 'I was just doing X...' device. The speaker then goes on to reveal that there was a mystery in each of these normal circumstances. In (27) the speaker's state formulation 'and I was just giving it to the man at the post office' (lines 23 to 25) is

followed by ' he said....we have a package from you⁵ from America' (lines 26 to 28). This package subsequently transpired to have been sent by the friend to whom the speaker was sending the book, and contained a pendant related to the same book. In (28) the speaker reports that she was 'down (1) right down (.5) bending down' (lines 4 to 8) when she 'thought this other lass' (lines 10 and 11) 'wanted to come by' (line 19). It turned out, however, that there was no-one in the vicinity of the speaker when she felt a presence behind her. Furthermore, the other person working with her had experienced the same sensation at exactly the same time in another part of the building. In (29) the speaker provides the state formulation 'one one occasion I opened the kitchen door that led to the hall (.) and the doorway into the shop' (lines 7 to 11). She then reports that she saw a 'man in a white coat go up the stairs' (lines 13 and 14). The speaker's husband was at that time working in the shop, through which was the only entrance onto the stairs. She thought that he had allowed a customer to use the toilet facilities in the flat, but he later denied having let anyone through the shop. Finally, in extract (30) the speaker's state formulation 'un driving fairly slowly having checked the school' (lines 11 and 12) is followed by the comment 'un something caught me eye' (line 17). It transpired that what had attracted his attention was a large fire attended by two dark figures in the middle of a local graveyard. Subsequent investigation, however, revealed no evidence of any burning, nor could his police dog detect any scent from the two figures.

In each case, then, the speakers have produced the type of

⁵ I take this as a 'slip-of-the-tongue', and assume that what she intended to say was 'for you'.

description that resembles a 'first thought' formulation of their reaction to the event. This enables them to display that, at the time, they did not immediately assume that the events they were observing or experiencing were extraordinary.

The recipient can infer, however, that the routine events represented by the speakers' 'first thoughts' are not all they seem to be. From an examination of the bland state formulation the recipient can recognise that the 'I was just doing X....' format is being used, and is thereby alerted to the forthcoming provision of the extraordinary event which conventionally occupies the second part of the device. The events subsequently produced in the second part are clearly not references to paranormal experiences. Thus, recognisably 'correct' - that is, normatively prescribed - occupants of the slot are absent. By virtue of their placement where suitably dramatic descriptions are conventionally placed, the recipient is invited to inspect these descriptions to locate their warrant as legitimate second parts. That is, the sequential organisation of the device provides recipients with the basis for inferential work about the information in the second part. From this they can arrive at the conclusion that the events so described must have some features, not yet explicated, which account for their legitimate inclusion: namely, some extraordinary character which is veiled, or merely 'hinted at', in the design of these descriptions.

By way of a summary to this section we may note some interactional benefits which accrue from exploiting the sequentially implicative features of this device. Firstly, speakers may present themselves as having reached 'ordinary' or 'normal' conclusions about events which were decidedly extraordinary. Thus, they are able to engage in

normalizing work of the type first noticed by Sacks (1984b) and Jefferson (1984a).

Jefferson's research examined a device - 'At first I thought... but then I realised...' - in which speakers explicitly mark their first thoughts as incorrect. In the data examined here, speakers introduce their first thoughts so as to invite the recipient to find that these are in some way inaccurate. By exploiting the organisational features of this device the speakers are relieved of the sensitive task of claiming explicitly that the events being reported are paranormal, while at the same time allowing the recipient to inspect the description to come to precisely that conclusion.⁶

8 Insertions in the 'I was just doing X...when Y' format

In this section we will consider materials in which speakers begin the first part of the 'I was just doing X...' device, but then do not move directly to the second part. Instead, either they extend their state formulation, or introduce new information, only then completing the '...when Y' part of the format. That is, we will be analysing occasions in which speakers disrupt the device by providing inserted material.

In the following data the speakers furnish information which

⁶ Of course, this is not to imply that the recipient will necessarily believe that the event was 'really' paranormal. Using this device in this way allows the speaker to guide the inference making procedures so that recipients can come to see that the event described in the second part does have some element of mystery attached to it.

attends to one of four broad interactional goals relevant to making a report of a paranormal experience:

[a] to constitute the 'paranormal' character of the event;

[b] to highlight that the speakers' circumstances at the time permitted them to have a clear view of the experience;

[c] to account for being in the right place at the right time to observe the event, and

[d] to demonstrate their alertness in circumstances which might otherwise be taken to imply a loss of sentience.

[a] Constituting the paranormality of the phenomenon

In extracts (31) and (32 [20]) the speakers disrupt the 'I was just doing X...' sequence to introduce information concerning another person present at the time of the experience.

(31) ME A 293 (The speaker is reporting her experience of a recurrent noise, the manifestation of which was confined to one part of her house.)

1 S 'hh well: (.3)
2 I never could figure it out
3 and it didn't (.) upset me
4 in fact it was quite a
5 lovely little happy sound
6 uhn:d so I let it go
7 (2.5)
8 one night however a
9 friend was with me (.)
10 X and we're just sitting
11 watching the tele
12 (.3)
13 ins. and she was also very psychic
14 a:nd urm
15 (1.3)
16 Y its (.) th-the s:ound started
17 the litt(le) musical (s) tu-
18 s::ound started again (.3)
19 and uhm: (.)
20 >she said what's THaght!<

21 >I said Oh (.)
22 have you heard it< (.)
23 ah (s) >oh that's wonderful
24 you're the first person who'se
25 ever heard it besides me<
((continues))

(32 [20]) FR 21/22

1 S and ur: I've got a pi:le
2 (.4)
3 of envelopes to file
4 (.5)
5 X and I was down
6 (1)
7 right down
8 (.5)
9 bending down
10 I °mm hm°
11 S and I thought this other
12 lass
13 ins. there were only
14 two of us working over
15 °Francis°
16 (.5)
17 °hhh an I thought
18 (1)
19 Y this this
20 (.7)
21 uh a peculiar sensation
22 that she wanted to come by
23 (1.3)
24 an I said ooh (.)
25 shan't be a minute (.)
26 and I turned round and
27 there was nobody there
28 you know she wasn't there
((continues))

Prior to the section in extract (31) the speaker had presented material designed to indicate that she did not immediately assume that the noise had a paranormal cause. She had also stressed that she was the only person to have heard the sound.⁷ Early in the extract she introduces her friend (line 9) and then goes on to

⁷ For a more complete analysis of earlier sections of this data, see Chapter Four.

produce a standard state formulation: 'and we're just sitting watching the tele' (lines 10 and 11). Before making a reference to the appearance of the sound she inserts material concerning her friend's abilities: 'and she was also very psychic' (line 13), at which point she moves to a description of the manifestation of the phenomenon.

The identification of the friend as psychic provides an understanding of how it was that she was able to hear the sound: a recipient can search this description to find that her perception was due to her special abilities. Immediately after the appearance of the sound and the friend's subsequent reaction (line 20), the speaker clearly emphasises that she too could hear the sound. Thus, by aligning herself with her psychic friend, she makes available the inference that she could hear it by virtue of her clairvoyant powers. In doing this she resolves the puzzle she had posed earlier in the account, namely, why nobody else could hear the noise when it had occurred previously: nobody else possessed the requisite psychic sensitivities.

The paranormal character of the episode hinges upon the friend's perception of the noise, and the implication that this was due to her psychic abilities, the kind of which are also possessed by the speaker. Up until the time of the event, however, there would have been no warrant to describe the friend in terms of this one special characteristic. Indeed, it is a somewhat peculiar description to use to refer to someone engaged in an activity as mundane as 'watching the tele'. The friend's clairvoyant abilities acquire a reportable status only in the light of subsequent developments, yet in order to provide material from an analysis of which a recipient can come to

the conclusion that the noise is paranormal, the speaker needs to ensure that her friend's psychic powers are introduced prior to the reference to the noise in the second part of the format.

Similar concerns inform the speaker in extract (32 [20]). Immediately following the state formulation ' I was down (1) right down (.5) bending down' (lines 5 to 9) the speaker begins to report her experience, but then interrupts herself to remark that there was only one other person working late that night, and names her. She then proceeds to the second part of the device in which she describes her sensation that someone was standing behind her. That there was only one other person in the immediate vicinity is of central importance for the denouement of the story, in that the speaker thought that the feeling of a presence behind her was caused by a colleague. Later it transpires that at the same time the colleague had exactly the same experience and attributed it to the speaker standing behind her. Thus, by stating explicitly that there were no other people working that night the speaker facilitates the recipient's conclusion that the cause of the sensations she experienced could not be the product of a normal, human agency. Furthermore, as in the previous extract, the speaker would not at the time of the experience have identified the relevance of there being only one other person working late.

[b] Constituting the grounds to have observed the phenomenon

In the last section the speaker disrupted the 'I was just doing X...' sequence to introduce material which implied the paranormality of the phenomenon. In the following extracts the speakers orient to, and try to defuse, the possibility that the veracity of their

accounts may be questioned by an inquiry as to whether they were adequately positioned to have obtained a clear sight of the phenomena they are describing.

(33) HS 17

1 S ah came home from work at lunchtime
2 (1)
3 an I walked into
4 the sitting room door (.)
5 X in through the sitting room door
6 (1.5)
7 an::
8 ins. right in front of me (.)
9 was a sort of alcove (.)
10 and a chimney breast (.)
11 °like° this (.7)
12 Y and a photograph of our wedding
13 (1)
14 came off the top shelf (.2)
15 floated down to the ground
16 °hh completely came apart
17 but didn't break
((continues))

(34) DN 7:49

1 S1 and then the disturbances started
2 (4.3)
3 the first thing we
4 (1.3)
5 really noticed was: (.5)
6 one night
7 (1.3)
8 in (.7)
9 I would think September
10 S2 Yeah September [Seventy Six
11 S1 [September
12 S2 it would be
13 S1 yeah that's right
14 (1.5)
15 X we were laid (.7) in the front bedroom
16 ins. which was below the front attics
17 (1.5)
18 Y and we heard a noise (.5)
19 like (.) someone throwing gravel
20 across a piece of (.)
21 hollow hardboard
((continues))

In extract (33) the speaker makes a 'slip of the tongue' in constructing a state formulation (lines 3 and 4), but then corrects herself to produce 'I walked in through the sitting room door' (line 5). Then she describes her position in relation to other features of the room (lines 8 to 11). This material is inserted between the state formulation and the description of the anomalous behaviour of the photograph. In extract (34) immediately after the state formulation 'we were laid (.7) in the front bedroom' (line 15) the speaker inserts the comment that the bedroom was below the front attics (line 16) and then moves on to a description of the audible manifestation of what transpired to be poltergeist activity.

Before making any analytic observations about these data it is useful to consider another example from Hufford's (1982) researches.

'One night, everything was dark as usual and I heard footsteps on the stairs. This didn't surprise me at all----I wasn't amazed at anything. The footsteps came up the stairs. I looked around the corner, my bed was more or less in the corner and I could look out and see the stairway, and I saw a figure coming up the stairs and turned [sic] at the top of the stairway.' (Hufford 1982: 33)

In this passage the speaker displays a self-interruption: after beginning to report on the sound of footsteps and his reaction to them, he then describes his location in relation to the physical layout of the house. Through this he is able to state that from his position at the time he had a clear view of the area where the figure first became visible. As in all the previous cases of inserted material, there would have been no warrant for him to make such an observation: it is only by virtue of the occurrence of a storyable event that his position at the time became significant.

In extracts (33) and (34) the speakers display a similar concern. Both insertions furnish material by which a recipient can infer that their location at the time of the experience ensured they had an unrestricted access to the manifestation of the particular phenomenon. In (33) she speaker displays her advantageous position through her claim that the incident occurred 'right in front' of her (line 8). Equally, in (34), the speaker reveals that he was directly underneath the attics where the poltergeist disturbances were happening.

In the following extract the speaker deals with the same order of problem. In this case, however, the material she inserts displays her sensitivity to the specific circumstances of this experience.

(35) AN APPS 17:131 (The speaker is reporting one of a series of apparitional experiences. In the incident she is reporting on here, she first encountered the glow, reflected on the wall opposite, emanating from an apparitional manifestation on the wall directly above the spot where she lay.)

1 S but this particuleh (er)
 2 it was when ah had me he-
 3 u-(.) b- bedhead (.) at that end
 4 so the m- window (.) was
 5 behind me (we:r) so ·hh
 6 an (.) as I (.)
 7 X was laid in bed (.7)
 8 yuh know (.) sort uv
 9 propped up (.4)
 10 >an ah thohhught< (.)
 11 ins. and it was dark (.) yuh know
 12 i(t) sws er: I hadn't me
 13 curtains drawn or anything
 14 Y 'hhh and (.) I saw this glo:w: (.3)
 15 on the (ws) got rea:lly (.2)
 16 glow (.3) was on the wall up above
 ((continues))

In this extract the speaker follows her state formulation - 'laid in bed (...)....sort uv propped up' (lines 7 to 9) with an utterance which appears to begin to describe her initial perception of the phenomenon. Instead of continuing with this aspect of the account she provides a clear self-interruption to state that the room was dark (line 11). The speaker then provides further information about the room: 'I hadn't me curtains drawn or anything' (lines 12 and 13). Clearly, then, this speaker displays the importance of this information: not only does she interrupt the sequence projected by her state formulation to mention how dark her room was, but she also provides other materials, an inspection of which will permit a recipient to infer the level of illumination.⁸

The speaker's inserted utterance addresses the contingencies of her experience. The speaker initially perceived a glow on the wall in front of her. Her subsequent inspection of the source of the glow revealed it to be an apparitional figure above her bed. Providing the information that the room was dark, then, ensures that the recipient has information from which to infer that the speaker would have had no difficulty in seeing a light source reflected on a wall. The additional information that the curtains were shut attends to, and disposes of, the possibility that the light source was just a reflection from a streetlight, or the headlights from a passing car. Therefore, this insertion deals with issues which could be employed

⁸ This extract is particularly interesting insofar as the speaker provides two separate interruptions to insert material. In lines 8 and 9 she remarks that she was 'propped up', and then appears to begin a reference to her first awareness of the phenomenon (>an ah thohhught<...'). Before going on to complete this reference, however, in lines 11 to 13 she discusses how dark it was in the room. We will return to this first set of inserted materials in a later section.

as evidence to suggest that the speaker was in some way mistaken about her experience, thus undermining the validity of the account.

[c] Constituting the warrant to have experienced a phenomenon

Claiming to have had a paranormal experience ensures that the experient is in a 'sensitive' position, not only because such anomalies appear to challenge common-sense assumptions about the nature of the world, but also because they are rare events. That is, being in the right place at the right time to witness something truly extraordinary is in itself a remarkably fortunate coincidence. The simple fact of such coincidences, however, can be used as the warrant to doubt the veracity of an account of a paranormal experience. For example, it may be argued that the sheer coincidence that a person should be in the same place as the manifestation of some paranormal force may be more economically accounted for by assuming that the experient was simply mistaken, or even lying.⁹ That is, in cases where there are no other witnesses, the fact that an individual 'just happened to come upon' a paranormal phenomenon may prove to be a particularly strong basis for the ascription of unfavourable and damaging assertions, not only about the truth of the account, but also about the character of the person who made the report.

The following two extracts are taken from accounts of particularly unusual paranormal experiences which happened while the speakers were alone in the early hours of the morning. In each case the speaker disrupts the regular pattern of the 'I was just doing X...' format by

⁹ Collins and Pinch (1979: 245) note that this line of reasoning and argument - referred to as 'Occam's Razor' - has often been used by skeptical critics to explain significant experimental results in parapsychology.

inserting material after the state formulation and before the reference to the phenomenon, or what transpired to be the phenomenon. Unlike the examples in sections [a] and [b], however, these insertions do not attend to issues which are unconnected to the sequence they disrupt. Rather, these materials embroider features of the prior state formulation.

(36 [30]) AY 9 (In this account the speaker is a policeman, and he is describing an event which occurred while he was making a routine night-time patrol of a local village.)

1 S it was:: (.) it was not a stop
 2 check on a night y'know
 3 yuh jus drove past it
 4 we'd 'ad a lot uv thieves (.)
 5 yuknow a couple of years ago
 6 so °yus:° (.) y'know (.)
 7 look for any strange
 8 vehicles really
 9 (1.3)
 10 X un driving fairly slowly
 11 having checked the school
 12 ins. (.3)
 13 on the other side of the road
 14 (1)
 15 er:m::
 16 (1)
 17 Y un something caught me eye
 ((continues))

(37 [9]) VA 1 100 (The speaker is reporting an experience which she had while she was working as a cleaner in a restaurant.)

1 S I got there very early
 2 in the morning simply because
 3 my mother was ill at the
 4 time with cancer °h
 5 and I used tuh have to
 6 nurse her so I (.3) got
 7 there early to do the work (.5)
 8 X °hh as I went up (.) one of
 9 the staircases
 10 ins. with all my cleaning equipment
 11 (.3)
 12 um::
 13 (1)
 14 Y a man

15 (.)
16 pushed passed me
12 (1)
18 he was spirit it w-
19 or whatever you want to call it
 ((continues))

Common to both extracts is the way speakers use an occasioned social identity - in these cases, their work identity - as a resource by which to account for their being in the place where their experience happened. In extract (36 [30]) the speaker's state formulation, 'un driving fairly slowly' (line 10) is followed by the utterance 'having checked the school (.3) on the other side of the road' (lines 11 to 13). The speaker inserts material which is related to the first part of the state formulation: that is, the fact that he was 'driving fairly slowly' is embroidered by his further description of having checked the school; thus, this information provides an account for why he was driving slowly. Also, checking a school is the proper business of policemen patrolling late in the night, and in this way the speaker invokes his 'official' or occupational identity, thereby providing the recipient with material which can be inspected to reveal the legitimate character of the activity indexed by the state formulation: driving slowly late at night. In extract (37 [9]) the speaker produces the state formulation 'as I went up one of the staircases' (lines 6 to 7). After this she provides the additional information 'with all of my cleaning equipment' (line 8). Only after this does she move to a description of the phenomenon she encountered. The information provided in the additional component identifies the type of work she was engaged in, that is, cleaning the building, and thereby she provides a warrant for her presence in the building at the time of

the experience.

[d] Displaying sentience

Finally, we will look at data from previous sections. In these, the speakers' state formulations reveal that they were in bed at the time of the events they report. The inserted material defuses the inference that the experiences were the result of drowsiness, or even entirely dreamt, and therefore not the product of external and objective phenomena.

(38 [35]) AN APPS 17:131

1 S but this particuleh (er)
2 it was when ah had me he-
3 u- (.) b- bedhead (.) at that end
4 so the m- window (.) was
5 behind me (we:r) so 'hh
6 an (.) as I (.)
7 X was laid in bed (.7)
8 yuh know (.)
9 ins. sort uv propped up (.4)
10 >an I thohhught< (.)
11 and it was dark (.) yuh know
12 i(t) sws er: I hadn't me
13 curtains drawn or anything
14 Y 'hhh and (.) I saw this glo:w:
15 on the (ws) got rea:lly (.2)
16 glow (.3) was on the wall up above
((continues))

(39 [4]) ME B 10

1 S I mean a simple example which
2 everybody's had something similar
3 to 'hhhh I was living in uhm (.)
4 inglan years ago:
5 and all of a sudden
6 X I was sitting in bed one night (.)
7 ins. getting ready to go to sleep (.)
8 Y and I decided to write to a friend
9 I hadn't seen for four years (.)
10 in Massachusetts
((continues))

In these data the speakers construct their state formulations in terms of their position in bed: 'an (.) as I (.) was laid in bed' (extract (38), lines 6 to 7), and 'I was sittin' in bed one night' (extract (39), line 6). Both speakers then provide additional information. In extract (38) 'yuh know (.) sort uv propped up' (lines 8 to 9), and in extract (39) 'getting ready to go to sleep' (line 7). This material is designed to reveal that the speakers were awake; for example, 'getting ready to go to sleep' orients to a stage of activity prior to sleep; also, 'propped up' in bed is the type of position in which one might read, but it is unlikely to be a position in which one might be sleeping.

By way of conclusion to this section it may be useful to make some remarks regarding why speakers may insert these materials in precisely this place.

In these data, through the insertion of certain information, the speakers accomplish four types of tasks. We have noted that, in each case, the materials so inserted became relevant after the events which are being reported in the 'I was just doing X...' format. At the time of the event this information would have not been notable. Yet it is clearly important if the recipient is to come to see the paranormality of the incident. That is, the insertions between the two parts of the device deal with issues relating to the veracity of the account or the reliability of the witness.

Overtly attempting to make the strongest and most plausible case for the truth of an account, however, could be taken to imply that the account is, in some ways, intrinsically weak or unreliable. There is, then, a 'sensitive' character to the business dealt with by

the production of these insertions.

In an earlier section we noted that mundane state formulations are predictive insofar as they generate an expectation for the forthcoming provision of an extraordinary event: the 'X' component of the device is sequentially implicative of the 'Y' component. Furthermore, only certain types of information legitimately can occupy the second part of the device. In the extracts considered in this section the inserted material is not the type of event which could stand as the warrant for the speaker to introduce a description of her mundane activities at the time. The recipient can thus infer that the momentous event has yet to be delivered. That is, the expectation generated by the first part still obtains.

By inserting this material between the two parts of the format speakers reduce the likelihood that a recipient may examine and draw conclusions from its sensitive character. That is, this information does not constitute a proper second part, and therefore the expectation that one is forthcoming still obtains. By virtue of this expectation, an advantageous position in which to introduce sensitive material is directly after the first part. Disrupting the format in this way ensures that material which is crucial to the account being produced acquires the character of parenthetical or incidental information, thereby minimising the possibility of explicit assessment by the recipient.¹⁰

10 For a related discussion of the way utterances may be designed so that the recipient will not become explicitly interested in the information contained in them, see Chapter Four, section 3.

10 Conclusions

This chapter has looked at one class of memory formulations as they were produced spontaneously in the course of verbal reports of paranormal experiences. These formulations are artfully constructed through a two part format, here identified as 'I was just doing X....when Y'. Through this device speakers deliver a description of the routine circumstances of their environment at the time of their experiences, and also a reference to their first awareness of the actual phenomenon.

The fine detail of these descriptions is not determined by a list of features which are stored in various cognitive processes, and thereby available to the speaker to be 'read off' at the appropriate moment in the conversation or account. Speakers actively constructed the blandness and mundanity of their circumstances at the time of the event they were reporting. Descriptive items were selected to provide for the mundane environment of situations that were both evocative and traumatic. Also, the contingent relevance between the character of the paranormal episode and the state formulation demonstrated that speakers were performing analytic work so as to build descriptions of their activities which 'meshed' with what the experience transpired to be. Moreover, in those instances in which speakers used state formulations to furnish gists or upshots of their own prior talk, their utterances emphasised the most routine aspects of their activities or environment, thereby deleting exceptional or storyable materials.

The structural features of this device furnishes a range of resources which can be used by speakers to attend to local, interactional issues relevant to making reports of paranormal

experiences. The device was used to do 'normalizing' work of the type initially observed by Sacks (1984b) and subsequently explored by Jefferson (1984b). Furthermore, speakers exploited the two part structure by disrupting it. Analysis of these inserted materials revealed that they were designed to defuse possible arguments which may have been adduced to undermine either the veracity of the account or the reliability of the speaker.

Supernatural and paranormal phenomena are particularly unusual events, and it may be objected, therefore, that the results from analysis of materials of this kind provides little purchase on accounts of other classes of events. However, we have seen that this format was first noted by psychologists in recollections of political assassinations, although at the time it was cited as evidence of the operation of certain cognitive facilities. Furthermore, we have seen contemporary examples of the appearance of this device in accounts of events other than direct, personal encounters with paranormal phenomena.¹¹

Of central importance, though, is the fact that this device occurs in circumstances where the speakers may be orienting to the possibility that their account might receive an unsympathetic or skeptical hearing. Furthermore, it is employed to attend to specific, pragmatic tasks sensitive precisely to this possibility. Practical considerations of this kind are not solely found in

¹¹ For example, the following account comes from a recent newspaper article about fighting in San Salvador, and was dictated by the correspondent:

'They were just relaxing when another car-load of journalists arrived. It was a Dutch crew: Cornel Lagrouw, a cameraman...with his wife, Annelise....We all knew each other so it was fun to see them.

[X] We were just taking pictures of the guerillas,
[Y] when all of a sudden gunfire rang out.' (S. Wallace, 'The Guardian', 21 March, 1989, p. 24.)

accounts of extraordinary experiences, however, but are generated in myriad occasions of everyday face-to-face interaction. For example, Pomerantz (1986) shows that extreme case formulations are used when speakers sense that the recipient of their complaints may be analysing their talk to find how it is that they are exaggerating the complainable matter. Thus, the kind of interactional and inferential business dealt with in the device analysed here is a common feature of everyday talk which occurs in a variety of circumstances. Reports of paranormal experiences merely provide an optimum environment in which to investigate one set of resources available to speakers by which to deal with this business.

The 'I was just doing X...when Y' format is an organised device rooted in the domain of face-to-face interaction. It is a constitutive feature of the culturally-available communicative resources through which, in the course of telling accounts of paranormal experiences (and, we may speculate, other types of extraordinary events), people engage in a range of fine-grained and orderly activities. This elaborates, and in part accounts for, Neisser's (1982b) observation that memory recollections of this type have a schematic quality, and also display the character of 'conventional' items.

Hitherto, psychologists have looked to cognitive processes to explain the reported association between mundane circumstances and the occurrence of extraordinary events. That is, to put it crudely, it has been assumed that the brain determines talk. On the basis of the analysis presented here, we may make the tentative suggestion that culturally-available practices and conventions regarding the organisation of accounts become sedimented in cognitive processes.

That is, with respect to this particular phenomenon, the way the brain deals with certain events may reflect the social organisations which deal with knowledge and accounts of these events.

Finally, I want to make some remarks concerning the relationship between inner mental states, such as cognitively-stored memory representations, and the social organisation of talk through which speakers produce conversational rememberings. The analysis presented here indicates that such recollections are not determined by the sorts of mental representations to which speakers may have access. Even having some form of visual representation of an event does not, in any automatic sense, pre-establish the ways that the memory of it may be described. These recollections are constructions, the design of which is sensitive to moral and inferential business generated in the course of making an account of an extraordinary experience. The very character of the memory is circumscribed by the interactional activities in the service of which it is being used. Therefore, the way in which these memories are organised may be answerable, not so much to cognitive procedures and mechanisms, but to the broader organisation of naturally-occurring talk. These analytic observations suggest that what the behavioural sciences have hitherto taken to be essentially psychological phenomena may yet yield to forms of investigation which emerge from the study of the social organisation of everyday interaction.

CHAPTER SIX:

VOICES

1 Introduction

In this chapter we will examine instances in which speakers use reported talk in their accounts of paranormal experiences. That is, words that they said; words other people said, or reported dialogue between themselves and other people. The analysis will focus on the use of reported talk as a resource to accomplish identifiable tasks in the course of accounts. Some introductory remarks are in order.

In the following section we will see that speakers may formulate information to be hearable as reported talk when in fact it is unlikely, or, in some cases, impossible, that the words so reported were actually said in this way. It is not merely the case that words were said which may at a later stage be incorporated usefully - that is, for interactional purposes - into subsequent recountings of those events. It is more accurate to begin with the assumption that the speakers are designing certain utterances to be heard as if they were said at the time. Consequently, we will refer to these utterances throughout this chapter as 'voices': the speaker's own reported utterances will be referred to as 'active' voices, and words reported to have been said by people other than the speaker are termed 'other' voices.

There has been little research into the interactional use of

reported talk. Johnstone's (1987) research looked at the variations in the use of 'said' and 'says' when people report dialogue they have had with other people. She explored hypotheses about the relationship between tense changes and the authority status of the reported speaker: for example, a speaker's tense variations in describing a judge's remarks and their own utterances when reporting their court appearance. Her analysis indicated that there is a significant asymmetry in the use of past and present tense formulations. When reporting the talk of a non authority figure, speakers use past tense rather than present tense constructions; when reporting the talk of an authority figure this is reversed, and speakers tend to invoke present tense formulations more frequently.

Johnstone's paper generally considers issues more relevant to sociolinguistics, and, therefore, does not attempt to explore the interactional concerns which may be addressed by the use of reported talk. Her paper is important, however, for two reasons: first, she indicates that the speakers' reconstructions of dialogue do have systematic features; and second, she analyses these through the use of specifically sociological perspectives: for example, Goffman's (1981) discussion of 'footing' and 'authorship'. Taking a lead from Johnstone's research, then, this chapter attempts to provide a thoroughly sociological analysis of reported utterances and dialogue.

2 Preliminary considerations

The objectives of this section are two-fold. First, to clarify some technical points regarding the source and transcription of data. Second, to illustrate some general points about the character of reported talk which occurs in the data, and thereby to sketch some of the issues of analytic interest.

The data to be used in this chapter comes from two sources: accounts collected specifically for this research, and extracts from interviews reproduced in Hufford's (1982) investigation of the 'Old Hag' experiences.¹ Extracts cited from this source will be marked by the prefix 'HD'. The numbers after this will refer to the page in Hufford's text from which the extract is taken.

There a number of reasons for using materials from Hufford's book. First, within the corpus collected specifically for this project there is a limited number of instances of reported speech. Preliminary investigation of these instances indicated a number of analytically interesting points. For a thorough analysis, however, more data were needed, and Hufford's book is particularly useful in this respect. In the course of his research he collected a considerable number of interviews which are reproduced extensively in his text. Furthermore, he states that he performed hardly any of the editing or 'cleaning-up' operations which often accompany the use of

¹ This experience usually occurs to people in supine positions, resting or in hypnopompic or hypnogogic states. A typical scenario may be: the experient hears footsteps approaching them, and is then physically paralysed by a sensation of great weight or force. During the period of paralysis they may hear a voice saying things such as 'You know who I am', or 'You knew I would come'. The experience can be accompanied by visual perception of the entity. After a period of time the speaker regains movement in one part of their body; the entity disappears, if it was visible, and shortly after full mobility is regained.

transcripts in studies of personal paranormal experiences. Thus, although transcriptions are not done to conversation analytic conventions, they are faithful to the naturally-occurring organisations and ungrammatical 'messiness' which inhere in spontaneously produced, everyday talk. Finally, his interviews were collected during the 1970's from people in Canada and the United States. Therefore, we may be especially confident of analytic observations which are supported by materials collected from such diverse sources.²

For the purpose of analysis and ease of identification sequences of reported talk will be distinguished by the use of speech markers usually employed in fictional writing. For example:

(1) ANN APPS 1:4 (The speaker is describing the first of a series of apparitions which appeared in her bedroom.)

1 S she stood there at
 2 the side of the bed
 3 (1.3)
 4 she had her hands like this (.)
 5 and she was looking down
 6 at me like that
 7 (1)
 8 and ah looked ah wo-
 9 my eyes were open
 10 'nd I looked at her
 11 (.5)
 12 then ah jumped up
 13 ah sat up un hh
 14 (.3)
 15 ()
 16 I just said
 17 (.7)
 → 18 "however did you get in"
 19 (.5)
 20 just like that
 ((continues))

² In this respect, we move towards what is becoming standard practice in conversation analysis: using data from face-to-face and telephone conversations recorded in both the United Kingdom and North America.

In this extract the speaker produces the utterance 'however did you get in' (line 18) and is thus reporting something she said to the apparition. The utterance is designed so that it is hearable, not as a paraphrase, but as the actual words she used to address the figure.

Through a brief consideration of this extract we can make some preliminary observations about some of the interactional activities mediated through the use of utterances which are designed to be heard as talk which occurred in the circumstances being reported. Firstly, the speaker can register her reactions at the time - in this case, her surprise at being disturbed by the figure. That she asked the figure how it gained entry to her home implies that she assumed it had certain characteristics: namely, that it was human and, therefore, for it to be in her home it must have overcome obstacles such as locked doors and bolted windows. This in turn shows that she made normal first assumptions about the nature of the figure. We have noted previously the range of normalizing activities in which people engage when describing extraordinary experiences; by reporting this question she displays that she reached 'normal conclusions' about the nature of the intruder. The reported utterance also tells the recipient something about the appearance of the figure: that is, for the speaker to have assumed that it was a human being, it must have been particularly vivid, life-like and three-dimensional. This works to defuse the possible accusation that the speaker's experience was the product of misperception; for example, mistaking the shadows in a dimly-lit bedroom for an apparitional visitor.

In this extract the speaker uses her report of talk which happened at the time of the experience to establish some features of her

reaction, her assumptions and the character of the apparition itself. In the following extract the speaker employs reported talk which is attributed to other people.

(2) HD 223 (The speaker has just finished recounting an experience which occurred to her husband while he was living in the Samoan Islands.)

1 S And, well, what is
2 even more fascinating
3 about the story is,
4 that he's telling
5 the experience to other
6 people and they said
→7 "Oh, that wasn't too
8 strange an experience,"
9 because they had heard
10 it before from this
11 particular hut.
 ((continues))

In extract (2) the utterance 'Oh that wasn't too strange an experience' (lines 7 and 8) is attributed to those people to whom her husband related his experience. Presumably, then, the speaker here is reporting the comments that her husband claimed had been said to him when he confronted other people about his encounter. From this extract alone we cannot know if the husband actually used reported talk in his account to his wife. We can note, however, that if the husband had used it in his account, then the speaker here has retained it in her subsequent retelling; if reported talk was not employed in earlier versions related to the speaker, then she has embellished the account in this manner.

The reported talk in this account serves to confirm the objectivity of the husband's experience: if others have heard similar reports from people staying in the same place, the husband's account is, in part, substantiated. This information is particularly useful to the

speaker in her attempt to provide a convincing account. The confirmatory response of the original recipients, however, is a collective response, distilled from numerous reactions to the telling of the story. The speaker herself designates it as such by describing the utterance as one that 'they said' (line 6). It is unlikely that the 'they' to which she refers all said the same thing in these exact words. Yet the way they are produced in the account makes them hearable as words which were spoken at the time. Thus, not only then can we note that the speaker's choice of what words to report provides for the veridicality of her husband's experience, but that, in relating his account, she has 'worked-up' her knowledge of the collective or general response to the account so as to construct it as talk which will be heard as something that happened at the time of the event.

In the following extract the speaker (S1) produces an utterance which describes a conclusion reached by the participants during the circumstances being reported. This utterance is also designed to be heard as a comment made at that time.

(3) DN 24:178 (The speakers are describing their attempt to make a recording of disturbances caused by a poltergeist.)

1	S1	we: (.) got a
2		tape recorder
3		(.3)
4	S2	yeah
5	S1	and [tried to
6	S2	()
7	S1	record the noise
8		(1.6)
9		on and on it would
10		go
11		(1.5)
12		we tape recorded it
13		and said
→ 15		"right we think
16		we've got enough"

17 (.2)
 18 switched the
 19 tape rhecohrdehr ohff
 20 (.7)
 21 following day we
 22 rewound it to play
 23 (.)
 24 over breakfast
 25 (.3)
 26 nuthing
 ((continues))

In extract (3) the utterance "'right we think we've got enough'" (lines 15 and 16) is prefaced by 'we.... said' (lines 12 and 13). A conventional interpretation of this utterance suggests that the speaker is reporting a joint decision regarding the length of time the tape recorder should have been left running. As in the previous extract, it is unlikely that these words were said in the way that they are reported as having been said: that is, jointly by the two parties present. In these extracts, then, speakers choose to introduce information into the account as though it had been spoken at the time of the experiences, either by others or by themselves.

We are beginning to see that describing a version of talk which happened at the time, or providing information which is designed to be heard as a stretch of actual talk, is a powerful resource in the construction of these accounts. This is confirmed in the following two extracts. In the first, the speaker uses an active voice to relay remarks which could not have been said in this way.

(4) ME B 2:17 (The speaker has just described an impulse to write to a friend to offer congratulations on the engagement of her daughter.)

1 S she wrote back
 2 to me *hhh in
 3 total chaos saying
 4 (.)
 5 "how the Hell did

6 ↑you know"
 7 she started the letter
 8 huhh hah↑ she said
 → 9 "I received your letter
 10 at nine o'clock in the
 11 morning (.) and you were
 12 congratulating me on (.)
 13 Miriam's getting engage:d:
 14 and I said what the Hell
 15 is she talking about 'hhh
 16 at twelve o'clock that
 17 morning (.) she walked in
 18 and announced her engagement"
 ((continues))

In this extract the speaker's knowledge of Miriam's engagement transpires to be precognitive insofar as, at the time of the impulse to write the letter, no-one knew that there was to be an engagement. The revelation that the speaker's impulse was motivated by paranormally acquired information is introduced into the account as an active voice. That is, it is not merely that the letter confirms the speaker's knowledge as somehow mysterious, but that this confirmation is reproduced as if the friend was saying the words which the speaker is claiming she had written in the letter.

In the following data the information revealed through the active voice has a conspicuous 'fit' with the nature of the experience reported by the speaker.

(5) HD 177 (The speaker is one of three young women who all experienced a series of phenomena in the house they shared. In this account the speaker is reporting an evening when she and a housemate came home and disturbed their friend while she was having a dream which was related to the experiences.)

1 S Joan and I walked into
 2 the house and Ruth's
 3 in the living room, um,
 4 asleep. And we awaken her
 5 when we go in,
 6 and she starts
 7 crying and bawling,

→ 8 "Oh, my God! I'm
9 so glad you all woke
10 me up! I've been trying
11 to wake up and get out
12 of this room for so long,
13 and I haven't been able to."
(continues)

In extract (5) the speaker reports the reactions of her friend. What is noticeable here is that this utterance has the character of material which has been 'repackaged'. That is, the speaker's friend may indeed have said something similar to the reported talk in the account, but it is unlikely to have been produced in precisely the way that it appears in the extract. This material has been reformulated to emphasise the severity of the experience through the depiction of the extent of the Ruth's response to the dream.

The preliminary examination of these data furnishes two observations. First, an active voice can be used to address a range of issues regarding the credibility of the account into which the voice has been introduced. Following from this, the second point is that these data suggest that what is interesting is not merely that something was said at the time, which is subsequently incorporated into a later version of the events, but that active voices have been used as a resource in the design of these accounts. That is, utterances made in specific circumstances can be incorporated into the subsequent account of those circumstances. Alternatively, items can be packaged so that they are hearable as active voices, even in cases where the utterances could not have been said in the way they have been presented.

In the rest of this chapter we will examine some of the ways that speakers can use active voices when recounting paranormal

experiences. The following sections will focus on the use of voices as a resource to deal with issues broadly concerning the 'objectivity' of experiences, and the substantiation of the 'paranormality' of phenomena.

3 Sustaining the objectivity of the phenomenon

One powerful argument which can be made about claims to have encountered anomalous phenomena is that the experient is mistaken, and that what they claim to have seen was not actually what they saw. One variant of this skeptical position is that the phenomenon was, in some way, the product of the speaker's own imagination. In this section we will look at three ways in which speakers can employ active voices in their accounts to provide material which supports their (implicit) claim that the event upon which they are reporting actually happened, and was an external phenomenon.

[a] Demonstrating that the phenomenon was observable by others;

[b] Revealing that the consequences or effects of the phenomenon were observable by others;

[c] Using other voices to confirm that an event or experience was in fact an anomaly.

[a] Displaying the observability of the phenomenon

In the following account the speaker employs a member of her family as the vehicle for the active voice. It is noticeable that the speaker describes the words said by the active voice as being that

'kind of thing' which were being said at the time, thereby displaying her own understanding that these words may never actually have been spoken in the way she is reproducing them here.

(6) HD 208 (The speaker is describing mysterious noises which plagued the family home.)

1 S My brother-in-law
2 used to get very, very
3 upset and start
4 cussing at this noise
5 kind of thing.
6 And just scream
→ 7 "Now get the Hell
8 out of here and
9 leave us alone
10 for a while,"
11 kind of thing
((continues))

The first point to make about this data is that the active voice displays that someone other than the speaker could hear the phenomenon. This demonstrates that the noise was not the product of the speaker's imagination, but was objectively available to others present during the disturbances.

Secondly, reporting a piece of talk as if it was said at the time not only allows the speaker to accomplish certain tasks with these words, but also provides a further resource in that it presents an opportunity to describe how the words were said. In this utterance the speaker gives two descriptions of the way in which the words were delivered. The first refers to a general reaction: he 'used to get very, very upset and start cussing' (lines 3 to 5). When she describes the words which she presents as an active voice, however, she uses the word 'scream' (line 6). 'Cussing' implies a mild form of bad language; 'scream' on the other hand, projects a far more

extreme form of behaviour. By upgrading the severity of her brother-in-law's response in this way she provides inferences about the character of the phenomenon: that it was the type of event which could provoke an extreme response of this kind. Moreover, there is the implication that such extreme reactions were warranted. This description of the way the other's words were said provides materials which confirm the drama of the experiences.

Thirdly, the experiences occurred over several months, manifesting on numerous occasions. The words that she portrays as being said confirm the consistency of the phenomenon: the brother-in-law's remarks are designed to be heard as being directed to the consistency of the phenomenon in that he makes a plea for it to cease: 'leave us alone for awhile' (lines 9 and 10).

Furthermore, the speaker portrays a further character of the noise by reporting her brother-in-law's remarks as being addressed to the phenomenon. That is, he is not talking about it, but talking to it. This suggests that the noise exhibited a discernible pattern, which in turn implies a controlling agency. That is, it wasn't random, but occurred only in certain times and in certain places. Imputing a regular pattern and a discriminating agent serves to negate the charge that the family were merely over-reacting to rare, but perfectly natural, noises which occasionally occur in houses. This is further corroborated in that her utterance is designed to be heard as making a demand of the noise to cease disturbing the family. Such a request is only explicable if the noise had displayed some pattern which indicated an initial intention to cause disruption.

This use of another's voice allows the speaker to perform a range of activities. Not only does she demonstrate the objectively-

available character of the phenomenon, but she also provides material which can be assessed to discover some of the features of that phenomenon. For example, that it displayed the presence of a controlling agency, the goal of which appeared to be the disruption of routine home life.

Hearing a mysterious noise is not the most dramatic of possible anomalous experiences: there are no physical objects or traces which can be observed, and thus experiencers have little to which they can refer to demonstrate the severity of the experience and the effect that it had. This utterance simultaneously provides information which allows the recipient to infer that the phenomenon was 'out there' in the world, and also the drama of the experiences.

In the following extract the dramatic nature of the experience is furnished by the speaker's preliminary description.

(7) VA II 10:85 (The speaker is describing one of a series of encounters with a malevolent spirit.)

1 S tha:t night:
2 (1.5)
3 I don't know what
4 time it was:
5 (1.3)
6 my: husband (.) and I
7 both woke up: (.7)
8 with the mo:st (.)
9 dreadful (.5)
10 feeling of
11 (1.7)
12 hhh °well° being (nyrie)
13 smothered (.5) but the
14 powerful smell °h and
15 a blackness (.3) that was
16 that was (.2) blacker than
17 black I can't describe it
18 like (.) an^ything else (.)
19 °hh it was the most
20 penetrating (.3) type of
21 blackness °hh
22 and there was this
23 (1.7)

24 what I assumed to be th-
 25 the shape of a man (.)
 26 in a cloak
 27 (2)
 28 it was the most
 29 (.3)
 30 formidable
 31 (1.2)
 32 sight
 33 (1)
 34 my husband said
 → 35 "my God what is it"
 36 (.)
 37 an I just said
 38 "now keep quiet and
 39 say the Lord's prayer"
 ((continues))

In this extract the speaker invokes the urgency of the encounter by dealing with three features of the experience: the smell (lines 13 and 14), the 'blackness' (lines 15 to 21) and the description of the figure itself (lines 28 to 32). Immediately after this elaborate and evocative descriptive work, she introduces her husband's utterance 'my God what is it' (line 35). This establishes that he could see the figure, and also corroborates the description provided by the speaker. That is, the severity of the husband's verbal reaction confirms that the thing in the room, and the associated sensations, were as powerful and alarming as the speaker had reported. Consequently, the speaker's reliability as an accurate reporter of the scene is confirmed, as is the drama of the experience.

Immediately following the the husband's utterance the speaker reports what she said at the time. We will discuss the use of reported stretches of dialogue in more detail during a later section; we can note as a preliminary observation, however, that this sequence enables the speaker to make inferable information about herself. First of all, by contrast to the shock registered in the

husband's response, her subsequent utterance - 'now just keep quiet and say the Lord's prayer' (lines 38 and 39) - is controlled and calming. Furthermore, she displays that she knows what to do in circumstances such as these, and that this involves religious incantations. In reporting these utterances she establishes a contrast between her husband's reactions and her own, and thus emphasises her competence to deal with these events.

In extract (7) the speaker makes a claim about the objectivity and drama of the experience by using another's voice to register a suitably astonished reaction. This is achieved through the words which are reported as having been said. In the following data the speaker achieves the same result by graphically reproducing the manner in which another person reacted to the occurrence of an unusual noise.

(8) ME A 295

1 S one night however a
 2 friend was with me (.)
 3 and we're just sitting
 4 watching the tele
 5 (.3)
 6 and she was also very psychic
 7 a:nd urm
 8 (1.3)
 9 its (.) th-the s:ound started
 10 the litt(le) musical (s) tu-
 11 s::ound started again
 12 (.3)
 13 and uhm: (.)
 14 >she said
 → 15 "what's THaght!"<
 16 >I said
 17 "Oh (.) have you
 18 heard it"< (.)
 19 ah (s)
 20 >"oh↑that's wonderful"
 ((continues))

Finally, in the following data the speaker initially reports what the other person did upon experiencing the phenomenon: scream (line 9). Then she introduces dialogue which reveals that her colleague had had the same experience (lines 14 and 15).

(9) FR 3:28 (The speaker has just described her experience of a presence behind her which she initially assumed to be a work colleague. She discovered subsequently that there was no-one standing behind her to account for her sensation)

1 S the next thing
2 (.)
3 I heard her say
→ 4 "ah shan't be a
5 minute Sheila"
6 (2.1)
7 so ah sai- uh I went to
8 the end and she >(cch)< (.)
9 and she screamed (.)
10 and she went (.) to the end
11 of her (.) block and I went to
12 the end of my block 'hh
13 she (s)
14 "I thought you were
15 standing behind me"
16 >ah said
17 "well↑ I've just had
18 that sensation"<
(continues)

In these data speakers incorporate other voices to confirm that there was something present in the world to be observed. Also, employing another's reaction corroborates the accuracy of the speaker's description of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the use of other voices provides an environment which speakers can exploit to present materials from which favourable assessments of their behaviour at the time may be drawn: for example, that they acted calmly or rationally.

[b] Displaying the observability of effects of the phenomenon

In the following extracts the speakers use active voices to establish that the effects of the phenomenon were noticeable by other people.

(10) HD 93 (The speaker has just had an 'Old Hag' experience.)

1 S I was still sleeping in
2 bed with my brother
3 because then we only had
4 one bed for the two of us.
5 And he told me one time
6 that I was breathing
7 very heavily. And in fact
8 one time he said,
→ 9 "What's the matter with you ?"
10 And when I looked over to him
11 and moved my head, everything
12 went, you know. And then
13 my eyes were wide open.
14 And I said,
15 "Well I just had a bad dream
16 or something."
17 And he says,
→ 18 "What's the matter,"
19 you now. And like I
20 really didn't know
21 what to say to him.
22 He said,
→ 23 "You were breathing really
24 heavy and just staring
25 straight out into space,"
((continues))

In this data the brother's comments refer to the speaker's strange behaviour (lines 9, 18 and 23 to 25). Prior to this extract the speaker had been describing an 'Old Hag' encounter, which involves the physical sensation of being paralysed by an oppressive force. Here the brother's comments are reported as being provoked by the observation of some of the consequences of the phenomenon which were displayed by the speaker during the experience. This reveals that the experience, regardless of its phenomenological characteristics,

was accompanied by correlating physical and physiological events which were sufficiently severe to arouse the concern of the speaker's brother, and to warrant his subsequent inquiry.

We may note also that the speaker initially produces a paraphrase of his brother's utterance: 'And he told me one time that I was breathing very heavily' (lines 5 to 7). Immediately after this, however, he reproduces the same material, but presented as an active voice. That is, the speaker does not produce a description of his response after the initial paraphrase, and then designs his utterance as reported talk. This suggests that the speaker prefers to introduce this material by the use of an active voice.

A further feature of this extract is that the brother is presented as being unaware of the causes of the effects which are being noted. This 'innocence' is repeated in the following two cases.

(11) DN 31:216 (The speakers are reporting a series of poltergeist disturbances which they alone experienced, despite living in a shared house.)

1 S when we left the house
2 we (re) talking to
3 the lad who lived
4 on the ground floor
5 (.6)
6 and he also had bought
7 a house and he was gonna
8 leave wasn't he
9 (.2)
10 S2 °yeah°
11 S1 and he said
12 (1.2)
→ 13 "somehow the atmosphere
14 in this house has
15 changed"
((continues))

(12) HD 199 (The speaker has been experiencing a number of disturbances in her home. In this account she is reporting upon her meeting with two strangers in a bar.)

1 S So I went over and
2 sat down and introduced
3 myself, and she said -
4 the girl, there was a
5 girl and a guy -
6 She said,
7 "I dont know why,"
8 she says,
→9 "I feel something
10 really weird from you.
11 Like I know you're
12 really upset about
13 something. And you know
14 I'm just wondering if
15 it has anything to do
16 with witchcraft or
17 anything like this ?"
((continues))

In extract (11) the speaker reports the utterance made by a co-tenant: 'somehow the atmosphere in this house has changed' (lines 13 to 15). The co-tenant's innocence is displayed in that he is portrayed as not knowing specifically the way in which the atmosphere in the house had changed: that is, because of the presence of the poltergeist. By reporting this utterance the speaker allows the co-tenant to reveal himself to be sensitive to subtle changes in the ambiance of the building; this not only confirms the events being reported, but also delicately evokes images of a haunted house.

At this stage in the account the speakers have described a number of specific incidents caused by the poltergeist. Thus the recipient has sufficient information to infer that the root of the worsening atmosphere was the presence of the spirit in the attic. Thus, the recipient arrives at the conclusion that the other voice is reporting contact, albeit unknowingly, with the effects of the anomaly. This relieves the speaker of the task of making it explicit that the

phenomenon was present in the world to be experienced by others.

In extract (12) the speaker reports a lengthy series of utterances from a stranger. In the main part of this series the stranger reports that her 'feelings' lead her to wonder if the speaker is associated with any witchcraft (lines 9 to 17). The speaker's experiences, although particularly unusual, are not correctly described as witchcraft. In failing to identify the real cause of the 'feelings' associated with the speaker, the active voice is portrayed as being innocent of them.

Insofar as this knowledge about the speaker is described as coming from someone to whom she has never spoken, it is itself indicative of a paranormal event: communication of information by extrasensory channels. Whereas in previous extracts the speakers report other voices commenting upon events which would not immediately sustain a paranormal interpretation - heavy breathing and changes in the atmosphere - in this case the other voice corroborates the nature of the speaker's experience while at the same time constituting a further example of the occurrence of anomalies.

[c] Using other voices to confirm the paranormality of the event

In extracts (9) to (12) the speaker uses an active voice to confirm that the effects of the phenomenon were observable to others, without a direct reference to paranormal agencies or causes. What is significant about extract (12) is that the other voice indicates that occult activities might be the cause of the effects which had been observed; that is, it furnishes an explicit reference to supernatural events. In the following two extracts the speakers use another's voice to refer directly to the phenomenon which they had encountered,

and in so doing, confirming it as a paranormal experience.

(13) ME A 306/7 (The speaker has been describing a series of strange noises appearing in her living room.)

1 S so: about two or three
2 days later (.3) ahr (.)
3 I went to: a seance
4 (1.3)
5 the medium came to
6 me almost immediately
7 and >she sed<
→ 8 "o:h (.) by the way"
9 (.2)
10 she >didn't know me<
11 she jus:t (.) came
12 straight to me however
13 'nd she said ehm (.)
14 "you know that ehm musical (.)
15 sound you've been hearing
16 in your li↓ving room"
17 n I dy(e) h huhh hah
18 I just said
19 "ye:ah" hh
20 'hhh and she said ehm
22 (.7)
22 "that was Bo:b (.)
23 a ma:n (.) who passed
24 over quite a lo:ng time ago"
((continues))

(14) ME A 5:385 (The speaker has just described an encounter with a spirit which occurred while she was in a state of meditation.)

1 S a week or two later
2 I was at a seance
3 (2)
4 and the medium 'h
5 s ws a different medium
6 came to me
7 (.)
8 and she said: ehm
9 (1.3)
10 she came to me late
11 in the seance
12 actually not immediately
13 uhm sh- she came to me
14 and she said
→ 15 "there's
16 (.2)
17 I just want to tell you"
18 she said

19 "there's ehm (.)
20 you have an Irish
21 gypsy guide"
((continues))

In extracts (13) and (14) both experiences are confirmed by mediums. In the (13) the medium's remark confirms that the cause of the phenomenon was paranormal by identifying the spirit who was the agent. It is further noticeable that the words produced through the other voice have a clear relation to the phenomenon as described by the speaker earlier in the account;³ indeed, they are almost identical. This further substantiates the accuracy of the medium's assessment, while at the same time providing evidence that the speaker is using the other voice as a vehicle through which to produce her own words. Furthermore, insofar as the medium presumably has had contact with spirit agents, it is also another anomalous experience. In (14) the medium's voice is used to reveal that someone else knows about the speaker's encounter with a spirit. In this case, however, the other voice does not have the same degree of familiarity with or detailed knowledge about the speaker's experiences. That is, she can identify that the speaker has a spirit guide, but does not know that the speaker has had recent contact with it.

Finally, in the following account the speaker's experience is confirmed as paranormal by a friend.

³ See the analysis in Chapter Four.

(15) HD 186 (The speaker is reporting an experience she had while staying with a friend. The morning after the night of the experience she questioned her friend about the history of the house.)

1 S she says,
2 "Did you feel something ?"
3 "Damn right I felt something!"
4 I said,
5 "There's a ghost up there."
6 She says,
→ 7 "Yeah, we know.
8 We didn't want to tell you
9 because we didn't want to
10 unnecessarily frighten you."
((continues)) [original emphasis]

In this extract the other voice is used to confirm that the speaker's assumptions about the nature of her experience were correct. Through the construction of the account in this way she is presented as arriving at a conclusion about the experience independent of any prior knowledge. It is only later that her assumptions about the experience are proved to be correct.

4 Using voices to premonitor a 'mystery'

In this section we will look at the way speakers use voices in their accounts to provide information from an assessment of which a recipient can arrive at the conclusion that the phenomenon being reported is anomalous. This is most clearly illustrated in extracts (16) and (17); these come from an interview with a couple who were plagued by poltergeist disturbances. In the first extract the speaker is describing an occasion on which they first noticed that something appeared to be moving around in the attic above their bedroom. In the second he describes their attempt to make a tape

recording of the noises caused by the movement.

(16) DN 13:91

1 S the noi:se (.)
2 was disturbing ·hh (.)
3 Ernie got out of bed
4 un I said
→ 5 "it must be running
6 between the rafters"
7 (2.4)
8 and it wasn't it was
9 going diagonally across
10 the room
((continues))

(17) DN 24:179

1 S o::n and o:n it would go
2 (1.5)
3 we tape recorded it
4 and said
→ 5 "right we think
6 we've got enough"
7 (.3)
8 un switched the tahape
9 recohrdeh off un
10 (.3)
11 following day we
12 rewind it (.) to play (.)
13 over breakfast
14 (.3)
15 nuthing
((continues))

In both these extracts the active voice is used to report routine, normal assumptions about the origin and character of the disturbances. In (16) the speaker reports that 'it must be running between the rafters' (lines 5 and 6). This invokes the image of the activities of a small animal, such as a rat, as the cause of the noise. This assumption is disappointed in the following utterance, however, when it is revealed that the noise of the movement did not follow the pattern of the rafters, but actually crossed over them.

The speakers had previously described the construction of the ceiling, emphasising the sturdiness of the materials used, in particular the size of the rafters. An animal small enough to enter the space between the ceiling and the attic floor would have also been too small to negotiate the rafters. Thus, the recipient is presented with a normal hypothesis as to the cause of the sounds, which is then shown to be false by the behaviour of the phenomenon. In extract (17) the speaker reports the joint decision 'we think we've got enough' (lines 5 and 6) as an active voice. This reveals the speakers to have made certain assumptions about the character of the sounds: namely, that if they could hear it, then a tape recorder would also be able to detect it. However, it transpires that the noise did not register on the tape, and thus another element of mystery is woven into the account.

In these cases an active voice is used to present information which implies the normal cause or character of the phenomenon. The recipient's appreciation of the mystery of the event is cultivated in the manner in which this information is then revealed to be false.

In the following data the speaker provides a more elaborate construction: an active voice is used to describe the expected outcome of the speaker's illness, during the period of which he experienced his encounter with an image of his deceased father.

(18) BY 2:10 (The speaker is reporting what the doctor had told his mother on the evening prior to his experience.)

1 S one day the doctor come
 2 'e said
 →3 "well there's no more I can
 4 do (.) 'e:s: (.) yuknow (.)
 5 you must prepare yourself
 6 for the worst 'e:s not
 7 gonna make it through the

8 night in my opinion"
9 'e said
10 "cos people become at
11 their lowest ebb (.3)
12 during the early hours
13 of the morning I don't
14 think he'll make it"
15 an 'ee says (.)
16 yuknow (.)
17 "all you can do is hope"
 ((continues))

In this account the speaker uses an expert's voice to permit the recipient to come to realise the significance of the subsequent experience. In this, the image of the speaker's father appeared and requested that his son 'let go' of life, succumb to the disease and pass over into the next world. The speaker screamed his refusal to die, the apparition disappeared and, eventually, he recovered.

The speaker's recovery is implicitly portrayed as remarkable in two respects. First, expert medical opinion - the active voice - proclaims his imminent demise; second, it is intimately related to his rejection of the request, from his father, to die. Thus, the recipient can form the conclusion that the encounter with the image was in some way responsible for the speaker's recovery 'against all odds'. Not only is the recovery unusual, but because it was due in part to the speaker's interaction with a supernatural agency, it acquires its extraordinary status.

Further 'scene-setting' work is accomplished through an active voice in the following extract; this comes from the same poltergeist case as extracts (16) and (17)

(19) DN 4:28 (The speakers rented, in addition to their own rooms, the attic rooms.)

1 S1 we asked the landlady's
2 permission (.) to restore
3 the windows
4 (.2)
5 S2 yeah
6 (.)
7 S1 and she said
8 (.7)
→ 9 "don't put glass in
10 (.7)
11 I want you to put
12 plastic in"
13 (1.3)
14 this went against the
15 grain for us but
16 (1)
17 fuh fifty pee a week
((continues))

Here the speaker sets a mystery by emphasising the landlady's request regarding the windows: he produces her voice actively making this request. He draws further attention to it by remarking that 'it went against the grain', and by providing a reason for why they complied - the small amount of extra rent they were paying for use of the attic rooms. At this stage there is no account for the landlady's unusual demand and the recipient is provided with a puzzle without a solution. By virtue of the nature of the account - a story of a haunting - the recipient can make, at least, tentative speculations that the mystery is in some way tied to the phenomenon.

It later transpires that the landlady was fully aware of the nature of the disturbances which occurred in the attic, and, furthermore, it is implied that she knew that the windows may be severely damaged if the attic rooms were to be renovated. One of the speakers' first experiences of the phenomenon was indeed a violent attack on the windows, the repair of which had only recently been completed. Thus

the recipient is presented with a puzzle - why should the landlady make such an odd request ? - which is subsequently resolved by the information that the poltergeist had a peculiar penchant for violent attacks on modernised windows.

In this section, then, we have looked at some ways that speakers can use active voices to hint at the paranormality of events without making this an overt focus of their talk. In the following section we will look more generally at a set of resources through which speakers explicitly point to the anomalous character of their experiences.

5 Reported dialogue

Earlier in this chapter we considered an extract in which the speaker reported a brief stretch of dialogue between herself and her husband which occurred at the time of their encounter with a particularly unpleasant hostile apparition.

(7) VA II 10:85

34 S my husband said
→ 35 "my God what is it"
36 (.)
37 an I just said
→ 38 "now keep quiet and
39 say the Lord's prayer"
((continues))

The primary feature of this sequence is that there are two active voices in the account, that of the speaker's husband and her own, the reported interaction of which permits her to display both the

reliability of her initial description of the experience, and that the figure so described was indeed external to them both and present in the bedroom.

In this section we will examine the way that reported dialogue provides a set of resources which can be exploited by speakers in the service of specific interactional goals. Some of the structural and organisational features of these resources are illustrated in the following extract, which is taken from the conclusion of an account of a series of mysterious noises which had been disturbing the speaker in her home. Until this point in the interview the speaker has not explicitly claimed that she knew the noises were caused by a paranormal agency. Indeed, previously in the account she had described her earlier reactions to the noise to facilitate the impression that she initially assumed that it had a perfectly natural explanation. In this excerpt she goes on to provide information which clearly substantiates the paranormality of the experiences.

(20) ME A 307 (The speaker is describing events which occurred shortly after a manifestation of the noise.)

1 S so: about two or three
2 days later (.3) ehr (.)
3 I went to: a seance
4 (1.3)
5 the medium came to
6 me ↑almost immediately
7 and >she sed<
8 "oh:↓(.) by the way"
9 (.2)
10 she >didn't know me<
11 she jus:t (.) came
12 straight to me however
13 nd she said ehm (.)
14 "you know that ehm musical (.)
15 sound you've been hearing
16 in your li↓ving room"
17 n I dy (e) h huhh hah

18 I just said
 19 "ye:ah hh"
 20 'hhh and she said ehm
 21 (.7)
 22 "that was Bo:b (.)
 23 a ma:n (.) who passed
 24 over quite a lo:ng time ago"
 ((continues))

Of interest here are the following three sections: [a] the medium's initial utterance, and the remarks leading up to it (lines 5 to 16), [b] the speaker's subsequent turn (lines 17 to 19), and [c] the medium's final utterance (lines 20 to 24).

[a] The medium's initial utterance

5 S the medium came to
 6 me ↑almost immediately
 7 and >she sed<
 8 "oh:↓ (.) by the way"
 9 (.2)
 10 she >didn't know me<
 11 she jus:t (.) came
 12 straight to me however
 13 nd she said ehm (.)
 14 "you know that ehm musical (.)
 15 sound you've been hearing
 16 in your li↓ving room"

The medium's utterance in this extract is designed to be heard as mysterious, and this is achieved partly through the description of the circumstances in which it was delivered. Firstly, the medium is reported as moving towards the speaker 'almost immediately' (line 6), thus implying that the motivation for such an approach was at least urgent. The speaker then begins to report the medium's first

remarks: "'oh: (.) by the way"' (line 8).⁴ Instead of completing this utterance, however, the speaker interrupts her report of the medium's talk to introduce information regarding the relationship between them, and she makes it plain that they did not know each other. The speaker's next utterance reiterates the directness of the medium's approach (lines 11 and 12). Thus sets up a puzzle: why did the medium approach the speaker with such urgency if they were not acquainted ?

The speaker has so far described the circumstances in which the medium approached her, and she has made it clear that she is going to report what the medium said to her. The way that these circumstances have been described, however, already provides information from which the recipient can arrive at an understanding of the forthcoming utterance. That is, it is not customary to dwell upon, and elaborate, the circumstances surrounding the provision of an utterance which deals with routine, everyday matters. The warrant for reporting the urgency of the medium's approach, and the lack of a relationship between the speaker and the medium, is a direct consequence of the nature of the information she imparted to the speaker. That is, these features of the circumstances only merit a reportable status by virtue of what happened next. By introducing this information prior to the medium's remarks, the speaker provides the basis for the recipient's inferential work about the character of the forthcoming utterance. The provision of this information generates an expectation about the unusual character of the

⁴ I hear the utterance 'oh: (.) by the way' as designed to be heard as something the medium said to the speaker, rather than a digression instituted by the speaker in the course of telling the account. It isn't clear on the transcript, but the actual tape strongly supports this interpretation.

information the medium wants to reveal.

The medium's actual utterance substantiates the mystery which has been introduced by the scene-setting work of the speaker's prior descriptions. The reference to the phenomenon which the speaker had been experiencing has an unequivocal character which itself borders on the extraordinary. This is provided for by two features of the medium's remarks. First, the medium is depicted as referring directly to the phenomenon: she does not ask if the speaker has had any experiences with strange noises, nor does she qualify her own knowledge of the phenomenon. The phrase 'you know' establishes that there is some knowledge common between them; it is not designed to depict the medium establishing the speaker's recognition, but rather to allow her to display her affiliation with the speaker in their knowledge of these experiences. Second, the speaker has designed the medium's description of the phenomenon to be remarkably accurate. Indeed, the reference to the 'musical sound' in the living room is almost exactly the same description provided earlier in the account by the speaker. Thus, the upshot of this utterance is that the medium is seen to be intimately familiar with specific details of the speaker's experiences.

The way that this sequence has been constructed provides the grounds for the recipient to draw the inference that the medium's remarks are, to a degree, a revelation to the speaker. Despite not knowing her, she has approached the speaker directly and displayed her detailed knowledge about her experiences. In this sense, a puzzle has been posed: how did she know ?

[b] The speaker's subsequent turn

17 S n I dy (e) h huhh hah
18 I just said
19 "ye:ah hh"

In this section the speaker reports her rather surprised reactions to the medium's remarks, through which she accomplishes three tasks. The first feature of note is the way that this reaction proposes the correctness of the medium's information. The speaker utters 'n I dy (e)' which is hearable as the beginning of 'I just said'. Instead of going on to report her response, however, she self-interrupts and laughs briefly.

Although we cannot be certain, it would seem that this laugh is designed to be heard as something that happened at that time, rather than the consequence of something humorous which occurred during the telling of the account. It intrudes upon a series of verbal exchanges which is clearly meant to recount things that were said at the time. Also, we can note that the provision of laughter in this place is an organised feature of accounts of paranormal events. For example, in the following extract, the speaker reports her mother's question 'why were you crying in the car', which reveals that she knew of an event which the speaker had not mentioned.

(21) SW 5:58

1 S and sh:he: saihd
2 "well (.) why were
3 you crying in the car"
4 (.7)
5 an I said
6 "wha↑t" hehh h
((continues))

In this extract the speaker produces a slight breathy laugh (line 6) as part of her response to her mother's knowledge that she had been upset. We may interpret this laugh as encapsulating the speaker's surprise that her mother knew about her crying. That is, it displays the speaker's response to receiving accurate information about events from someone who, logically, should have no knowledge of them. It displays the speaker's recognition that the mother's remarks correctly referred to an actual event. (Presumably, had the speaker received wildly inaccurate information, her report of her response at the time would include some remark to indicate that she did not know what her mother was talking about.) With reference to the utterance in lines 17 to 19, the speaker's display of laughter orients to, and displays, the accuracy of the information she received.

We have previously noted that that speakers' orchestrate their descriptions so as to allow the recipient to come to the conclusion that they acted like any normal person might in the circumstances. This occurs in extract (20): the speaker has received dramatic news, and is responding as anyone might in that position. The warrant for the legitimacy of her startled reaction is that the medium knew of events about which she should have had no prior information. Furthermore, it is noticeable that the speaker's response does not explicitly confirm the accuracy of the other voice's utterance; alternatively, her 'ye:ah' (line 19) acknowledges that she is aware of the events to which the medium has referred, while at the same time returning the floor to the other voice. This provides the warrant for the speaker to report the medium's subsequent utterances.

[c] The medium's final turn

20 S •hhh and she said ehm
21 (.7)
22 "that was Bo:b (.)
23 a ma:n (.) who passed
24 over quite a lo:ng time ago"

In this section the speaker uses the other voice to confirm that the cause of her experiences was a spirit agency. The most notable advantage to accrue from using another voice to do this is that the speaker is relieved of the task of providing the information which substantiates her (hitherto implicit) claim that the events she experienced were caused by something genuinely mysterious.

In this sequence the speaker depicts an occasion in which important information is revealed to her by another: that is, she portrays herself as a passive recipient of news, the incredible nature of which she is entirely innocent, and hence reacts accordingly. This sequence occurs, however, in an account of paranormal experiences, and is, therefore, a vehicle for exactly this type of incredible news. Displaying an innocent and passive reciprocity towards information which confirms the anomalous character of her experiences substantiates her attempts to depict herself as behaving normally when confronted with extraordinary situations.

The three part sequence can be summarised as follows: in the first part, the other voice presents information which is designed to be heard as a revelation to the speaker at the time. The second part details the speaker's response to this information. The final part of the sequence finds the speaker portrayed as a recipient to further information which provides the denouement to the mystery established by the first utterance (and, indeed, to the mystery around which the

whole account has been based), and is thus a resolution.

The same pattern is present in the following data. In these extracts, however, the speaker does not construct the third part of the sequence with an active voice.

(22) ME A 5:385 (Shortly before the events reported in this extract the speaker had had an encounter with a what she presumed to be a spirit guide.)

1 S a week or two later
2 I was at a seance
3 (2)
4 and the medium h
5 s ws a different medium
6 came to me
7 (.)
8 and she said: ehm
9 (1.3)
10 she came to me late
11 in the seance
12 actually not immediately
13 uhm sh- she came to me
14 and she said
15 "there's
16 (.2)
17 I just want to tell you"
18 she said
19 "there's ehm (.)
20 you have an Irish
21 gypsy gui:de"
22 and I jUMPed up which
23 is inappropriate behahviour
24 at a sehahnce un shouted
25 ">OH I'VE SEEN< Her"
26 (.7)
27 un then I sat down and shut up
28 and realised that she had
29 come to me first and
30 this medium was confirming
31 my experience
((continues))

(23) SW 5:58-62 (The speaker in this extract is partially deaf. She has just been to a specialist who had assessed the possibility of an operation to clear blockages in her inner ear. Unfortunately, the outcome of this meeting was disappointing. Directly after the meeting the speaker went to see her mother, and during the drive she became very upset. Not wishing to distress her mother, however, she decided not to mention the doctor's pessimistic verdict, and instead described only the routine features of the examination.)

1 S and sh:he: h saihd
2 "well"
3 (.)
4 "why were you
5 crying in the car
6 (.7)
7 an I said
8 "wha[↑]t" hehh 'hh
9 un ehr
10 (.)
11 she said she'd
12 (.5)
13 at the time that
14 I'd been in the car
15 park
16 (.3)
17 she'd had ah
18 (.)
19 an image um she said
20 a picture but (°ah a°)
21 (.)
22 meaning yuh know like
23 an image
24 'hh
25 of me sitting
26 in the car
27 (.3)
28 crying
((continues))

In both these extracts the speakers construct this part of their account around the same three part sequence: an other's voice is used to present information which, at the time, is a revelation to the speakers. Their response is designed to be heard as a surprised reaction to the receipt of this information: in extract (22) the speaker claims that she 'jumped up', an activity which she then describes as inappropriate (lines 22 to 24); in (23) the speaker exclaims 'what' and also provides a breathy laugh, similar to the one

produced by the speaker in extract (20).

Unlike the speaker in extract (20), however, these speakers do not employ an active voice to provide the resolution to the puzzle established in the first part. In (21) the speaker reports that she came to appreciate more fully the nature of her experience through the other's comments; in (22) the speaker paraphrases the remarks made by her mother. This indicates that the third part of the sequence need not necessarily employ an active voice construction. It would appear that the primary function of this part is to be a vehicle for the resolution of the puzzle established in the revelation of the other voice's initial utterance.

In the following account the same sequence is in evidence, although it is broken up by the speaker's digressions about the background of the people whose talk she is reporting.

(24 [12]) HD 199 (On entering a nightclub, the speaker noticed two people who appeared to be observing her closely.)

1 S So I went over and sat down
2 and introduced myself, and she
3 said - the girl, there was a girl
4 and a guy - she said
5 "I don't know why",
6 she says,
7 "I feel something really weird
8 from you. Like I know you're really upset
9 about something. And you know, I'm just
10 wondering if it has anything to do with
11 witchcraft or anything like this?"
12 And I said,
13 "Wow, I can't believe you said that"
14 I'd never seen her before. She's not
15 from Bowling Green. She's from
16 Louisville. She was just visiting here
17 for the weekend. Her and her
18 boyfriend are down here.
19 And I went,
20 "I can't believe you said that,"
21 you know. And I proceeded to tell her
22 about our house and everything.

23 And she said,
24 "I knew something was troubling you,
25 you know, and I could just feel it.
26 And you sitting over there I could
27 feel something was wrong."
28 And at the time it really was
29 bothering me because we were going
30 to have to go home that night.
31 And I was scared to go home.
32 I was real scared to go home
 ((continues))

The revelatory material is that the girl is able to sense the speaker was involved in some form of occult activity (lines 5 to 11), and the speaker's startled reaction is reported twice (lines 13 and 20). The revelation and response sequence allows the speaker then to go on to say that she was frightened to go home because of her paranormal experiences (lines 28 to 32).

In extracts (20) to (24) the speakers use the third part of the sequence to introduce information which is particularly significant to the account. For example, in (20) the third part is used to reveal that the noise was caused by a paranormal agency; in (22) the speaker describes the way that her understanding of her experience was aided by the other voice's revelatory announcement; in (23) the speaker clarifies the telepathic mechanism whereby her mother knew about her distress, and in (24) the speaker reveals that anomalous phenomena increased her reluctance to return home.

In each of these cases the speakers are thus dealing with 'sensitive' material. In extract (20) the speaker confirms that the experience was paranormal: had she not legitimised the provision of this information through the first two parts of the sequence it may have appeared that this was a clumsy and conspicuous effort to substantiate her story. Likewise, it is to the advantage of the

speaker in extract (23) that she clarifies that her mother's knowledge of her distress was telepathically-acquired, but to do so without the warrant provided by her mother's startling knowledge of the incident would decrease the validity of her claim. Finally, in extract (24) the speaker's fear about returning home substantiates her claim that she was experiencing anomalous phenomena. Without warranting this information it could be inferred that she was merely over-reacting and unjustifiably frightened. In each case then, the speakers construct these sequences so as to allow them to deal with information which is of crucial significance to the resolution of the account, or the description of a particular episode, but which could, in different circumstances, provide the basis for unfavourable inferences about either the speaker, or the validity of the experience they claim to have had.

Finally, we can examine further examples of the way speakers exploit the three part sequence identified here. In the following extracts the speakers are reporting not one specific event, but a series of connected incidents: in the first case, recurrent poltergeist disturbances; in the second, apparitions of the speaker's recently deceased husband.

(25) DN 31:216

1 S1 when we left the house
2 we (re) talking to
3 the lad who live
4 on the ground floor
5 (.6)
6 and he also had bought
7 a house and he was gonna
8 leave wasn't he
9 (.2)
10 S2 °yeah°

11 S1 and he said
 12 (.7)
 13 "somehow the atmosphere
 14 in this house has
 15 cha:nged"
 16 "uo:h really Basil"
 17 ah said
 18 "when would you reckon
 19 th↑at happened"
 20 (.4)
 21 "oh about September"
 22 'e said
 ((continues))

(26) LE 9:75 (Shortly after the death of her husband, the speaker and a friend attended her children's school Christmas play .)

1 S when I came out
 2 and I was driving
 3 my neighbour home
 4 she said to me
 5 "I hope you won't
 6 be upset
 7 (.5)
 8 but I think David
 9 was there"
 10 and I said
 11 "what made you (.3)
 12 think that he was there"
 13 (.7)
 14 and she said
 15 "because I felt him
 16 on my shou↑lder"
 ((continues))

In both cases the first utterance is produced by someone who had no knowledge of the speaker's experiences, but is designed to be heard as a hesitant reference to the phenomena. In (25) 'somehow the atmosphere in this house has cha:nged' (lines 13 to 15) reveals that someone other than speakers could sense the presence of the poltergeist, even if they did not have actual experience of the accompanying disturbances. In (26) 'I think David was there' (lines 8 and 9) points to someone other than the speaker having direct contact with the spirit of her husband.

These utterances do not refer explicitly to the phenomena. The other voice is not used to provide immediate confirmation of the experience, for example, by displaying a detailed knowledge of the circumstances of the experiences. Instead, these utterances hint at the underlying phenomenon. Even veiled reference such as these could stand as evidence of the objectivity of the experience. In both cases, however, these remarks are not employed for this task; instead, speakers respond by asking a question which seeks confirmation that the other voice's remarks do indeed concern their own experiences: in (25) 'uo:h really Basil....when would you reckon th at happened' (lines 16 to 19); in (26) 'what made you think that he was there' (lines 11 and 12). In both these cases the speakers had, prior to the report of this exchange, previously described their experience of the relevant phenomena. Thus, the recipient has been informed that, at the time of the exchange being reported, the speakers themselves knew what the other voice is referring to. Despite this knowledge, however, their responses to the revelatory material are distinctly cautious, if not guarded. This has two interactional consequences. First, reporting this type of response permits the speakers to display themselves as actively withholding confirmation of the phenomenon to which the other voice's innocent remarks refer.⁵ That is, they reveal their decision not to exploit a legitimate opportunity to proclaim their own experience of the same phenomenon, and thereby confirming its strangeness. They display 'caution' about claiming explicitly that they have encountered

⁵ In the case of the speaker in extract (26) this seems particularly apparent. It later transpires that she had had the same experience as her friend at exactly the same time. Intuitively, then, a more likely reaction would have been something like 'Really? So did I!'.

something anomalous. Such a cautious approach would, routinely, be taken as indicating a hesitance to accept or endorse a paranormal interpretation of the events raised by the other voice. By drawing the recipient's attention to this reluctance they exhibit that they acted as any 'normal' person might, and withheld making a commitment to a supernatural explanation, or, in the case of extract (26) a denouement, of the mystery referred to by the other voice. Second, they can supply the warrant to reproduce the other voice's further utterances, which in both cases deliver stronger evidence of the objectively-available character of the phenomenon.

In the next extract this organisation is employed in an account of someone else's experience of a paranormal event.

(25) ME B 2 16/17 (The speaker has written to a friend congratulating her on the engagement of her eldest daughter.)

1 S an and she wrote back
2 to me 'hh (.) in in
3 total chaos saying (.)
4 "how the Hell did you know"
5 she started the letter
6 huhh hah[^] 'hh she said
7 "I received your letter
8 at nine o'clock in the
9 morning (.) and you
10 were congratulating me
11 on (.) Miriam's getting
12 engage:d:
13 and I said
14 'what the Hell is she
15 talking about' 'hhh
16 at twelve o'clock that
17 morning (.) she walked in and
18 announced her engagement"
((continues))

The three part sequence begins with the report of the friend's utterance 'I received your letter...' to '...Miriam's getting engage:d:' (lines 7 to 12). The friend's next utterance treats this

information as revelatory, and is designed as a response to this: 'and I said what the Hell is she talking about' (lines 14 and 15). The subsequent stretch of reported talk reveals that the engagement eventually did occur, thus indicating that the speaker's knowledge of the engagement was paranormally acquired. This structure is used to organise the denouement of a mysterious event which was originally experienced by someone else, and subsequently related to the speaker. This implies one of two things: either the other person used it in her original report of the experience, in which case the present speaker has merely preserved it as a feature of this account; or, that the present speaker designed her report of the friend's experience in this way. Either interpretation indicates that this structure may be a pervasive device by which to organise the denouement of accounts of anomalous experiences.

By way of a conclusion to this section I want to discuss some issues concerning the range of resources identified in this section: specifically, the ways that speakers uses stretches of dialogue between themselves and other people. This resource is interesting on two counts: conversation analytic research has focused precisely on materials generated through interaction between two or more parties, and thus should be able to help illuminate some of the events occurring in these data. Moreover, such considerations touch upon an issue which is of primary importance in in sociology - the notion of intersubjectivity.

Alfred Schutz's writings on this subject are particularly illuminating. Schutz (1967) begins his analyses by raising a dilemma: how can intersubjective understanding occur? For example,

with regard to common knowledge of a physical object in the world, one person's perception of the object will be different to any other's simply because each act of perceiving will necessarily happen in different physical locations, thereby assuring varying perspectives on the object. Furthermore, the personal inclinations and motivations for looking at the object will vary between the two percipients. Thus, in what sense can we talk of 'common knowledge' of the 'same' states of affairs? However, Schutz argues that this dilemma always remains abstract or theoretical because of the operation of two 'idealizations', or sets of commonly-available assumptions and procedures, by which these problems are practically negotiated.

'First, the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints. If I were there, where he is now, then I would experience things in the same perspective, distance, and reach as he does. And, if he were here where I am now, he would experience things from the same perspective as I.

Second, the idealization of the congruence of relevance systems. He and I learn to accept as given that the variances in apprehension and explication which result from differences between my and his autobiographical situations are irrelevant for my and his, our, present practical goals. Thus, I and he, we, can act and understand each other as if we had experienced in an identical way, and explicated the Objects and their properties lying actually or potentially in our reach.' (Schutz and Luckmann 1974 [1967]: 60) [original emphasis]

Together, these two idealizations combine to form the general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives.

In Schutz's terms these presuppositions are implicit - incarnate - in actual occasions of actors' dealings with each other, and, thereby, are not available for inspection or scrutiny by participants

themselves. That is, in Pollner's (1974) terms, these are incorrigible propositions. This insight has hitherto been used as an analytic tool to demarcate and investigate analytic issues; for example, Pollner's (1979) study of resources available to repair problems arising from 'reality disjunctions' which occur in traffic violation court cases. (See also Pollner's more extended [1987] discussion of mundane reasoning.)

In some of the data cited previously, however, we can see a different use for the thesis of reciprocity: as a resource for the participants to concretise the objective status of a phenomenon. Take, for example, extract (7).

(7) VA II 10:85

34 S my husband said
35 "my God what is it"
36 (.)
37 an I just said
38 "now keep quiet and
39 say the Lord's prayer"
((continues))

We have already noted that this reported exchange reveals that someone other than the speaker saw the phenomenon. What gives these utterances their power as an inference-building sequence is the manner in which the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints is affirmed, while the idealization of the congruence of relevance systems is disconfirmed.

The voices are designed to reveal that, despite differing spatial locations, both parties saw the same thing. That is, the husband's comment makes a direct and alarmed reference to the phenomenon. The speaker's reported utterance obliquely confirms her husband's

perception by orienting, not to his question, but to the consequences of the apparition's presence for what they, as experiencers, should do. That is, although she does not refer explicitly to the phenomenon, her utterance becomes meaningful by virtue of its appeal to the assumption that both parties are witnessing the same phenomenon.

In Chapter Three we observed that a fundamental resource for the social scientist in the study of naturally-occurring talk is the way that participants construct utterances in the light of their analyses of prior turns. That is, next turns display the result of this analysis, and thereby the producer of an utterance can make an assessment of the way that it was interpreted. As a consequence of the public exhibition of the interpretative practices on which participants rely in their talk, intersubjective understanding - that is, a combined orientation to 'what's being done here and now' - is procedurally accomplished in the course of the conversation. For example, in the following extract M asks a question which legitimately supports two immediate interpretations.

(28) (Family Dinner)

- 1 M Do you know who's going to that meeting?
- 2 R Who.
- 3 M I don't know.
- 4 R Oh::. Prob'ly Missiz McOwen ('n detsa) en
prob'ly Missiz Cadry and some of the teachers.

R's response reveals which of these interpretations he has made. M's second turn displays that R had made an assessment which was, for practical purposes, incorrect. R's subsequent turn resolves the dilemma by adopting the second possible interpretation, and in doing so he displays his orientation to the pragmatic concerns which he now

realised informed M's original question.

The point is this: in talk, people display their analyses of other people's talk; there is a 'public display' of interpretative practices. When reporting stretches of dialogue, speakers allow the recipient to see the 'publically displayed' reasoning practices which informed that dialogue at the time it was said. So, in extract (7), the speaker reports two very different reactions to the apparition: her husband's startled exclamation, and her measured and cautious response. That is, she relies on two distinct 'relevance systems': for her husband, the apparition provokes fear; she, however, displays her knowledge of and competence to deal with phenomena of this kind by reporting her essentially practical response. The upshot of displaying these diverse relevancies is that the speaker provides a contrast for the recipient - her measured reaction against her husband's more vehement outburst - from which a recipient can deduce at least, the calm and authoritative manner in which the speaker dealt with the apparition.

A combination of a Schutzian and conversation analytic approaches to the issue of intersubjectivity can therefore illuminate the processes by which sequences of reported exchanges are constructed. Schutz's idealizations may be exploited as resources in the design of talk which occurred at the time, and not merely a series of incorrigible propositions upon which participants rely to sustain intersubjective understanding. Moreover, the way that a sequence of exchanges will reveal the practical analytic tasks performed *in situ* by participants at the time may be further exploited in the pursuit of fine-grained inferential business.

6 Conclusions

In these data we have explicated some of the organised procedures by which utterances containing active voices, both the speakers' and those of other people, have been designed to display the objective and paranormal character of the experiences being reported. This has been accomplished in various ways:

[a] by revealing that other people were able to observe the phenomenon;

[b] by displaying that the effects of the experience were sufficiently enduring to be observed and commented upon by others;

[c] by providing information which hints at, and thereby allows the recipient to infer, some underlying mystery surrounding the events reported,

[d] by presenting other voices as confirming the paranormality of the phenomenon.

In this then, we are contributing to the broader study of the way that the 'facticity' and 'objectively-available' features of members' worlds are constituted through and sedimented in their linguistic practices. It connects with with Garfinkel, Lynch and Livingston's (1981) study of scientists' 'discovery' of a pulsar; Pollner's (1987) research on the incorrigibility of mundane reasoning about a world 'out there'; Pollner and McDonald-Wikler's (1985) study of the practices whereby a family constituted the 'normality' of a severely retarded child; Pomerantz's (1986) analysis of some devices to reveal the basis for complaints as being independent of the speaker; Potter and Wetherell's (1988) remarks on

the construction of the 'external' warrant for racist comments, and Smith's (1978) explication of the procedures used to construct a factual account of mental illness. I want to make two brief concluding remarks: the implications of these types of research findings for traditional parapsychological research, and the relationship of this methodological approach to other fields of sociological research which display a commitment to investigating the socially-constructed character of scientific knowledge.

We noted in Chapter One that, within certain areas of parapsychology, there is a growing feeling that more attention should be given to people's actual experiences, and that this necessarily implies a greater dependence upon their accounts. The analyses presented in this chapter indicate at least one set of related issues which could be pursued through the detailed analysis of such materials: that is, the explication of how experiencers themselves describe their encounters so as to provide for the 'objectivity', 'paranormality', and so on, of the phenomena they experienced. Whereas the preceding chapters have demonstrated that a project of this kind is a legitimate sociological enterprise, it would represent a major break from traditional parapsychological methods and research questions. Therefore, in the final chapter we will discuss the extent to which these research recommendations are compatible with parapsychological objectives.

Hitherto in sociology, the term 'socially-constructed' has been associated with studies of scientific knowledge undertaken from a 'relativist' perspective. For example, studies of the social construction of parapsychology as a scientific discipline (Collins 1976; Collins and Pinch 1979; 1982). The goal of researches such as

these has been to reveal the social basis of the factual status of knowledge claims at an institutional level: as the consequence of the concerted-yet-tacit activities of groups of scientists as a community. The analytic points raised in this and earlier chapters, however, indicate that the linguistic resources available to speakers are essentially social - that is, cultural - sets of procedures for 'doing' reporting. Therefore, the 'social' construction of phenomena as objective features of an external world may be explored also through the detailed micro-analysis of speakers' linguistic practices.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

1 Introduction

It is important to set out the primary issues addressed in this thesis. In Chapter One we established the basis of an interest in people's accounts of their personal experiences of paranormal phenomena. First, by showing that in parapsychological quarters there is a small but vocal contingent arguing for new forms of analyses which take as their point of departure the experiences which people claim to have in the course of their everyday lives. Insofar as these experiences do not happen conveniently in the presence of parapsychologists, there is a growing realisation that accounts are of central methodological importance to parapsychology. Second, we looked at previous sociological studies on aspects of the paranormal and its relationship to society. The vast majority of these studies not only overlooked accounts as a topic for research, but were informed by assumptions that such accounts would be analytically useful only insofar as they could be used in the sociological study of the architecture of people's false beliefs. The limiting character of these assumptions were delineated by comparing them to those which inform ethnomethodological analyses.

The goals of Chapter Two were two-fold: first, to illustrate the nature of an ethnomethodological interest in accounts through the

examination of some empirical materials. Second, to look in more detail at four areas of parapsychological research which have used accounts as investigative resources. This exercise allowed us to point out some methodological difficulties in these studies, and thereby clarify the advantages gained by adopting an ethnomethodological perspective.

There are two contemporary empirical approaches which display a commitment to Garfinkel's (1967) remarks on the nature of language and its significance in social life, and these were discussed in Chapter Three. This discussion was informed by an appreciation of the underlying common goals of conversation analysis and discourse analysis. It was decided, however, that the empirical analyses of the present research would investigate features of people's accounts more conventionally explored in the analysis of naturally-occurring conversational materials. Also, we discussed some potential difficulties in the application of a broadly conversation analytic interest this kind of data. Some comments were made about the significance of these problems and how they could be overcome.

Chapter Four was the first of the analytic chapters. In this a single data extract was subjected to a detailed analysis, the object of which was to illustrate the range of analytic considerations which might be brought to bear on materials of these kind, and to explicate some of the resources by which the speaker methodically assembled her utterances. This in turn provided a 'test case' for the application of a distinctly conversation analytic approach, and further generated an array of issues for subsequent investigation.

One such theme was explored in Chapter Five. Stimulated by the observation that all accounts are necessarily versions of people's

memories of those events, we started by looking at cognitive psychological work on one class of memory formulations, forms of which appeared to be recurrent not only in reports of paranormal experiences, but also in accounts of other types of dramatic incidents. The analysis explicated some of the procedures by which these memories were assembled by speakers in the talk about their experiences, and examined some of the interactional tasks negotiated through the use of this class of memory formulation.

Finally, in Chapter Six we looked at the use of active voices, or reported talk, as resources to enable speakers to achieve certain ends; for example, to point to the 'objectivity' of the phenomenon. Some of the organisational features of these resources were examined.

In the rest of this chapter we will discuss four issues which have either informed, or emerged from, the work presented in this thesis. In section 2 we will discuss some consequences of the methodological position developed in this thesis for the sociological study of the paranormal. Section 3 has a discussion of the results of the empirical analyses. Some broader methodological issues are raised in section 4: for example, the suitability of micro-analytic techniques, developed in the study of interactions between two or more active parties, for the analysis of materials of a substantively different kind. In addition I discuss the relationship between the two pre-eminent approaches to the study of naturally-occurring talk, and language use more generally. Finally, in section 5, I will trace some implications of a distinctly ethnomethodological interest in accounts of paranormal experiences for parapsychological research; also, I will discuss the wider issue of the relationship between parapsychology and sociology.

These themes are, inevitably, far more inter-connected than suggested by such a simple representation. In the following discussion I will outline the important points of convergence.

2 Sociology and the paranormal

Three major points became clear from the review of previous sociological work on the paranormal, or the occult. Much of this was informed by the assumption that belief in the existence of, or claimed experience of, paranormal agencies and forces are epiphenomenal manifestations of underlying and determinant social or cultural events. Therefore, it is the sociologist's task to investigate these determinant processes to provide a 'rational' account of what are considered to be essentially 'irrational' beliefs and claims. In Chapter One it was argued that such attempts are unsatisfactory. First, because there is evidence that shows paranormal phenomena are not significantly associated with those social aggregates which were collectively termed the 'socially marginal'. Second, there is a wide array of research which indicates that the occult is an integral feature of contemporary culture, and not a form of transient deviancy.

The second important point to emerge from Chapter One was that the incidence of anomalous phenomena may be very high. The surveys reviewed by Blackmore (1982a), and Haraldsson's (1985) compilation of survey results from studies of Western European countries and North America, suggest that, as a conservative estimate, one person in ten believes that they have experienced some form of anomalous

phenomena.

From these observations it follows that empirical interest in the paranormal need not be restricted by the presupposition that these beliefs and events are essentially irrational or peripheral to the cultural and societal concerns traditionally studied by sociologists. These events are recurrent and integral features of contemporary society, and, therefore, legitimate phenomena for serious sociological attention.

The third important observation was that the majority of previous sociological studies dealt with both the experience of and belief in the paranormal. There have been few studies which draw a distinction between these two aspects for research purposes. As a consequence there has been little sociological interest in the experiential character of encounters with paranormal phenomena.

The empirical research in this thesis took these observations as its point of departure. First, it dealt only with experiential issues: in this case, accounts of direct contact with paranormal phenomena. Issues concerning belief in the existence of supernatural forces, or participation in groups which adhere to occult philosophies, were ignored. Second, it developed distinctly ethnomethodological lines of inquiry in that people's own accounts of their experiences were given analytic priority. Furthermore, the analytic task was not to ironise these reports by pointing to the supposedly 'rational' causes of claimed experiences; the objective was instead to investigate the linguistic practices embedded in people's descriptions. That is, sociological research issues were pursued which are agnostic about the ultimate truth or falsity of the events being claimed, or the beliefs espoused.

These analyses deal only with accounts of personal encounters; there is a range of alternative empirical issues generated by similar considerations, however, and it is useful to sketch these here. For example, we may take issues which have been studied before, such as belief in astrology. Instead of looking to find why people believe in the efficacy of astrological charts and predictions - and in doing so incorporate the assumption that, in reality, they furnish spurious information - we may try to find out how such pronouncements come to be seen as true or false by the reader or recipient. That is, how is it that a set of (usually) vaguely-worded phrases - unavoidably constructed from indexical materials - come to be interpreted as providing correct and useful information about personal history, idiosyncratic characteristics or contemporary ambitions and goals? What order of sense-making procedures are being employed by people when they 'see' that horoscopes are 'accurate'?

One main conclusion from Chapter One was that knowledge about the paranormal is a central feature of contemporary cultural life. A further empirical project, then, would be to investigate the ways in which this knowledge permeates everyday social life: for example, a study of references to supernatural powers and forces which occur in everyday discourse. Do people invoke 'fate', 'luck', 'chance' 'providence' (in its theological sense) in systematic ways? Are they used in certain types of accounting practices, for example, to provide a sense of inexplicable accidents or unforeseen consequences? In what precise linguistic contexts do people refer to these forces? What interactional goals are pursued through the use of utterances which refer explicitly or implicitly to supernormal agencies? Such a project could develop our understanding of the cultural knowledge

about the paranormal, and at the same time reveal how aspects of this culture are actually instantiated and used in occasions of everyday life.

Insofar as the paranormal can be conceived as a normal and recurrent feature of contemporary society, studies such as these are legitimate additions to the sociological investigation of contemporary cultural life. The previous remarks have illustrated the general point that there is scope for a variety of ethnomethodologically-informed projects. The research presented in this thesis takes an initial step towards a sociological approach to the paranormal which does not seek to explain its subject matter, but merely to further our understanding of it.

3 Analytic conclusions

Jefferson's (1984a) research on a 'normalizing' device revealed two issues which informed much of the analyses presented here. First, that speakers can design utterances to attend to the possibility that their reports of extraordinary (but not paranormal) experiences may receive an unsympathetic hearing. Second, that speakers orient to this possibility even when the report is made to people who are merely interested in the story - journalists, friends and so on. Thus, speakers orient to a potential skeptical response even when there is little likelihood of an overt challenge to the accuracy or reliability of their story. Her main contribution in this paper, then, is to point to the culturally-based skepticism about claims of extraordinary events.

The primary analytic conclusion from the studies presented in this research is that, when making their accounts, speakers display their orientation to the inauspiciousness of claiming to have had paranormal experiences. In Chapter Four we observed that this was the case even when the speaker was a self-described medium who claimed that, for her, communication with the dead and other types of elemental spirits was a practical business and a routine, everyday event.

In the empirical chapters we examined some resources and procedures by which the speakers were able to attend to a range of possible skeptical responses to their stories. For example, a paranormal experience can be 'explained' by arguing that the speaker merely misperceived a perfectly normal event. Using the resources identified in these analyses the speakers have, in a variety of ways, produced descriptions which are designed to reveal, not only the 'out-there-ness' of the phenomenon, but also its 'facticity' as a recognisably non-normal occurrence. Another option open to the skeptic by which to undermine the veridicality and reliability of the speaker's claims is to imply, or make an outright claim, that the speaker is not 'normal': that is, they are suffering from hallucinations, experiencing forms of 'wish fulfilment', show inclinations to regard every strange event in their environment as a sign of paranormal phenomena, and so on. In the data we have explicated a number of methods through which speakers display their own 'normality' in the way that they reason about and behave in the world.

In the extracts we have examined the speakers display their (tacit) awareness of the possibility that these arguments, and other related

explanations, can be invoked to account for the experiences they claim to have had. In the analysis of the fine-grained and orderly details of their talk we have explicated some aspects of speakers' specifically interactional activities, through which they produce their accounts to be recognisably reliable, and, moreover, recognisable as accounts of real - that is paranormal - experiences.

In Chapter Four we observed that the speaker's utterances were designed to address local, interactional tasks. By designing her utterances to attend to these, however, she also was engaged in the business of building the phenomenon which she was reporting; for example, invoking certain features to accomplish tasks, fashioning her descriptive remarks to bring certain characteristics to the recipient's attention, while actively disattending to others, and so on. That is, the speaker was engaged in the moment-by-moment interactional construction of the phenomenon itself. This observation has some relevance for parapsychology, and these points are discussed in section 5. For present purposes, however we, can note that such an analytic interest is parallel to that of the 'social constructivists'' approach in the sociology of scientific knowledge. For example, Collins and Pinch's (1979) research on the social construction of the scientific status of parapsychology; also, their (1982) comments on the way that the experimenters in a series of laboratory-based observational studies negotiated whether or not video-recordings revealed 'paranormal' or 'normal' events.

The 'negotiation' of the character of paranormal phenomena has hitherto been studied at a broader institutional level, and has focused on the activities of groups of scientists. However, the single case analysis in Chapter Four suggests that the micro-

analytic, language-oriented investigation of the interactional construction of paranormal phenomena is a feasible and potentially useful project.

I think that an important empirical contribution of this thesis is the analysis of the 'I was just doing X....when Y' format. First, it tackles a class of memory formulations which are conversational instances of what are known as 'flashbulb memories'. Within cognitive psychology these are considered to be largely exempt from the distorting processes which are a normal feature of memory storage, retention and retrieval. However, the analysis revealed these formulations to be socially-organised devices through which speakers attend to local, interactional tasks. That is, features of these memories, which have hitherto been seen as evidence of the operation of determinant cognitive processes, were shown to be constructed and constructive. This analysis, then, calls into question the assumption that discourse is a neutral medium through which inner cognitive states can, on occasion, become 'visible'. By focusing on the organised and interactional character of naturally-occurring discourse we were able to delineate some of the inherently social and cultural practices by which flashbulb memories were accomplished. This approach makes connections with previous Wittgensteinian and ethnomethodologically-informed considerations of the relationship between inner cognitive states and a world of socially-organised practices (Coulter 1982; Ryle 1949); furthermore, it adds to the growing empirical investigation of this and related areas (Drew 1989; Edwards and Potter 1989).

4 Methodological considerations

Perhaps the first issue to discuss is the effectiveness of the mode of analysis adopted in this research. In Chapter Three we noted that conversation analytic studies have hitherto been conducted almost entirely on materials drawn from face-to-face or telephone interaction. Therefore, we considered the possibility that the analysis of multi-unit single speaker turns may present difficulties, the foremost of which being the absence of a 'proof procedure' by which analysts can 'measure' their analytic interpretations by reference to those displayed by the participants themselves. After three analytic chapters we may re-assess these difficulties.

I think it is useful to consider conversation analytic research in terms of two analytic 'emphases'. This is not to claim that there are discrete research objectives, or alternative ways of 'doing' CA, but merely to draw attention to different dimensions of the same analytic enterprise: explicating the structures of everyday verbal interaction. In the pursuit of this goal some analyses have become increasingly 'technical', focusing on the apparent mechanics of talk; an illustration of this is Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1978 [1974]) study of the organisation of turn-taking procedures. The materials analysed in the present research, however, are not 'interactional' in the sense that they are the results of participants' co-ordinated activities; therefore, they simply do not offer the option of such technical analyses. In this respect, then, one important objective of conversation analytic research has not been explored in this thesis.

The other feature of conversation analytic work, often obscured in

the pursuit of detailed technical features,¹ is the analysis of social action. As Schegloff puts it:

'In spite of its name [conversation analysis] is concerned with the understanding of talk-in-interaction more generally, and with interaction per se more generally still. However, it takes ordinary conversation to be the fundamental form of talk-in-interaction....and the primordial site of human sociality and social life.' (Schegloff 1987b: 101) [original emphasis]

Conversation analysis examines the character of the social activities negotiated in, and mediated through, language use. That is, it attends specifically to moral and inferential business. It is an interest in the examination of these issues which has informed the analyses of the present research: the methodic procedures by which words are selected, and utterances composed, in order to achieve certain ends. In the pursuit of these goals a conversation analytic approach has been entirely applicable to lengthy stretches of one-speaker talk. For example, we have been able to look at some of the ways that the 'facticity' of phenomena have been created and sustained through descriptive practices; the methods used by speakers to display their orientation-at-the-time to normal assumptions and reasoning about their experiences, and the interactional concerns pursued through the way that descriptions of memories are designed in discursive recollections.

In Chapter Three I compared conversation analysis with discourse analysis, and from this I concluded that, in terms of immediate

¹ I do not mean that these broader goals are in any way overlooked: I realise that the 'mechanics' of talk are analysed because they are the vehicles for specifically social activities.

empirical interests, a conversation analytic approach was more appropriate.² However, as these two modes of analysis share a great deal - in terms of the common intellectual roots, and the emphasis upon the constructive and functional character of language use - I think it useful to address some remarks to the relationship between them.

Some of the primary differences were outlined in Chapter Three: whereas CA deals only with talk-in-interaction, DA attends to a wide range of materials, both verbal and written. Following this, the analytic focus for CA is the detailed explication of occasionally short-lived interactional events; in DA larger segments of talk or texts are suitable environments in which to specify the functions for which language is being used. Finally, the terminological vocabulary is different: we have already noted that CA attends to the structural or 'technical' aspects of talk, and has developed a suitable terminology to match this analytic enterprise; the language of DA is sensitive to the broader analytic goals it pursues, however, and is couched in terms of interpretative repertoires and linguistic registers.

Within discourse analysis there have been attempts to use results from conversation analytic studies as research resources. For example, Mulkey's (1984) analysis of ceremonial discourse draws on

² I talk in terms of 'CA and DA' only to allow me to draw out some concluding methodological observations. I am reluctant to refer to CA and DA approaches as if these are rather mechanical empirical techniques or tools which are merely waiting to be applied to data. I don't want to reify what are, essentially, practical analytic mentalities employed in the investigation of, and always answerable to, the particulars of natural actions and events. (An example of describing CA as if it is an operationalised technique, see Lee's [1987] introduction.)

Pomerantz's (1978) paper on responses to compliments; also, his (1985: 79ff.) analysis of scientists' letters takes as its point of departure findings from the study of turn-taking and conversational closings. So far, however, conversation analysts have not looked to the fruits of discourse analytic endeavours to assist their researches.

I mentioned earlier the benefits which accrue to analysts who work on conversational materials in which the participants themselves provide analyses of prior turns in their subsequent talk. The analyses presented here indicate that the lack of such a resource is not an intractable problem. It is a weakness of this research, however, that the development of analytic themes was not assisted by the kind of insights afforded by the public display of participants' own interpretations which are generated in turn-taking procedures. This weakness is most notable in the business of actually doing analytic work: the practical activity of working through long stretches of transcribed talk. It is here that the absence of co-participants' active contributions are most keenly felt, simply because there is, initially at least, little by way of an analytic 'foothold' into the explication of specific themes. In dealing with this practical problem, however, the concept of the linguistic repertoire can be an aid.

As we have seen, in discourse analysis linguistic repertoires are treated as a set of resources through which members fashion the character of their discourse. Empirically, the features and functions of repertoires are usually examined over lengthy stretches of talk. While I have argued that such an approach provides little access to the methodic construction of the particulars of such

stretches of talk - for example, specific word selection - it does provide an initial analytic point of entry to the details of the talk. In this it provides a resource in the pursuit of distinctly conversation analytic goals. For example, and in retrospect, I think this was a (tacit) methodological procedure employed in data analysis in Chapter Four. Here a single extract was taken apart to reveal the organised procedures by which it had been initially assembled. A theme throughout this analysis was that the speaker was constructing events so as to provide the inference that she acted like any normal person would have done in those circumstances. That is, in discourse analytic terms, we investigated the linguistic repertoire through which this 'function' was achieved: the repertoire of 'normal behaviour in the face of abnormal events'.

Had this repertoire been ascribed to this data in place of detailed examination of the particular interactional concerns mediated through these utterances, it would not have been possible to delineate the precise resources employed by the speaker: listing, extreme case formulations and the provision of inferable materials achieved through the speaker's (implicit) self-ascription as a member of a specific category. Thus, the analytic gains would have been delimited. A preliminary investigation of these utterances, however, indicated that the speaker was, in broad terms, engaged in normalizing work, and from this basis a more comprehensive analysis was conducted. An initial assessment that this was the function of the speaker's utterances, therefore, furnished the analytic resource by which the more specific features of this accomplishment could be explicated. That is, in the absence of the kind usually furnished by the activities of co-participants, the linguistic repertoire provided

an analytic foothold: it established an interpretative base from which more detailed analysis could begin.

It may be objected that such a procedure abnegates the central methodological recommendation in conversation analysis and ethnomethodology: to approach data analysis with no a priori theories, assumptions and presuppositions about the character of the materials in the data. That is, to be 'unmotivated' about the data with respect to the analytic conclusions that are to be drawn from them. To follow such a recommendation, however, forces us into a paradox: if we accept the central ethnomethodological point that language is a reflexive medium, including the language used by the analyst, then the vocabulary, objectives and methods of conversation analysis are also constructive and reflexive. That is, this analytic method can not, in principle, provide a privileged point of access to events 'in the world' (however they may be made available for analytic inspection) which are independent of the language employed in their discovery. It is not possible for sociology to be the 'observational science' Sacks envisaged in his early lectures (Sacks Lectures 1 - 8, Fall 1964; see also Schegloff's [1988] illuminating 'memoir' on the early development of Sacks' thinking).

While this may be a powerful argument in principle, it need not intrude in the actual business of analysis: with reference to discourse analysis we argued in Chapter Three that such work is a practical activity in the course of which the more 'paralysing' reflexive arguments simply may be abandoned. It does force us to question the idea of 'unmotivated' enquiry, however, and this in turn allows a degree of leverage in the use and character of the resources which may be brought to bear in data analysis.

There are two final points in connection with this. First, within conversation analysis there is a firm commitment to the principle of unmotivated inquiry; to question it, then, may be to invite analytic bedlam. A 'worst case scenario' would be the use of data extracts to support or justify 'pet' theories, thereby obscuring the fine-grained and orderly interactional details of those materials. However, this is an unwarranted anxiety: analysis is a craft skill, an important part of which is the development of the appropriate 'analytic mentality' to the treatment of data. Learning the skills of analysis ensures that data are not used as a 'tabula rasa' for the ascription of personal intellectual interests. Furthermore, the policy of reproducing the data from which analytic observations are drawn acts as a powerful public constraint on the analyst's claims.

Second, and on a more positive note, a practical consequence of these arguments is that there is the possibility of producing micro-analytic studies which combine the attention to detail and rigour of conversation analytic study, but which at the same time tackle some of the broader sociological or social-psychological issues hitherto addressed through the investigation of linguistic repertoires. For example, Widdicombe and Wooffitt's (forthcoming) analysis of the conversational devices used by members of youth subcultures to construct their 'social identities' as punks, gothics, rockers, and so on. Also, Wooffitt and Widdicombe's (MS) study of specific linguistic resources used in a description of a violent incident to occasion asymmetrical interpretative accounts by which blame allocation and responsibility is negotiated.

5 Parapsychology and sociology

After over one hundred years of thorough and sometimes painstaking experimental research, parapsychology cannot be considered to be a 'proper' - that is, accepted - member of the community of academic subjects. Furthermore, it enjoys a limited representation in university psychology departments: the Chair in Parapsychology at Edinburgh University is the sole academic appointment in the United Kingdom. Moreover, there is only one research award available to fund post-graduate studies,³ and there are no sources of official or governmental support for parapsychological research. In a very real sense, then, parapsychology is a 'rejected' science (Allison 1979).

This may be regarded as a somewhat paradoxical state of affairs. The events parapsychologists claim to study are, potentially, of fundamental significance, with important implications for a wide variety of other disciplines. This point is accepted even by its critics (Alcock 1987). Furthermore, the range of experiences and phenomena it takes as its subject matter are, firstly, of intrinsic interest, and, secondly, according to the available evidence, not uncommon events. That is, it deals with recurrent and fascinating human experiences. Yet despite all this, parapsychologists are still having to argue for the legitimacy of their researches, and seek recognition from their peers for the validity of their subject.

A recent exchange of opinions (Alcock 1987; Rao and Palmer 1987) carries with it a series of commentaries from a variety of parapsychologists, and both skeptical and sympathetic philosophers, social scientists and orthodox scientists. In one of these Pinch

³ The Perrot-Warrwick Studentship, which is awarded approximately once every two years.

(1987) develops ideas derived from the sociological research into the relationship between parapsychology and the established sciences. In his commentary he suggests how parapsychology might substantiate its position in the wider academic community.

Pinch does not argue that parapsychologists should increase their efforts to 'become' scientific by adopting the practices, methodology and terminology of science. Sociological studies have shown that these avenues have been explored already (Collins and Pinch 1979), but to no significant long-standing effect (Alcock 1987; Blackmore 1985a, 1988a, 1988b; Kurtz 1985; Mauskopf and McVaugh; McVaugh and Mauskopf 1976). The way forward for parapsychology, then, is not, for example, through an increased attention to experimental rigour, or replications of significant studies, but through the establishment of research networks and contacts with members of the orthodox scientific community. To illustrate: by trying to persuade psychologists to control for the effects of psi in their laboratory research, as they might control for the effects of, for example, the presence of the experimenter, parapsychologists can engage in a discourse with their colleagues which is oriented to practical applications. Another option is to gain the attention and interest of scientists by pointing to the experimental evidence on the relationship between psi and mechanical objects, and thereby indicating a range of implications for the technology of experimental equipment; issues which require parapsychological knowledge and expertise.

Thus, Pinch argues for a pragmatic approach rather than one that rests on the strengths of theoretical explanations, experimental results and the stringency of laboratory protocol. It is through the

establishment of research links like these that parapsychology may secure its place in the wider scientific community.

There are two points relevant to Pinch's recommendations. First, his arguments are informed by an implicit acceptance of psi - not necessarily as a phenomenon which has been 'scientifically' proven - but as a primary characteristic of parapsychology. As we noted briefly in Chapters One and Two, the search for the elusive psi may have been one of the primary stumbling blocks in parapsychology's empirical and theoretical development, and we will explore this point in more detail later. Secondly, these suggestions focus only upon parapsychology's relationship with other 'hard' scientific disciplines in which knowledge is pursued primarily through experimental procedures. That is, his recommendations are directed toward furnishing parapsychology with an acceptable niche as another orthodox science. As such, there is no consideration given to the relationship between parapsychology and the social sciences. By way of a conclusion to this chapter, and to this thesis, I want to address some remarks to this issue.

In this research I have pursued broadly ethnomethodological lines of inquiry, both in terms of the review of previous work in sociology and parapsychology, and in the empirical analyses of actual accounts. The core assumption of this approach is that:

'members' accounts, of every sort, in all logical modes, with all their uses, and for every method for their assembly are constituent features of the settings they make observable. Members know, require, count on, and make use of this relexivity to produce, accomplish, recognise, or demonstrate rational-adequacy-for-all-practical-purposes of their procedures....' (Garfinkel 1967: 8) [emphasis added]

In section 2 we saw that this position suggests a range of questions suitable for specifically sociological attention. However, throughout the present research this position has been explored primarily through the study of linguistic practices, and the issues generated as a consequence of this exploration have most immediate relevance to parapsychology.

In their broadest sense, Garfinkel's insights attend to the relationship between language and the world, whether the world in question is one of social relationships, beliefs, patterns of normatively appropriate behaviour, attitudes, social institutions, social structures, and so on. What the world is - how it is conceived and the phenomena that populate it - are the organised products of members' concerted practical activities to realise that world and those features. This realisation occurs in and through discourse. What have hitherto been taken to be the proper phenomena for the social sciences, then, are inextricably tied to the reflexive and constitutive processes of language use, and the 'lay' procedures of practical reasoning, which, in every circumstance, inform that use, and are embedded in its products: 'descriptions', 'references', 'accounts', 'judgements', 'declarations', 'claims', 'explanations', and so forth. Any phenomenon can be investigated as a realised product of locally-occasioned practical activities, and the analyst may therefore attend to the orderly practices whereby that realisation is accomplished. Thus, the social scientist is permitted to analyse the 'molecular and sub-molecular levels of social structure' (Heritage 1984: 311) to explicate how the world-as-it-is-known comes to be known and recognised as the world.

The reflexive features of language use, however, are not

'sociological issues' - that is, products of the academic discipline of sociology, and, thereby, limited to the researches conducted within this domain. While their investigation may be unique to areas of sociological discourse,⁴ they are constituent aspects of all social activities: quite simply, occasions in which people employ natural language resources to produce descriptions.

This has profound implications for parapsychological interest in people's accounts of their paranormal experiences. For example, in the investigation of spontaneous cases, what the parapsychologist knows about the experience - what the actual phenomenon was, what the experience consisted of, and so on - can be investigated only as a consequence of the use of the natural language abilities available to the speaker. In each and every case, then, the phenomenon - a ghost, an apparition, a mystical encounter, a precognition, a UFO sighting, an out-of-body experience, a near-death experience - is unavoidably the product of the organised linguistic practices which are sedimented in its description. That is, the accounts themselves are constitutive of the phenomena to which they refer.

In the empirical chapters of this thesis I have begun to explicate some of the procedures of practical reasoning which are embedded in specific features of speakers' accounts of their experiences. In particular, I focused on the interactional tasks mediated through the construction of specific referential utterances. These analyses were in part directed to sociological issues: the ways that speakers organised their accounts to provide certain sets of inferable

⁴ Although this may be changing. See, for example, Suchman's (1987) discussion of the importance of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in the field of human-computer interaction.

materials. However, they point to ways in which accounts of paranormal events may be investigated to address distinctly parapsychological issues. For example, in the analysis of the use of reported talk we identified procedures by which the 'objectivity' and 'facticity' of phenomena were being constructed in the course of the accounts. Similarly, in the single case analysis of one short data extract we explicated how the trajectory of the speaker's description, and, therefore, the composition of the character of the phenomenon she was reporting, were methodically produced to attend to interpersonal issues, and were also constrained by normative prescriptions regarding descriptive practices. The ontological status of paranormal phenomena and the characteristics of these experiences are issues of central importance in parapsychology. The perspective on language use which informs these considerations, however, casts these issues in a new light, and, furthermore, renders them available for, and amenable to, empirical investigation. That is: how are the phenomena described so as to be recognisably 'objective' ? By what methods is the 'out-there-ness' of an experience accomplished ? How are the dimensions of a phenomenon, and the speaker's experience of it, negotiated in the fine-grained interactional business through which the descriptions of the experience are mediated ?⁵

It may be objected that, whereas such issues may be legitimately pursued as sociological projects, such an approach in parapsychology would amount to 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'. That is,

⁵ Although these projects are discussed here in relation to verbal accounts, I can see no reason in principle why similar concerns could not inform the investigation of written reports, historical documents - in short, a variety of textual materials.

such projects would have no application to parapsychology's fundamental quest - the search for psi. There are two immediate points in response to this. First, since Rhine's initial endeavours the pursuit of psi has been the primary goal of parapsychology. Yet, despite numerous significant experimental results, the majority of orthodox scientists are not convinced that psi exists, and parapsychology is largely ostracised from the scientific community. That is, the search for psi has hardly precipitated the revolution in our understanding of human nature envisaged by the founding fathers of the discipline. Indeed, in the light of the lack of empirical and theoretical development, one can sympathise with those parapsychologists who call for new ideas to develop alternative empirical questions. Furthermore, regardless of whether psi 'exists' or not, one cannot help but be pessimistic about the potential of a discipline which, after one hundred years of research, is hidebound to one concept - the domain of which reduces in proportion to success of the orthodox sciences to provide acceptable explanations for events hitherto considered to be paranormal.⁶

The analysis of the constructive and functional aspects of the language used by people to describe their personal experiences provides one line of empirical research issues which could be legitimately assimilated to traditional parapsychological concerns. We have already argued that, given the contemporary understanding of the nature of natural language competences, the study of the patterns and properties of descriptive practices is a methodological imperative if parapsychologists are to use accounts and reports as

⁶ For example, hypnotism. See also Blackmore's work on the OBE (1984b; 1985b), and Near-Death Experiences (1988c)

investigative resources. More important, however, are the positive benefits to be derived from the kind of research projects I envisage.

First, there is the opportunity for a rapprochement between two hitherto unconnected studies: parapsychology and sociology. That is, the ethnomethodological analyses of language have equivalent implications for traditional methodologies and empirical procedures in each discipline. In this sense, the 'subject matter' for parapsychological studies of these accounts are the same reflexive and constitutive materials as are the subject matter for similar sociological projects.⁷ Blurring the boundaries of academic subjects can only facilitate useful interchanges, and, taking a lead from Pinch's (1987) recommendations, provides the opportunity for parapsychologists to develop practical research links with researchers from established disciplines.

In Chapter One I discussed Blackmore's appeals for a 'new' parapsychology based on the study of experiences which occur spontaneously in everyday life, and noted that she explicitly pointed to the importance of accounts of experiences in such a

⁷ Of course, I realise that the majority of parapsychologists would be interested primarily in what was reported, rather than how the report was constructed. However, it has not been my intention to provide a detailed critique of such an approach as these points have been made comprehensively elsewhere (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Gilbert and Mulkey 1984; Potter and Wetherell 1987). The range of criticisms cited in these studies, however, were referred to in the review of parapsychology's use of accounts of personal experiences in Chapter Two.

project.⁸ While the sociological study of accounts exemplified in this thesis has obvious connections to the type of projects she envisaged, there are some important differences, and these need to be clarified.

Her 'new' parapsychology involves locating the recurrent features of experiences and explaining these phenomenological forms by reference to underlying and determinant cognitive processes. (I have indicated previously that there may be problems involved in the procedure whereby consistent patterns in accounts are taken to stand for, and be isomorphic with, actual characteristics of the experience, either as it is experienced, or its 'true' causes, and there is no need to rehearse them here.) Her investigations, therefore, are inevitably exercises in reductionism. The experience of (what are believed by the experiencers to be) paranormal phenomena are accounted for by the analyst in terms of rational explanatory frameworks. As such, it is difficult to see what is 'new' about her work: she is merely providing rational explanations for claimed anomalous experiences. It is curious, then, that the one parapsychologist who has so articulately championed the need for novel lines of inquiry fails to establish one. This is not to slight her work, however, but to point out that even she may be trapped by the 'scientific' ethos which has pervaded parapsychology since J. B. Rhine established it as a laboratory-based enterprise.

⁸ The project outlined here is not the only one which urges a greater emphasis upon accounts of spontaneous experiences. The study of folklore provides two notable examples: Hufford describes the method of his (1982) studies of the 'Old Hag' phenomenon as 'experience-centred'; see also Bennett's (1987) study of women's accounts of their experience of and beliefs in the supernatural. Although these are very different projects to the ethnomethodological approach adopted here, they are to be welcomed as they demonstrate a serious interest in people's actual reports.

The project and mode of analysis for which I have argued in this thesis makes no claims about the 'ultimate' ontological status of the phenomena for which people's accounts stand as reports; nor is it an objective of this project to ironicise those accounts, either implicitly or explicitly, by attempting to discover the determinant 'causes' of the experient's perceptions. Rather, it seeks to explicate the linguistic practices by which the character of those phenomena are produced in discourse - and produced to be recognisable as the phenomena they are. In this, it exposes an array of issues which warrant empirical investigation; it proposes the basis for a rapprochement between research in parapsychology and sociology, and it permits the development and use of investigative techniques which hitherto have been employed solely to pursue analytic goals traditionally associated with the social sciences. Moreover, it seeks to establish as a legitimate subject matter for research those events which motivated the founding fathers of parapsychology, and also the research presented in this thesis - people's accounts of their encounters with anomalous phenomena.

APPENDIX:

DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSCRIPTION

1 Data Sources

The data used in this thesis were collected from three sources.

[a] An advert placed on University of York college and Departmental notice boards.

The wording of the advert was as follows:

'As part of my doctoral research, I am interested in paranormal or anomalous experiences, such as telepathy, precognition, out-of-body experiences, encounters with spirits or ghosts, encounters with apparitions, UFO sightings, etc. If you feel that you have had such an experience, and you wouldn't mind talking about, it please contact Rob Wooffitt, Department of Sociology, room no W.120, internal phone no. 3062.'

This notice was circulated during June, July and August of 1986. Owing to the fact that term had ended by the time many of the adverts had been placed, there were only 3 initial responses. 2 of the people who replied were happy to be interviewed, and have the interview recorded. One person required a number of meetings with me before giving consent for a recorded interview. The interviews were conducted in the Sociology Department. Transcripts of parts of

these interviews were used to develop the 'craft skills'¹ of conversation analysis.

[b] Adverts placed in local daily evening newspapers in York and Bristol. These cities were chosen primarily because of my familiarity with their geography. They were further suited for two other reasons: they presented populations drawn from different parts of the country, and from very different cities: York is small provincial city whereas Bristol is a large and developing commercial and business centre.

The adverts that appeared had the following wording:

'I am a University researcher interested in people's experiences of paranormal or supernatural phenomena, such as: telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, spirits of the dead, out-of-body experiences, apparitions, UFO sightings, and mystical or revelatory experiences. If you feel you have had an experience of this kind, and you would not mind talking to me about it, please contact me through P.O Box no. XXXXX. All replies will be treated in strictest confidence.'

This advert ran for three days in mid-January in York, and for three days in mid-March in Bristol.

The York advert produced sixteen replies, the Bristol advert produced twenty-four. Ten of the York respondents were contacted by telephone and an interview was arranged. (During the initial telephone contact with both sets of respondents I asked permission to tape record the subsequent interview, and none refused.) One of the replies was a 'hate-mail' letter from, presumably, a staunch

¹ Wetherell and Potter (1989: 182) use this phrase to refer to discourse analysis, but I think it is equally applicable to conversation analytic qualitative research.

rationalist, who berated me for being interested in such 'spurious' experiences.

Of the Bristol respondents, eleven were contacted by telephone, of which ten were happy to be interviewed.² One person refused to allow me to record the interview when I arrived at her home, and thus a total of nine interviews was collected.

Owing to teaching commitments it was not possible to try to collect interviews from all the respondents. There were two primary criteria by which I selected which of the replies were to be 'targeted'.

First, the availability of telephone contact was essential. I did not have sufficient time to write back to those people who had only forwarded their address, or who had no telephone. (The opportunity for preliminary telephone contact was especially important in Bristol: organising interviews by mail with people who were scattered over such a large area would have been far too time-consuming.)

Interest and involvement in the paranormal attracts some strange people. I was interested in meeting ordinary people who felt that they had experienced something extraordinary. The second criterion, then, was the character of the letter I received. On the basis of my assessment of this I decided whether an interview would be worth pursuing. For example, the author of the following letter was not contacted for an interview.

² The 12th transpired to be Christian fundamentalist who mistook my advert for the start of a Christian mission to 'save' people who had been dabbling in the occult. When I told her that I was simply interested in talking to people about their experiences she refused to have anything further to do with me on the grounds that my research was, in a literal sense, diabolical.

'Dear Sir or Madam,

In reply to your appeal in Saturday's E. Post I may be able to help you, I have been clairaudient since 1970 and am 'told' of the world, about life and my own future, I have never published the fact of my gift....

Your appeal for those experienced with the supernatural/paranormal made me smile, it is not the mystery you expect once you understand the truth, may I quote you one of my verses I was 'told' in the winter of 85-86:-

You live in two worlds and two bodies

The earthly ones are temporaries
and that explains it all

I will end by repeating what I was 'told' about Terry Waite on Feb. 22nd. 87, 'they' said he was gun runner and was in the Bekar Valley, I am often surprised at what I am 'told' because 'they' seem to have a different outlook on life.

Yours....'

This type of letter was by no means unusual.³ Letters of the following kind were more likely to be targeted.

'Dear Box No H4237

I read with interest your Advert in the Evening Press.

I have had an "experience" which you may be interested in hearing about.

(Name and telephone number)'

This rule of thumb may be formulated as follows: 'if the letter indicates, or hints at, some bizarre behaviour, characteristics or attitudes of the writer, do not target it'. This rule was adopted for the purely pragmatic reason of deciding which of the letters to

³ There were about four replies from people who were willing to 'explain' the paranormal to me. The most interesting was from one a man in Bristol who claimed to be a Lecturer in Subatomic Phenomena. He sent me photocopies of letters he had sent to various university professors in which he tried to explain the relationship between spiritualism and quantum mechanics. He also forwarded a booklet which, among other things, claimed that the suppression of public knowledge about the paranormal was a Vatican-inspired Catholic conspiracy.

follow-up, and in no way reflected any commitment to specific interpretations or explanations for paranormal experiences. Besides which, I wanted to investigate the normal communicative skills relied on by people when accounting for direct paranormal experiences. I felt that the letters provided a useful indicator of the writer's possession of mundane natural language abilities. The decision to reject 'odd' letters was thus useful insofar as it increased the chances that the people I eventually interviewed were culturally competent in this sense. Thus, ironically, the rejection of 'odd' people had nothing to do with my assumptions about the 'underlying' causes of the extraordinary experiences they claimed to have had, but was related more to their possession of routine natural language abilities.

The York interviews were conducted either in the Sociology Department or in the interviewees' homes. In Bristol, all the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' homes.

[c] Other Sources.

Owing to my teaching duties I had access to a number of first-year sociology students. Two first-year students came forward to be interviewed.

Prior to beginning this research I had been involved with local and national UFO research groups. Through my contact with the administrator for the British UFO Research Association (Jenny Randles), and with the help of one of my supervisors at the time (Shirley McIver), I was given the name of one of the leading amateur UFO investigators, who kindly sent me copies of taped interviews with witnesses to three UFO cases he was currently investigating.

During the period of data collection I developed the habit of carrying a small pocket-sized tape recorder and several blank tapes. By virtue of these accessories I was able to obtain three 'spontaneous' interviews with friends and chance meetings.

In total I conducted twenty-seven recorded interviews, and was sent three more, thus making a total of thirty separate interviews.

The interviews were informal, and I had no set questions or routines. My objective was to make the interview as 'conversational' as possible. Therefore, once the tape recorder was running my opening remark would merely provide the speaker with the floor to say whatever he or she wanted about their experience. For example, the following remarks are indicative of the kind of 'first' words on the tape (these are not transcribed according to conversation analytic conventions):

LE: 'Okay if you'd just like to tell me about the experiences you've had'

VA 1: 'Well could you tell me about some of the experiences that you've had'

PE: 'Well then if you'd care to tell me about the experience you mentioned in the letter'

BT: I 'you mentioned in your letter that you had experiences as a child

S yeah

I what sort of experiences were they'

During the interviews I did not make any remarks until the speaker had clearly finished talking about the experience, or had stated that they had finished. This was in order to allow the speaker to tell

the story spontaneously without interruptions. Upon subsequent inspection of the tapes it transpired that I had been making 'minimal continuers' - 'mm hm', 'uh huh', 'yeah' - during the interviews, and these were transcribed.

Some of the interviewees produced a large number of personal experiences, and these interviews regularly extended over two sides of a C.90 tapes. The majority of interviewees, however, had only one account, or a small number of direct experiences.

The transcription procedures were borrowed from conversation analysis.⁴ I decided that it would take too long to transcribe all the accounts produced from the interviews. Therefore I transcribed a sufficient amount to begin analysis. When certain themes started to emerge, I re-examined the tapes to locate further examples of the phenomenon, and then transcribed these episodes. Forty-six separate accounts were initially transcribed (approximately 1/10 of the combined duration of the interviews).

Certain transcription symbols, more useful in the close inspection of conversational materials, were not used in these transcriptions. As I was interested in broader features of the talk, I felt that attention to such detail was unnecessary. Subsequently, I have used a limited number of the available transcription symbols.⁵

⁴ As these conventions have been described extensively in other works in the relevant literature (for example, Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Button and Lee 1987) I will not rehearse them again here.

⁵ Hopper has made the point that no transcript can ever completely exhaust the details of the talk. That is, they are not so much 'finished' as 'abandoned' (Hopper 1989: 55). In this respect, then, my transcripts were abandoned comparatively early.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abell, P. 1983 'Accounts and those accounts called accounts of actions' in G. N. Gilbert and P. Abell (eds.) Accounts and Action.
- Alcock, J. E. 1987 'Parapsychology: science of the anomalous or search for the soul ?' Behavioural and Brain Sciences 10, 4.
- Alexander, J., Giesen, B., Munch, R., Smelser, N. (eds.) 1987 The Micro-Macro Link Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Allan, W. K. 1978 'The Fort St. James sightings' Flying Saucer Review 24, 3, 8-11.
- Alston, W. P. 1964 The Philosophy of Language New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Alvarado, C. S. 1984 'Phenomenological aspects of out-of-body experiences: a report of three studies' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 78, 219-240.
- Alvarado, C. S. 1986 'ESP during spontaneous out-of-body experiences; a research and methodological note' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 53, 804, 393-397.
- Antaki, C. (ed.) 1988 Analysing Everyday Explanations: A Casebook of Methods London: Sage.
- Ashmore, M. 1985 A Question of Reflexivity: Wrighting Sociology of Scientific Knowledge unpublished D. Phil Thesis, University of York. (Also forthcoming.)
- Ashworth, C. E. 1980 'Flying saucers, spoonbending and Atlantis: a structural analysis of new mythologies' Sociological Review 28, 2, 353-376.
- Atkinson, J. M. 1973 'Suicide, status integration and pseudo-science' unpublished manuscript.
- Atkinson, J. M. 1978 Discovering Suicide: Studies in the Social Organisation of Sudden Death London: Macmillan.
- Atkinson, J. M. 1984a Our Master's Voices: the Language and Body Language of Politics London: Methuen.
- Atkinson, J. M. 1984b 'Public speaking and audience responses: some techniques for inviting applause' in J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action.

- Atkinson, J. M. 1985 'Refusing invited applause: preliminary observations from a case-study of charismatic oratory' in T. A. van Dijk (ed.) Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vol. 3.
- Atkinson, J. M. and Drew, P. 1979 Order in Court: the Organisation of Verbal Interaction in Judicial Settings London: Macmillan.
- Atkinson, J. M. and Heritage, J. (eds.) 1984 Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Austin, J. L. 1962 How To Do Things With Words Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barnes, B. 1986 'Ethnomethodology as science: essay review of Heritage's "Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology"' Social Studies of Science 15, 751-762.
- Barnes, B. and Law, J. 1976 'Whatever should be done with indexical expressions?' Theory and Society 3, 223-237.
- Becker, H., Geer, B., Hughes, E. C., Strauss, A. L. 1961 The Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Beloff, J. 1987 Book review of Blackmore's (1986a) 'The Adventures of a Parapsychologist' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 54, 808, 219-221.
- Bennett, G. 1987 Traditions of Belief: Women, Folklore and the Supernatural Today London and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Benson, D. and Hughes, J. A. 1983 The Perspective of Ethnomethodology London and New York: Longman.
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. 1967 The Social Construction of Reality Harmondsworth: Allen Lane.
- Bernstein, B. 1972 'Social class, language and socialization' in P. P. Giglioli, (ed.) Language and Social Context.
- Betty, L. S. 1984 'The Kern City poltergeist: a case severely straining the living-agent hypothesis' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 52, 798, 345-364.
- Besterman, T. 1932-33 'Report of an inquiry into precognitive dreams' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 41, 186-204.
- Billig, M. 1985 'Prejudice, categorization and particularization: from a perceptual to a rhetorical approach' European Journal of Social Psychology 15, 79-103.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1982a Beyond the Body London: Heinemann.

- Blackmore, S. J. 1982b 'Have you ever had an OBE?: the wording of the question' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 51, 292-302.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1982c 'OBE's, lucid dreams and imagery: two surveys' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 76, 4.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1983 'Birth and the OBE: an unhelpful analogy' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 77, 229-238.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1984a 'A postal survey of OBE's and other experiences' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 52, 225-244.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1984b 'A psychological theory of the OBE' Journal of Parapsychology 48, 201-218.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1985a 'The Adventures of a psi-inhibitory experimenter' in P. Kurtz (ed.) A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1985b '"Where am I?": viewpoints in imagery and the OBE' unpublished MS.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1986a The Adventures of a Parapsychologist New York: Prometheus Books.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1986b 'Spontaneous and deliberate OBE's: a questionnaire survey' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 53, 802, 218-224.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1987 'A report of a visit to Carl Sargent's laboratory' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 54, 186-198.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1988a 'The failure of Psychical Research' New Humanist 103, 1, 23-25.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1988b 'Do we need a new psychical research?' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 55, 811, 49-59.
- Blackmore, S. J. 1988c 'Visions from the dying brain' New Scientist 1611, May 5, 43-46.
- Bloor, D. 1976 Knowledge and Social Imagery London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bloor, D. 1983 Wittgenstein: a Social Theory of Knowledge London: Macmillan.
- Bock, E. W. 1966 'Symbols in conflict: official versus folk religion' Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 5, 204-212.

- Bourque, L. B. 1969 'Social correlates of transcendental experiences' Sociological Analysis 30, 151-163.
- Bourque, L. B. and Back, K. W. 1968 'Values and transcendental experiences' Social Forces 47, 34-38.
- Bourque, L. B. and Back, K. W. 1971 'Language, society and subjective experience' Sociometry 34, 1, 1-21.
- Bowen, C. (ed.) 1977a Encounter Cases from the Flying Saucer Review New York: Signet.
- Bowen, C. (ed.) 1977b The Humanoids London: Neville Spearman.
- Brown, G. and Yule, G. 1983 Discourse Analysis Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, R. and Kulik, J. 1977 'Flashbulb memories' Cognition 5, 73-99.
- Button, G., Drew, P., Heritage, J. (eds.) 1986 Human Studies Special Edition on Interaction and Language Use 9, nos. 2-3.
- Button, G., and Lee, J. (eds) 1987 Talk and Social Organisation Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Campbell, C. 1972 'The cult, the cultic milieu and secularization' in M. Hill (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion London: SCM Press.
- Campbell, C. and McIver, S. 1987 'Cultural sources of support for contemporary occultism' Social Compass 34, 1, 41-60
- Carlton, E. 1987 'Parapsychology as a religious surrogate' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 54, 807, 130-138.
- Chumineto, A. 1983 'The little oriental airman' Flying Saucer Review 28, 5, 3-8.
- Cicourel, A. V. 1964 Method and Measurement in Sociology London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Cicourel, A. V. 1974 'Interviewing and memory' in C. Cherry (ed.) Pragmatic Aspects of Human Communication Dordrecht Holland: D. Reidal.
- Codol, J-P. and Lyons, J. P. (eds.) 1982 Cognitive Analysis of Social Behaviour The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Colegrave, F. W. 1982 'Individual memories' in U. Neisser (ed.) Memory Observed. (Originally published in American Journal of Psychology 10, 1899.)
- Collins, H. M. 1974 'The T.E.A. set: tacit knowledge and scientific networks' Science Studies 4, 165-189.

- Collins, H. M. 1975 'The 7 sexes: a study in the sociology of a phenomenon, or the replication of experiments in physics' Sociology 9, 205-224.
- Collins, H. M. 1976 'Upon the replication of scientific findings: a discussion illuminated by the experiences of researchers into parapsychology' paper presented to the 4S/ISA First International Conference on the Social Studies of Science, Cornell University, 4-6 November.
- Collins, H. M. 1979 'The investigation of frames of meaning in science: complementarity and compromise' Sociological Review 27, 703-718.
- Collins, H. M. 1982 Sociology of Scientific Knowledge: A Source Book Bath: Bath University Press.
- Collins, H. M. and Pinch, T. J. 1979 'The construction of the paranormal: nothing unscientific is happening' in R. Wallis (ed.) On the Margins of Science.
- Collins H. M. and Pinch, T. J. 1982 Frames of Meaning: the Social Construction of Extraordinary Science London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Collins, H. M. and Pinch, T. J. 1983 'The core and periphery of scientific knowledge' paper presented to the B. S. A. Conference, April.
- Corsaro, W. A. 1985 'Sociological approaches to discourse analysis' in T. A. van Dijk (ed.) Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vol. 1.
- Coulter, J. 1975 'Perceptual accounts and interpretative asymmetries' Sociology 9, 385-394.
- Coulter, J. 1979 'Beliefs and practical reasoning' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Coulter, J. 1982 Rethinking Cognitive Theory London: Macmillan.
- Coulthard, M. 1977 An Introduction to Discourse Analysis London: Longman.
- Coulthard, M. and Montgomery, M. (eds.) 1981a Studies in Discourse Analysis London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Coulthard, M. and Montgomery, M. 1981b 'The structure of monologue' in M. Coulthard and M. Montgomery (eds.) Studies in Discourse Analysis Chapter 1, section 3.
- Cox, T. 1978 'Green mist UFOs at Newmill' Flying Saucer Review 24, 1, 28-30.
- Creighton, G. 1978 'A French parallel to the Vila Velha attempted abduction' Flying Saucer Review 23, 5, 16-18.

- Crookall, R. 1961 The Study and Practice of Astral Projection London: Aquarian Press.
- Crookall, R. 1964 More Astral Projections London: Aquarian Press.
- Dale, L. A. 1951 'A series of spontaneous cases in the tradition of "Phantasms of the Living"' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 45, 85-102.
- Dale, L. A., White, R., Murphey, G. 1962 'A selection of cases from a recent survey of spontaneous ESP phenomena' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 56, 3-47.
- Douglas, J. D. (ed.) 1971 Understanding Everyday Life London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Dow, C. 1987a 'Factors affecting judgements about the occurrence of psi in spontaneous settings' paper presented to the Parapsychology Association Conference, Edinburgh, August.
- Dow, C. 1987b 'Spontaneous cases - towards a more active approach' paper presented to the 11th International Conference of the Society for Psychical Research, Oxford, September.
- Drew, P. 1977 'Some moral and inferential aspects of descriptions of violent events in Northern Ireland' unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Lancaster.
- Drew, P. 1984a 'Speakers' reportings in invitation sequences' In J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action.
- Drew, P. 1984b 'Disputes in courtroom cross examination: contrasting versions in a rape trial' unpublished paper, University of York.
- Drew, P. 1987 'Po-faced receipts of teases' Linguistics 25-1, 219-253.
- Drew, P. 1989 'Recalling someone from the past' in D. Roger and P. Bull (eds.) Conversation.
- Drew, P. 'Strategies in the contest between lawyer and witness in cross-examination' in J. Levi and A. Walker Language in the Judicial Process (forthcoming).
- Drucker, S. A., Drewes, A. A., Rubin, L. 1977 'ESP in relation to cognitive development and IQ in young children' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 71, 3.
- Edge, H. L., Morris, R. L., Palmer, J., Rush, J. H. 1986 Foundations of Parapsychology: Exploring the Boundaries of Human Capability Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Edwards, D. and Potter, J. 1989 'The Chancellor's memory: rhetoric and truth in discursive remembering' unpublished paper, University of Loughborough.
- Eglin, T. 1986 'Introduction to a hermeneutics of the occult: alchemy' In H. Garfinkel (ed.) Ethnomethodological Studies of Work.
- Eisenbud, J. 1963 'Two approaches to spontaneous case material' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 57, 118-135.
- Eliade, M. 1976 Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Evans, H. 1982 Intrusions: Society and the Paranormal London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Evans, H. 1983 The Evidence for UFOs Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- Evans, H. 1984 Visions, Apparitions and Alien Visitors Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- Evans, H. 1987 Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians: A Comparative Study of the Encounter Experience Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- Farr, R. and Moscovici, S. (eds.) 1984 Social Representations Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fillmore, C. F. 1985 'Linguistics as a tool for discourse analysis' in T. A. van Dijk (ed.) Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vol. 1.
- Finucane, R. C. 1982 Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts London: Junction Books.
- Forgas, J. (ed.) 1981 Social Cognition: Perspectives on Everyday Understanding London: Academic Press.
- Fowler, R. E. 1979 The Andreasson Affair New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Fox, P. 1979 'Social and cultural factors influencing beliefs about UFOs' in R. Haines (ed.) UFOs and the Behavioural Scientist.
- Fuller, J. G. 1980 The Interrupted Journey London: Corgi Books.
- Gardner, M. 1985 'Parapsychology and quantum mechanics' in P. Kurtz (ed.) A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology.
- Garfinkel, H. 1984 Studies in Ethnomethodology Oxford: Polity Press. (Originally published in New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967.)

- Garfinkel, H. (ed.) 1986 Ethnomethodological Studies of Work London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Garfinkel, H., Lynch, M., Livingston, E. 1981 'The work of discovering science construed with materials from the optically discovered pulsar' Philosophy of the Social sciences 11, 131-158.
- Garfinkel, H. and Sacks, H. 'On formal structures of practical actions' in J. C. McKinney and E. A. Tiryakin (eds.) Theoretical Sociology.
- Gauld, A. 1968 The Founders of Psychical Research New York: Schocken.
- Gauld, A. 1982 Mediumship and Survival: A Century of Investigations London: Paladin.
- Giglioli, P. P. (ed.) 1972 Language and Social Context Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gilbert, G. N. 1983 'Accounts and those accounts called actions' in G. N. Gilbert and P. Abell (eds.) Accounts and Action.
- Gilbert, G. N. and Abell, P. (eds.) 1983 Accounts and Action Aldershot: Gower.
- Gilbert, G. N. and Mulkay, M. J. 1983 'In search of the action' in G. N. Gilbert and P. Abell (eds.) Accounts and Action
- Gilbert, G. N. and Mulkay, M. J. 1984 Opening Pandora's Box: A Sociological Analysis of Scientists' Discourse Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gleeson, D. and Erben, M. 'Meaning in context: notes towards a critique of ethnomethodology' British Journal of Sociology 27, 4, 474-483.
- Goffman, E. 1981 Forms of Talk Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goodwin, C. 1979 'The interactive construction of a sentence in natural conversation' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Gordon, M. D. 1982 'How socially distinctive is cognitive deviance in an emergent science? The case of parapsychology' Social Studies of Science 12, 151-165.
- Goss, M. 1984 The Evidence for Phantom Hitchhikers Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- Graham, B. 1976 Angels: God's Secret Agents London: Hodder and Stoughton.

- Gratton-Guinness, I. (ed.) 1982 Psychical Research: A Guide to its History, Principles and Practices Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- Greatbatch, D. 1983 The Social Organisation of News Interview Interaction unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Warwick.
- Greatbatch, D. 1988 'A turn-taking system for British news interviewers' Language in Society 17, 3.
- Greeley, A. M. 1975 The Sociology of the Paranormal: A Reconnaissance Beverly Hills and London: Sage.
- Green, C. E. 1960 'Analysis of spontaneous cases' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 53, part 191, 97-161.
- Green, C. E. 1966 'Spontaneous "paranormal" experiences in relation to sex and academic background' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 43, 357-363.
- Green, C. E. 1968 Out-of-the-Body Experiences London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Green, C. E. and McCreery, C. 1975 Apparitions London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Gregory, A. 1982 Book review of Collins and Pinch's (1983) 'Frames of Meaning: The Social Construction of Extraordinary Science' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 51, 791, 309-314.
- Gumperz, J. J. 1982 Discourse Strategies Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. and Hymes, D. (eds.) 1972 Directions in Sociolinguistics: the Ethnography of Communication New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Gurney, E., Myers, F. W. H., Podmore, F. 1886 Phantasms of the Living London: Trubner (two volumes).
- Haines, R. (ed.) 1979 UFOs and the Behavioural Scientist Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press.
- Halfpenny, P. 1988 'Talking of talking, writing of writing: some reflections on Gilbert and Mulkey's discourse analysis' Social Studies of Science 18, 169-182.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1978 Language as Social Semiotic London: Edward Arnold.
- Hansel, C. E. M. 1966 ESP: A Scientific Evaluation New York: Charles Scribner's.

- Haraldsson, E. 1985 'Representative national surveys of psychic phenomena: Iceland, Great Britain, Sweden, the United States of America and Gallup's multinational survey' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 53, 801, 145-158.
- Haraldsson, E., Gudmundsdottir, A., Ragnarsson, A., Loftsson, J., Jonsson, S. 1977 'National survey of psychical experiences and attitudes towards the paranormal in Iceland' Research in Parapsychology 1976, 182-186.
- Hart, H. 1954 'ESP projection: spontaneous cases and the experimental method' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 48, 121-146.
- Hart, H. 1956 'Six theories about apparitions' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 50, 153-239.
- Hart, H. 1967 'Scientific Survival Research' International Journal of Parapsychology 9, 43-52.
- Hartman, P. 1976 'Social dimensions of occult participation: the "Gnostica" study' British Journal of Sociology 27, 169-183.
- Hay, D. 'Religious experiences amongst a group of post-graduate students: a qualitative study' unpublished manuscript.
- Hay, D. and Morissy, A. 'Reports of ecstatic, paranormal or religious experiences in Great Britain and the United States of America: a comparison of trends' unpublished manuscript.
- Haynes, R. 1982 The Society for Psychical Research 1882-1982 London and Sydney: MacDonald.
- Hearne, K. M. T. 1982a 'An ostensive precognition of the accidental sinking of H. M.'s submarine "Artemis" in 1971' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 51, 791, 283-287.
- Hearne, K. M. T. 1982b 'Three cases of ostensive precognition from a single recipient' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 51, 791, 288-291.
- Hearne, K. M. T. 1984 'A survey of reported premonitions and of those who have them' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 52, 796, 261-269.
- Hearne, K. M. T. 1986 'An analysis of premonitions deposited over one year, from an apparently gifted subject' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 53, 804, 376-382.
- Heath, C. 1986 'Talk and reciprocity: sequential organisation in speech and body movement' in J. M Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action.
- Heath, C. 1986 Body Movement and Speech in Medical Interaction Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Heritage, J. 1978 'Aspects of the flexibilities of language use' Sociology 12, 1, 79-104.
- Heritage, J. 1984 Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. 1989 'Current developments in conversation analysis' in D. Roger and P. Bull (eds.) Conversation.
- Heritage, J. and Atkinson, J. M. 1984 'Introduction' in J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action.
- Heritage, J. and Greatbatch, D. 'Generating applause: a study of rhetoric and response at party political conferences' American Journal of Sociology 92, 1, 110-157.
- Heritage, J. and Watson, D. R. 1979 'Formulations as conversational objects' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Heywood, R. 1960 'Immediate background to Celia Green's analysis of spontaneous cases' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 53, part 191, 94-96.
- Hoebens, P. H. 1981 'Croiset and Professor Tenhaeff: discrepancies in claims of clairvoyance' Skeptical Inquirer Winter.
- Hopper, R. 1989 'Conversation analysis and social psychology as descriptions of interpersonal communication' in D. Roger and P. Bull (eds.) Conversation.
- Hufford, D. 1982 The Terror that Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centred Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hyneck, J. A. 1972 The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry London: Abelard-Schuman.
- Hyneck, J. A. 1978 The Hyneck UFO Report London: Sphere.
- James, W. 1960 The Varieties of Religious Experience London: Collins. (Originally published 1902.)
- James, W. 1979 The Will to Believe Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. (Originally published 1897.)
- Jarvis, P. 1980 'Towards a sociological understanding of superstition' Social Compass 26, 285-295.
- Jefferson, G. 1979 'A technique for inviting laughter and the subsequent acceptance declination' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Jefferson, G. 'Exposed and embedded correction in conversation' Studium Linguistik 14, 58-62.

- Jefferson, G. 1984a ' "At first I thought": a normalizing device for extraordinary events' unpublished manuscript, Katholieke Hogeschool Tilburg.
- Jefferson, G. 1984b 'Notes on a systematic deployment of the acknowledgement tokens "yeah" and "mm hm"' Tilburg Papers in Language and Literature 30.
- Jefferson, G. 1985 'On the interactional unpackaging of a "gloss"' Language and Society 435-463.
- Jefferson, G. 1986 'Colligation as a device for minimising repair or disagreement' unpublished mimeo, University of York.
- Jefferson, G. 'List construction as a task and resource' in G. Psathas (ed.) Interactional Competence (forthcoming).
- Johnstone, B. 1987 ' "He says...so I said": verb tense alternation and narrative depictions of authority in American English' Linguistics 25, 33-52.
- Josephson, B. 1975 'Possible connections between psychic phenomena and quantum mechanics' New Horizons January, 224-226.
- Jung, C. G. 1959 Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. 1977 Psychology and the Occult Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Translated by R. F. C. Hull.)
- Kastenbaum, R. 1984 Is There Life After Death ? London: Rider.
- Keel, J. 1975 Strange Creatures from Time and Space London: Neville Spearman.
- Keel, J. 1976 Why "UFOs" ? New York: Manor Books.
- Knocke, D. 1972 'Community and consistency: the ethnic factor in status inconsistency' Social Forces 51, 23-33.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. D. and Mulkay M. (eds.) 1983 Science Observed London: Sage.
- Koestler, A. 1977 The Roots of Coincidence London: Hutchinson.
- Kurtz, P. (ed.) 1985 A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology New York: Prometheus.
- Lee, D. 1987 'The semantics of "just"' Journal of Pragmatics 11, 377-398.
- Lee, J. R. E. 1987 'Prologue: talking organisation' in G Button and J. R. E. Lee (eds.) Talk and Social Organisation.
- Leiter, K. 1980 A Primer on Ethnomethodology New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Levi, E. 1982 The History of Magic London: Rider. (Translated by A. E. Waite; originally published in 1913.)
- Levi, J. and Walker, A. (eds.) Language in the Judicial Process (forthcoming).
- Levinson, S. C. 'Activity types and language' Linguistics 17, 365-399.
- Levinson, S. C. 1983 Pragmatics Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Littig, L. W. 1971 'Affiliation motivation and belief in extraterrestrial UFOs' Journal of Social Psychology 83, 307-308.
- Livneh, G. 1986 'An ostensible precognition of the Arab surprise attack on the Day of Atonement 1973' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 53, 804, 383-386.
- Lofland, J. and Stark, R. 1965 'Becoming a world-saver: a theory of conversion to a deviant perspective' American Sociological Review 30, 862-875.
- Lynch, F. R. 1979 '"Occult establishment" or "deviant religion" ? The rise and fall of a modern church of magic' Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 18, 3, 281-298.
- Markwick, B. 1978 'The Soal-Goldney experiments with Basil Shackleton: new evidence of data manipulation' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 56, 250-277.
- Markwick, B. 1985 'The establishment of data manipulation in the Soal-Shackleton experiments' in P. Kurtz (ed.) A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology.
- Marsh, P. Rosser, E., Harre, R. 1978 The Rules of Disorder London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Marty, M. 1970 'The occult establishment' Social Research 37, 212-230.
- Mauskopf, S. H. 1982 'The history of psychical research: the United States of America' in I. Gratton-Guinness (ed.) Psychical Research.
- Mauskopf, S. H. and McVaugh, M. R. 1980 The Elusive Science: The Origins of Experimental Psychical Research Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- McClure, K. 1983 The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- McConnell, R. A. and McConnell, T. 1971 'Occult books at the University of Pittsburgh' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 65, 344-353.

- McGuinness 1983 Fatal Vision New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McKinney, J. C. and Tiryakin, E. A. (eds.) Theoretical Sociology: Perspectives and Development New York: Appleton Century Crofts.
- McVaugh, M. R. and Mauskopf, S. H. 1976 'J. B Rhine's "ESP" and its background in psychical research' Isis 67, 161-189.
- Mehan, H. 1975 The Reality of Ethnomethodology New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Moody, E. J. 1974 'Urban witches' in E. A. Tiryakin (ed.) On the Margins of the Visible.
- Morrell, R. 1977 'UFOs over Bridlington Factories' Flying Saucer Review 23, 3, 8-10.
- Morris, E. 1979 'The winged beings of Bluestone Walk' Flying Saucer Review 25, 6, 24-27.
- Morris, R. L., Harary, S., Janis, J., Hartwell, J., Roll, W. G. 1978 'Studies of communication during OBEs' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 72, 1, 1-22.
- Moscovici, S. 1981 'On social representations' in J. Forgas (ed.) Social Cognition.
- Moscovici, S. 1982 'The coming era of social representations' in J-P Codol and J. P. Lyons (eds.) Cognitive Analysis of Social Behaviour.
- Moscovici, S. 1984 'The phenomenon of social representations' in R. Farr and S. Moscovici (eds.) Social Representations.
- Muldoon, S. and Carrington, H. 1951 The Phenomena of Astral Projection London: Rider.
- Mulkay, M. J. 1979 Science and the Sociology of Knowledge London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Mulkay, M. J. 1984 'The ultimate compliment: a sociological analysis of ceremonial discourse' Sociology 18, 531-549.
- Mulkay, M. J. 1985 The Word and World: Explorations in the Form of Sociological Analysis London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Mulkay, M. J. 1986 'Conversations and texts' in G. Button, P. Drew, J. Heritage (eds.) Human Studies Special Issue on Interaction and Language Use 9, 303-321.
- Mulkay, M. J., Ashmore, M., Pinch, T. J. 1987 'Measuring the quality of life: a sociological invention concerning the application of Economics to Health Care' Sociology 21, 4, 541-564.

- Mulkay, M. J., Potter, J., Yearley, S. 1982 'Why an analysis of scientific discourse is needed' in K. D. Knorr-Cetina and M. J. Mulkay (eds.) Science Observed.
- Nederman, C. J. and Goulding, J. W. 1981 'Popular occultism and critical social theory: exploring some themes in Adorno's critique of astrology and the occult' Sociological Analysis 42, 4, 325-332.
- Neisser, U. (ed.) 1982a Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts San Fransisco: Freeman.
- Neisser, U. 1982b 'Snapshots or benchmarks ?' in U. Neisser (ed.) Memory Observed.
- Neisser, U. 1986 'Remembering Pearl Harbour: a reply to Thompson and Cowan' Cognition 23, 285-286.
- Nelson, G. K. 1975 'Toward a sociology of the psychic' Review of Religious Research 16, 3, 166-173.
- Nickles, T. 1984 'A revolution that failed: Collins and Pinch on the paranormal' Social Studies of Science 14, 297-308.
- Nicol, J. F. 1982 'The history of psychical research: Great Britain' in I. Gratton-Guinness (ed.) Psychical Research.
- Nicol, J. F. 1985 'Fraudulent children in psychical research' in P. Kurtz (ed.) A skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology.
- Nigro, G. and Neisser, U. 1983 'Point of view in personal memory' Cognitive Psychology 15, 467-482.
- O'Keefe, D. J. 1979 'Ethnomethodology' Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour 9, 2, 187-219.
- O'Keefe, D. L. 1982 Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- Olliver, C. W. 1932 The Extension of Consciousness London: Rider.
- Oteri, L. (ed.) 1975 Quantum Mechanics and Parapsychology New York: Parapsychological Foundation.
- Palfreman, J. 1979 'Between scepticism and credulity: a study of Victorian scientific attitudes to modern spiritualism' in R. Wallis (ed.) On the Margins of the Visible.
- Palmer, J. 1979 'A community mail survey of psychic experiences' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 73, 3, 221-251.
- Parker, D. 1975 States of Mind London: Malaby Press.
- Pears, D. 1971 Wittgenstein London: Fontana.

- Persinger, M. A. 1981 'UFOs and tectonic strain' Perceptual and Motor Skills 53.
- Phillips, J. 1978 'Some problems in locating practices' Sociology 12, 1, 55-78.
- Pillemer, D. B. 1984 'Flashbulb memories of the assassination attempt on President Reagan' Cognition 16, 63-80.
- Pinch, T. J. 1979 'Normal explanations of the paranormal: the demarcation problem and fraud in parapsychology' Social Studies of Science 9, 329-348.
- Pinch, T. J. 1984 'Kuhn and parapsychology' Journal of Parapsychology 48, 121-125.
- Pinch, T. J. 1987 'Some suggestions from the sociology of science to advance the psi debate' Behavioural and Brain Sciences 10, 4, 603-605.
- Pinch, T. J. and Clark, C. 1986 'The hard sell: "patter merchanting" and the strategic (re)production and local management of economic reasoning in the sales routines of market pitchers' Sociology 20, 2, 169-191.
- Pinch, T. J. and Collins, H. M. 1984 'Private science and public knowledge: the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal and its use of literature' Social Studies of Science 14, 521-546.
- Pitkin, H. F. 1972 Wittgenstein and Justice Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Plank, R. 1968 The Emotional Significance of Imaginary Beings Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.
- Pollner, M. 1974 'Mundane Reasoning' Philosophy of the Social Sciences 4, 35-54.
- Pollner, M. 1975 '"The very coinage of your brain": the anatomy of reality disjunctures' Philosophy of the Social Sciences 5, 411-430.
- Pollner, M. 1979 'Explicative transactions: making and managing meaning in traffic courts' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Pollner, M. 1987 Mundane Reason Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pollner, M. and McDonald-Wikler, L. 1985 'The social construction of unreality: a case study of a family's attribution of competence to a severely retarded child' Family Process 24, 2, 241-254.

- Pomerantz, A. M. 1978 'Compliment responses: notes on the cooperation of multiple constraints' in J. Schenkein (ed) Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction.
- Pomerantz, A. M. 1986 'Extreme case formulations: a way of legitimizing claims' in G. Button, P. Drew, J. Heritage (eds.) Human Studies Special Issue on Interaction and Language Use 9, 219-229.
- Potter, J. and Mulkay, M. 1985 'Scientists' interview talk: interviews as a technique for revealing participants; interpretative practices' in M. Brenner, J. Brown, D. Canter (eds.) The Research Interview: Uses and Approaches London: Academic Press.
- Potter, J. and Reicher, S. 1987 'Discourses of community and conflict: the organisation of social categories in accounts of a "riot"' British Journal of Social Psychology 26, 25-40.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. 1987 Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour London: Sage.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. 1988 'Accomplishing attitudes: fact and evaluation in racist discourse' Text 1-2, 51-68.
- Pratt, J. G. 1969 'On the evaluation of verbal material in parapsychology' Parapsychological Monographs no. 10, New York: Parapsychological Foundation.
- Psathas, G. (ed.) 1979 Everyday Language: Studies In Ethnomethodology New York: Irvington.
- Psathas, G. (ed.) Interactional Competence (forthcoming).
- Pugh-Jones, R. and Holiday, F. W. 1979 The Dyfed Enigma: UFOs in West Wales London: Faber and Faber.
- Randles, J. and Whetnall, P. 1981 Alien Contact: Window on Another World London: Neville Spearman.
- Rao, K. R. and Palmer, J. 1987 'The anomaly called psi: recent research and criticism' Behavioural and Brain Sciences 10, 4.
- Rhine, J. B. 1934 Extra-Sensory Perception Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Society for Psychical Research.
- Rhine, J. B. 1937 New Frontiers of the Mind New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Rhine, J. B. 1948a The Reach of the Mind London: Faber and Faber.
- Rhine, J. B. 1948b 'The value of reports of spontaneous psi phenomena' Journal of Parapsychology 12, 231-235.
- Rhine, J. B. 1954 New World of the Mind London: Faber and Faber.

- Rhine, L. E. 1953 'Subjective forms of spontaneous psi experiences' Journal of Parapsychology 17, 77-114.
- Rhine, L. E. 1977 'Research methods with spontaneous cases' in B. B. Wolman (ed.) Handbook of Parapsychology.
- Rhine, L. E. 1981 The Invisible Picture: A Study of Psychic Experiences Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland.
- Rimmer, J. 1984 The Evidence for Alien Abductions Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.
- Roger, D. and Bull, P. (eds.) 1989 Conversation Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Rogo, D. S. 1982 'Psychological models of OBEs: a review and critical evaluation' Journal of Parapsychology 46, 1, 29-45.
- Rogo, D. S. 1985 'J. B. Rhine and the Levy scandal' in P. Kurtz (ed.) A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology.
- Rogo, D. S. 1987 'A case of mysterious stone-throwing in Arizona' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 54, 806, 16-37.
- Rueckert, C. L. 'Kentucky Close Encounter; Flying Saucer Review 23, 3, 15-16.
- Rush, J. H. 1986a 'Parapsychology: a historical perspective' in Edge H. L. et al Foundations of Parapsychology.
- Rush, J. H. 1986b 'Spontaneous psi phenomenon: case studies and field investigations' in Edge H. L. et al Foundations of Parapsychology.
- Ryle, G. 1949 The Concept of Mind London: Hutchinson.
- Sacks, H. 1963 'Sociological description' Berkeley Journal of Sociology 8, 1-16.
- Sacks, H. 1964-1972 Unpublished transcribed lectures, University of California at Irvine. (Transcribed and indexed by G. Jefferson.)
- Sacks, H. 1972 'On the analyzability of stories by children' in J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.) Directions in Sociolinguistics.
- Sacks, H. 1979 'Hotrodder: a revolutionary category' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language. (Edited by G. Jefferson from unpublished lectures: Spring 1966, lecture 18.)
- Sacks, H. 1984a 'Notes on methodology' in J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action. (Edited by G. Jefferson from unpublished lectures: various.)

- Sacks, H. 1984b 'On doing "Being Ordinary"' in J. M. Atkison and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action. (Edited by G. Jefferson: Spring 1970: lecture 1.)
- Sacks, H. 1985 'The inference making machine: notes on observability' in T. A van Dijk (ed.) Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vol 3. (Edited by G. Jefferson from unpublished lectures: Winter 1964-65.)
- Sacks, H. 1987 'You want to find out if anybody really does care' in G Button and J. R. E. Lee (eds.) Talk and Social Organisation. (Edited by G. Jefferson from unpublished lectures: Fall 1964.)
- Sacks, H. 'On members' measurement systems' in G. Psathas (ed.) Interactional Competence Forthcoming. (Edited by G. Jefferson from unpublished lectures: 1966, 1967 and 1970.)
- Sacks, H. and Schegloff, E. A. 1979 'Two preferences for the organisation of reference to persons in conversation and their interaction' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., Jefferson, G. 1978 'A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn-taking for conversation' in J. Schenkein (ed.) Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction. (Originally published in Language 50, 696-735, 1974.)
- Salter, W. H. 1960 'Historical background to 1959 report on inquiry into spontaneous cases' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 53, part 191, 83-93.
- Saltmarsh, H. F. 1934 'Report on cases of apparent precognition' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 42, 49-103.
- Sanchez, J. M. 1977 'Canary Islands landing: occupants reported' Flying Saucer Review 23, 3, 4-7.
- Sannwald G. 1961 'Parapsychischen erlebnissen und Personlichkeitsunerkmalen' ['Relations between paranormal experiences and personality traits'] unpublished dissertation, University of Freiburg.
- Sannwald, G. 1963 'On the psychology of spontaneous paranormal phenomena' International Journal of Parapsychology 5, 274-294.
- Sargent, C. 1987 'Skeptical fairy tales from Bristol' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 54, 808, 208-218.
- Saunders, D. R. 1972 'Some new lines for UFO research' Proceedings of the Mutual UFO Network Conference (17 June 1972), 130-145.
- Scharfstein, B-A. 1973 Mystical Experience Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Sharrock, W. and Anderson, B. 1986 The Ethnomethodologists
Chichester: Ellis Horwood.
- Schatzman, M. 1980 The Story of Ruth New York: G. P. Putnam's.
- Schegloff, E. A. 'Pre-sequences and indirections: applying speech act theory to ordinary conversation' unpublished manuscript.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1972a 'Sequencing in conversational openings' in J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.) Directions in Sociolinguistics.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1972b 'Notes on conversational practice: formulating place' in D. Sudnow (ed.) Studies in Social Interaction.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1981 'Discourse as an interactional achievement: some uses of "uh huh" and other things that come between sentences' in D. Tannen (ed.) Analysing Discourse: Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics Washington D. C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1984 'On some questions and ambiguities in conversation' in J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) Structures of Social Action.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1986 'The routine as achievement' Human Studies 9, 111-152.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1987a 'Between macro and micro' in J. Alexander et al (eds.) The Micro-Macro Link Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1987b 'Analysing single episodes of conversation: an exercise in conversation analysis' Social Psychology Quarterly 50, 101-114.
- Schegloff, E. A. 1988 'On an actual virtual servo mechanism for guessing bad news: a single case study' Social Problems 35, (4), 442-456.
- Schegloff, E. A. 'Harvey Sacks' lectures on conversation. The 1964-1965 lectures: an introduction/memoir' unpublished manuscript.
- Schegloff, E. A. and Sacks, H. 1973 'Opening up closings' Semiotica 7, 289-327.
- Schenkein, J. (ed.) 1978a Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction New York: Academic Press.
- Schenkein, J. 1978b 'Sketch of the analytic mentality for the study of conversational interaction' in J. Schenkein (ed.) Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction.

- Schenkein, J. 1978c 'Identity negotiations in conversation' in J. Schenkein (ed.) Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction.
- Schenkein, J. 1979 'The radio raiders story' in G. Psathas (ed.) Everyday Language.
- Schlitz, M. 1983 'The phenomenology of replication' paper presented to the Parapsychology Foundation Conference, November.
- Schouten, S. A. 1979 'Analysis of spontaneous cases as reported in "Phantasms of the Living"' European Journal of Parapsychology 2, 408-454.
- Schouten, S. A. 1981 'Analysing spontaneous cases: a replication based on the Sannwald collection' European Journal of Parapsychology 4, 9-48.
- Schouten, S. A. 1982 'Analysing spontaneous cases: a replication based on the Rhine collection' European Journal of Parapsychology 4, 113-158.
- Schutz, A. 1962 Collected Papers Volume 1, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Schutz, A. and Luckmann, T. 1974 The Structures of the Life World London: Heinemann. (Originally published 1967.)
- Schwarz, B. E. 1961 'Telepathic events in a child between one and three-and-a-half years of age' International Journal of Parapsychology 3, 4.
- Schwarz, B. E. 1977 'The man-in-black syndrome' part 1 Flying Saucer Review 23, 4, 9-15.
- Scott, C. 1972 'On the evaluation of verbal material in parapsychology: a discussion of Dr. Pratt's monograph' Journal of the Society for Psychical Research 46, 752, 79-90.
- Shapin, S. 1982 'The politics of observation: cerebral anatomy and social interests in the Edinburgh phrenology disputes' in H. M. Collins (ed.) Sociology of Scientific Knowledge
- Siegal, R. K. 1984 'Hostage hallucinations' Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease 172, 5.
- Singer, B. and Benassi, V. A. 1980 'Fooling some of the people all of the time' Skeptical Inquirer Winter 1980-81.
- Smith, D. E. 1978 '"K is mentally ill": the anatomy of a factual account' Sociology 12, 23-53.

- Smits, M., Simmons, S., Burrows, R., Lloyd, P., Martin, T. 1982 'Unemployment discourse: some notes towards a sociological analysis of accounts of unemployment' Occasional paper in Sociology and Social Policy no. 8, University of Surrey.
- Stevenson, I. 1982 'The contribution of apparitions to the evidence of survival' Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 76, 341-358.
- Story, R. 1976 The Space Gods Revealed London: New English Library.
- Suchman, L. A. 1987 Plans and Situated Action: the Problem of Human-Machine Communication Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sudnow, D. (ed.) 1972 Studies in Social Interaction New York: Free Press.
- Taylor, J. 1981 Science and the Supernatural: an Investigation of Paranormal Phenomena London: Paladin.
- Thompson, C. P. and Cowan, T. 1986 'Flashbulb memories: a nicer interpretation of a Neisser recollection' Cognition 22, 199-200.
- Thouless, R. H. 1984 'Do we survive bodily death?' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 57, 213, 1-52.
- Tiryakin, E. D. (ed.) 1974a On the Margin of the Visible New York: John Wiley.
- Tiryakin, E. A. 1974b 'Toward the sociology of esoteric culture' in E. A. Tiryakin (ed.) On the Margin of the Visible.
- Truzzi, M. 1971 'The occult revival in popular culture: some random observations on the old and the nouveau witch' Sociological Quarterly 13, 1, 16-36.
- Truzzi, M. 1974a 'Definition and dimension of the occult: toward a sociological perspective' in E. A. Tiryakin (ed.) On the Margins of the Visible.
- Truzzi, M. 1974b 'Toward a sociology of the occult: notes on modern witchcraft' in I. Zaretsky and M. P. Leone (eds.) Religious Movements in Contemporary America.
- Truzzi, M. 1975 'Astrology as popular culture' Journal of Popular Culture 8, 906-911.
- Turner, R. (ed.) 1974a Ethnomethodology Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Turner, R. 1974b 'Words, utterances and activities' in R. Turner (ed.) Ethnomethodology.

- Tyrrell, G. N. M. 1938 'The Tyrrell apparatus for testing extrasensory perception' Journal of Parapsychology 2, 107-118.
- Tyrrell, G. N. M. 1942 Apparitions London: the Society for Psychical Research.
- Uriondo, O. 1980 'Paranormal features in UFO phenomenology' Flying Saucer Review 23, 3, 8-10.
- Vallee, J. 1970 Passport to Magonia: From Folklore to Flying Saucers London: Neville Spearman.
- Van de Castle, R. L. 1977 'Parapsychology and anthropology' in B. B. Wolman (ed.) Handbook of Parapsychology.
- van Dijk, T. A. 1985 Handbook of Discourse Analysis Vols. 1-4 London: Academic Press.
- Vogt, E. Z. 1956 'Interviewing water dowzers' American Journal of Sociology 62, 198.
- von Daniken, E. 1971 Chariots of the Gods ? New York: Bantam Books.
- von Daniken, E. 1974 The Gold of the Gods New York: Bantam Books.
- Waismann, F. 1965 The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy London: Macmillan. (Edited by R. Harre.)
- Wallace, S. 1989 'An "interesting little war" turns nightmare as Death closes in' The Guardian 21st March.
- Wallis, R. (ed.) 1979 On the Margins of Science: the Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge University of Keele, Sociological Review Monograph no. 27.
- Warren, D. I. 1970 'Status inconsistency theory and flying saucer sightings' Science 170, 3958, 599-603.
- Watson, R. 1983 'The presentation of victim and motive in discourse: the case of police interrogation and interviews' Victimology 8, 31-52.
- Watson, R. and Weinberg, T. 1982 'Interviews and the interactional construction of accounts of homosexual identity' Sociological Analysis 11, 56-78.
- West, D. J. 1948 'The investigation of spontaneous cases' Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research 48, 264-300.
- Westrum, R. 1977 'Social intelligence about anomalies: the case of UFOs' Social Studies of Science 7, 271-302.

- Westrum, R. 1978 'Science and social intelligence about anomalies: the case of meteorites' Social Studies of Science 8, 461-493.
- Westrum, R. 1979a 'UFO reporting dynamics' in R. Haines (ed.) UFOs and the Behavioural Scientist.
- Westrum, R. 1979b 'Knowledge about sea-serpents' in R. Wallis (ed.) On the Margins of Science.
- Wetherell, M. and Potter, J. 1988 'Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires' in C. Antaki (ed.) Analysing Everyday Explanation.
- Wetherell, M., Stiven, H., Potter, J. 1987 'Unequal egalitarianism: a preliminary study of discourse concerning gender and employment opportunities' British Journal of Social Psychology 26, 59-71.
- Whalen, J., Zimmerman, D., Whalen, M. 1988 'When words fail: a single case analysis' Social Problems 35, 4, 333-362.
- Widdicombe, S. and Wooffitt, R. C. 1989 '"Being" versus "doing" punk (etc.): on achieving authenticity as a member' forthcoming.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1953 Philosophical Investigations Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (Edited by G. Anscombe.)
- Wittgenstein, L. 1980 Culture and Value Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (Edited by G. von Wright and H. Nyman: translated by P. Winch.)
- Wolman, B. B. (ed.) 1977 Handbook of Parapsychology New York: Van Nostrand.
- Wooffitt, R. C. 1987 'Sociology and the Paranormal' paper presented to the 11th International Conference of the Society for Psychical Research, Oxford. September.
- Wooffitt, R. C. and Blackmore, S. J. 1985 'Out-of-body experiences and young children' paper presented to the 9th International Conference of the Society for Psychical Research, London, September.
- Wooffitt, R. C. and Widdicombe, S. 1989 'Blame allocation in an account of a violent act: a single case analysis' unpublished manuscript, University of York.
- Woolgar, S. 1980 'Discovery, logic and sequence in a text' in K. D. Knorr, R. Krohn, R. Whitley, (eds.) The Social Process of Scientific Investigation: Sociology of the Sciences Vol. IV 239-268.
- Woolgar, S. 1986 'On the alleged distinction between discourse and praxis' Social Studies of Science 16, 309-317.

- Wootton, A. 1975 Dilemmas of Discourse London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Wootton, A. 1989 'Remarks on the methodology of conversation analysis' in D. Roger and P. Bull (eds.) Conversation.
- Wowk, M. T. 1984 'Blame allocation, sex and gender in a murder interrogation' Women's Studies International Forum 7, 75-82.
- Wuthnow, R. 1976 'Astrology and marginality' Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 15, 157-168.
- Wuthnow, R. 1978 'Religious orientations and ESP' in I. Zaretsky and M. P Leone (eds.) Religious Movements in Contemporary America.
- Wynne, A. 1986 'Reading and writing sociology' paper presented to the Discourse and Reflexivity workshoop, University of York, April.
- Yarmey, A. D. and Bull, M. P. 1978 'Where were you when President Kennedy was assassinated ?' Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society 11, 133-135.
- Zaehner, R. C. 1961 Mysticism, Sacred and Profane London: Oxford University Press.
- Zaretsky, I and Leone, M. P. (eds.) 1974 Religious Movements in Contemporary America Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zimmerman, D. H. and Pollner, M. 1971 'The everyday world as phenomenon' in J. D. Douglas (ed.) Understanding Everyday Life.
- Zohar, D. 1983 Through the Time Barrier: A Study in Precognition and Modern Physics London: Paladin.