# Interactional dynamics and the production of collective experience: the case of paranormal research groups

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# Abstract

This research examines how paranormal experiences are shared and understood collectively. The study focuses on the multimodal practices produced during a paranormal event, and observes the interactive resources drawn upon by individuals to manage, disclose and share extraordinary experiences.

Drawing upon a methodological approach informed by conversation analysis, this research uses video data to observe and analyse multimodal practices. The video data presents paranormal experiences as they happen, in the moment, and was collected by the researcher prior to research-led interests. Due to the researcher's presence as a reflective participant in the analysis of data, this study also draws upon ethnographic reflections to compliment the analytical process.

The findings from this study reveal that collective paranormal experiences are noticed, their features established, and their status as paranormal determined, by organised social practices. Despite the ontological and psychological factors that may contribute to an experience, paranormal events are noticed, talked about and displayed in the presence of others. Through these practices individuals construct turns that engender certain qualities towards an event, are sensitive to the epistemic status of themselves and co-participants, and through their construction inform the future trajectory of interaction. Thus, this study argues that the experience of an individual in the context of a collective paranormal event is one that can be seen as socially constructed.

Overall, this study contributes to a developing body of research that examines paranormal experiences from a sociological perspective. However, through these findings this analysis also contributes more broadly to research concerning demonstrative practice, talk and epistemics, and embodied practice.

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# Declaration

I hereby acknowledge that material covered in Chapter Five has also formed part of the paper "The transgressive *that:* Making the world uncanny" by Rachael Hayward (pre-marital name), Robin Wooffitt and Catherine Woods, which appeared in *Discourse Studies,* issue *17 (6).*

In accordance with the University regulations, I hereby declare that:

1. This thesis has been composed solely by myself

2. It is entirely my own work

3. It has not been submitted in part or whole for any other degree or personal qualification

4. All sources are acknowledged as References.

# Chapter One

# Seeking Paranormal Experiences: A Social and Historic Perspective

## 1.1 Introduction

*"It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it."* - Samuel Johnson, The Life of Samuel Johnson

The pursuit to understand what happens to the human spirit beyond life, and indeed whether the spirit lives on in death, has been a notable concern throughout the history of human society. Accounts of paranormal events, ghost stories and extraordinary encounters prevail across generations, geographies, and cultures, situating themselves firmly in the traditions and social history of civilisations across the world. Notably, regardless of the lack of scientific evidence to prove the existence of life beyond death, belief in the continuation of the human soul has endured. It has been argued that these beliefs help us to understand the crisis of the human condition convincing us that something exists beyond our inevitable demise (Grimmer, 1992; MacDonald, 1994), reducing fear of death (Cohen et al, 2005; Thalbourne, 1996) and provides meaning to our lives (Golsworthy & Coyle, 1999). As such, accounts of the paranormal and folklore have persisted as a feature in our lives despite scientific and technological progress. However, as acknowledged by Hufford in his study, *The Terror that Comes in the Night,* "For believed narratives that claim repeated experience as their authority…the explanation of stability cannot be ultimately settled without a consideration of the alleged experiences" (xi: 1989). Thus, whilst paranormal belief may be associated with the continued interest in life beyond death, the experiences that inform these accounts are a likely factor in determining these belief systems.[1]

The purpose of this study is to consider paranormal events in relation to collective

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[1] See Hufford's (1989, 2005) work for a discussion on the experiential-source hypothesis which informs this approach.

experiences. MacDonald (1994) defines paranormal experiences as "those instances in which persons perceive phenomena that appear to defy scientific explanation" (p.35). As such, this study examines occurrences in which two or more individuals encounter an event that is perceived to have no normal, rational explanation. Due to the elusive and spontaneous nature of paranormal events this research focuses on a social group associated with seeking paranormal experiences through their collaborative activities – the Modern Paranormal Group. Formed with the intention of investigating the paranormal, these groups, often established by individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities, are connected by a common interest – finding truth in the historic concern of life beyond death. From the perspective of this research and sociological study as whole, the interactions and activities of these groups present an opportunity to explore the mundane and extraordinary social practices that are used to address this concern. In doing so, they illuminate an area that has been denigrated by many as cult, abnormal and often just strange, on both a social *and* academic level.

As briefly discussed, the origins and fundamental objective of these social groups – to investigate the potential of life beyond death – is grounded in a broad social and anthropological history. However, it is the Modern Paranormal Group (hereafter, MPG) formed out of a milieu of embellished media, popular theoretical notions and a continuing desire to pursue the unknown that captures the interest of this study. These groups over the last 10-15 years have become popularly known as 'Paranormal Research Groups', 'Paranormal Investigation Groups' and 'Ghost Hunting Groups', all of which fall under the general terminology used here as; *'a social group formed with the intention of experiencing paranormal phenomena'*. From Europe, to America, to the Middle East, MPGs have multiplied, encapsulating an avid audience keen to follow and participate in their exploration of the unknown. A brief internet search under the term "paranormal group" presents 9,430,000 related results,[2] and although not all of these links lead to individual groups it demonstrates the tremendous interest that there is in this recent social phenomenon. This chapter, therefore, intends to introduce the MPG and examine their emergence in contemporary society

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[2] Accessed on 01.09.2015

## 1.2 Paranormal Belief and Experience

As suggested by Castro, Burrows and Wooffitt (2014), and supported by various studies (Irwin, 2009), there is substantial evidence to suggest that paranormal belief does not necessarily correlate with paranormal experiences. However, the numerous studies that have examined paranormal belief provide a useful context for understanding some of the psychological, cultural and social influences that are associated with interest in this area. As such, examination of these studies provides a relevant starting point for understanding the emergence and subsequent popularity of MPGs.

Greeley (1975) was the first to conduct a major study into belief in the paranormal throughout America, and his discovery that almost one-fifth of the population had reported a paranormal experience spurred on further research into this area. Four years later, the Gallup Poll (1979) again produced findings that over 90% of adults in America had a belief in the paranormal. Although the methodology behind these surveys has come under much scrutiny they do provide an interesting insight into the complexity of belief in the paranormal, its multidimensionality and general demographic traits (Irwin, 1993; Markovsky & Thye, 2001). Furthermore, recent research suggests that this percentage remains fairly consistent, with a particular rise in belief in the phenomena of "haunted houses" and that "ghost/spirits of the dead can come back in certain places/ situations", standing at 37% and 32% respectively of the population believing in these phenomena. Extrasensory Perception remained at the top of the rankings as gaining the highest level of belief (41%) (Gallup Poll, 2005). The rise in haunting/ ghost phenomena is particularly interesting, as it coincides with the rapid increase of MPGs over the last 10-15 years.

From a sociological standpoint one of the key issues that arises when discussing these different categories of belief is how a 'paranormal belief' can be defined. As Irwin (1993) discusses in detail, there is often an assumption that the 'paranormal' can be categorised under the broader umbrella of all things otherworldly or unusual. However, as the research suggests (Castro, Burrows & Wooffitt, 2014; Irwin, 1993; Gallup Poll, 1979, 2005; Markovsky & Thye, 2001, McClenon, 1994), the dimensions of paranormal beliefs span spiritual, supernatural and superstitious boundaries. Paranormal belief encompasses a pick 'n mix style approach to what is seen as acceptable or real, from extraordinary life forms (aliens, big foot and Loch Ness Monster), to communication

and encounters with the dead, precognition, occult practices, demonic possession, ESP (Extrasensory perception), religious experiences, and unlucky symbols to name just a few (Irwin, 1993). The difficulty therefore arises in how to categorise these in such a way that a clear approach can be defined to measure and analyse the results. Various researchers have attempted to rectify this issue by employing inventories that encompass this broad overview such as Tobacyk's Paranormal Belief Scale (1988), and Otis and Alcock's Extraordinary Belief Inventory (1982). In doing this, various demographic patterns have emerged that are fairly consistent across studies, and point towards underlying social and cultural characteristics that determine belief in the paranormal.

For the purpose of this research the demographic trends identified will correlate with the types of beliefs associated with the activities of MPGs, most notably belief in ghosts/ spirits, haunted houses and spiritualism. Although other beliefs are omitted, it is worth noting that often belief in one paranormal phenomenon is accompanied by another (Gallup Poll, 2005). Research suggests that beliefs in spiritualism (Tobacyk, Pritchett & Mitchell, 1988) and ghosts (Clarke, 1991) tend to fall across different ages, however, it was noted that paranormal beliefs in general were more prominent in younger adults (Irwin, 1993; Gallup Poll, 2005). In relation to gender, females showed a higher percentage of belief in matters concerning spiritual experience, with a higher proportion believing in "ghosts, or the spirits of dead people can come back in certain places or situations", "can hear from or communicate mentally with someone who has died" and that "houses can be haunted" (Gallup Poll, 2005). Indeed females, with the exception of belief in UFO and extraterrestrial experiences, were more likely to believe in a wide range of paranormal occurrences (Goode, 2000; Markovsky & Thye, 2001; Irwin, 1993). People of Hispanic origin were seen as expressing the highest level of belief in ghosts, haunted houses, communication with the dead and channelling of spiritual entities (Goode, 2000). Factors such as economic status, education and employment levels showed variable trends, indicating that the social marginality model often applied to the paranormal belief argument is not consistent across this multidimensional faction. However, there was some indication that a lower education was indicative of belief in haunted houses and ghost experiences, although the disparity between school leavers and postgraduate level students was not hugely significant (Goode, 2000).

Further to the demographic research that has been conducted into paranormal beliefs,

there are also significant studies investigating cognitive and behavioural traits. Unsurprisingly, this research shows that a concern about one's post-mortem state and belief in life beyond death correlate positively with belief in the paranormal (Irwin, 1985). As discussed by Irwin (1993) a concern with things beyond the physical realm, and immersion in subjective experiences points towards a world-view that is subjective in nature, including a tendency to adopt an external locus of control. The paranormal, and those that choose to acknowledge it have also often been associated with cognitive deficiencies, branded as unintelligent, naive and irrational. However, research into intelligence and paranormal belief has not shown consistent results, and as previously discussed correlates with educational level have not produced any definitive conclusions. Paranormal belief, in fact, within some domains has been associated with a high level of creativity and the desire to encounter different experiences. Although these measures fall out with the conventional IQ test, they reflect exploratory and intuitive personality traits in contrast to the delinquent description that is often quoted in psychological research. Nevertheless, it is at this point that it should also be acknowledged that research suggests a high proneness to fantasizing and a high level of hypnotic suggestibility are positively correlated with belief in the paranormal (Irwin, 1993). Furthermore, various studies have linked childhood trauma and abuse with paranormal experiences at a later stage in life, with a strong connection between these early abusive experiences and a tendency to adopt methods of dissociation or fantasy proneness (Lawrence et al, 1995; Perkins & Allen, 2006; Irwin, 1993). The cognitive and behavioural factors, mentioned here, form just a small part of the numerous examinations that have taken place into the reasons for belief in the paranormal. Whereas the demographic studies previously examined demonstrate the broader social categories that paranormal beliefs inhabit, these studies examine some of the innate characteristics that have been examined and associated with paranormal-type experiences and belief. However, these cognitive and demographic categories have also been exposed to the influences of external social forces, most notably in this domain, the media. The media is a prominent and often essential means of disseminating information about this area to the general public, and is therefore worthy of examination.

*1.2.1 Cultural influence and the paranormal*

Markovskye and Thye (2001) assert the prominence of the media as an important tool for information, stories and opinions about the paranormal. Books, radio, films, magazines, web pages, television shows, and newspapers, are all highly supportive of the paranormal as a popular news item, likely to grab the attention of a captive audience. Stories about the paranormal are often framed within a 'believers-against-sceptic' type narrative, with sceptics being transformed by a truly unexplainable experience, and the approach to phenomena is often one-sided in support of a paranormal origin (Goode, 2000). As is explored by McClenon (1994), reports of paranormal phenomena are much more likely to make the headlines if they are written from the perspective of belief rather than scepticism. As in the *Alexandria Haunting* news release discussed in his publication, the action of the press to release a story that had been largely edited to depict a paranormal rather than natural explanation for the misfortunate deaths of the couple, aids in reaffirming the belief that ghosts can return from the grave to seek vengeance on the living. The media can not only play a role confirming beliefs that already exist, but also as shown by Kottmeyer (1990), can actually aid in moulding the experience that is reported. In a society where the media is a huge influence on the day-to-day living of individuals this one-sided affirmation undoubtedly plays some role in helping to shape and determine the beliefs of individuals. This is supported by several studies that have examined the influence of paranormal TV shows (Sparks, Nelson & Campbell, 1997; Sparks, 1998; Sparks and Miller, 2001), all of which have shown a relationship between belief in the paranormal and the viewing of paranormal-type programmes. However, Irwin (2009) argues that whilst research suggests that individuals may use programmes to rationalise their beliefs, caution should be exercised in attributing TV to the source of paranormal belief. Furthermore, access to media on the World Wide Web and the extensive dissemination of material supporting narratives about the paranormal is likely to further contribute to belief in this area (Irwin, 2009).

The ability to access information and services on the internet has also led to the increasing availability of paid consumer services. It is no longer necessary to physically visit psychics, tarot card readers, healers and crystal readers, advancements in communications have made it possible for these types of services to be available at the

touch of a button. Shepherd (2008) reports that this accessibility is so strong that participation in psychic readings through 'psychic hotlines' has become an addiction to the extent that support groups exist to provide psychological release to these so called 'psychic junkies'. Indeed Hill (2010) reports that according to statistics from the Office of Fair Trading in Britain in 2007, over 170,000 consumers fell victim to psychic and clairvoyant scams, losing approximately £40 million. Although these individuals are not in the majority, the mere prospect that investments in these services can become an addiction, and the vast sum of debt that has been incurred by these individuals, demonstrates the substantial market that is thriving in a society eager to embrace belief in the paranormal. In addition, akin to the media, it can be suggested that promotion of these services further fosters the notion that the paranormal is acceptable and somewhat ironically 'normal'.

It is evident from a review of existing studies that a complex relationship between psychological, social and cultural factors is present in determining paranormal belief and experience. As suggested by Greeley (1975), and others (Castro, Burrows & Wooffitt, 2014), these factors warrant further study and investigation, particularly in relation to the sociological variables that may foster such experiences, an area of study that is yet to receive significant academic attention. The MPG, as will be explored in the proceeding section, can be considered a contemporary and recent development. However, the activities of these social groups as they seek, claim, record and share paranormal experiences provides a unique opportunity to study exceptional experiences through a social lens.

## 1.3 The Emergence of the Modern Paranormal Group: Who, What and Why?

The common associations that arise when presented with the prospect of paranormal groups are images and theme tunes from familiar media, often most notably, Ghostbusters and Most Haunted. However, behind an abundance of popularised culture sits a social group determined by hierarchy, a strictly followed set of rules and a desire to be viewed by the watching public as a serious and professional community. Due to limited research on Modern Paranormal Groups this section will provide an introduction to the MPG based on the ethnographic knowledge of the researcher and online

discourse.

The MPG is a social group formed with the intention of experiencing paranormal phenomena. It is suggested that over 1,200 paranormal groups are operating in the UK alone (Parascience: Who Ya Gonna Call?, 2010), although other researchers suggest that this figure is closer to 2500, up from 150 groups a decade ago (Hill, 2010). With such a broad international reach it is surprising to find that so little research has been carried out into these social groups whose numbers have increased so considerably in recent years.

There is, however, some initial survey research available providing a basic, if not truly generalisable, glimpse into the dynamics of these groups. From this data it is possible to observe that there is often an even distribution of male and female participants, and that the age range generally sits between 28-52yrs. Websites associated with paranormal groups show that these members are often from a range of occupational backgrounds and vary in their level of education. Respondents also claimed to have an average of 6 years of experience investigating the paranormal and, interestingly, although the majority believed their work to be scientific in nature only 29% of respondents had received any formal training. This initial research also provides an interesting insight into the beliefs of MPGs stating that although 79% of participants claimed to have had direct experience with a ghost, only 65% claimed to believe in ghosts and a very small proportion stated that they were religious, standing at 29% (Paranthrology: Ghost Hunters, 2010). This, therefore, indicates that the motivation to emerge oneself in the activities of these groups spans more than a mere belief in the paranormal. Suggesting a more complex relationship between experience and what the social environment presented by these groups can provide.

Furthermore, MPGs take a serious perspective towards their activities, positioning themselves as a community providing a service and within a 'helping' capacity. This serious exterior is indicated in the groups 'mission' and 'ethos', and often displayed within the discourse used online to create the group's public presence.

> "TAPS promises to bring professionalism, personality, and confidentiality to each case we investigate. We understand that it is tough to call someone like us, and we respect your right to privacy."(The Atlantic Paranormal Society, 2015)

The above quote has been taken from The Atlantic Paranormal Society website otherwise referred to as TAPS, an international community of paranormal research groups that are recruited and dispatched to provide a 'paranormal service' to the public operating under the TAPS mentality. This organisation, although based in America, connects with groups around the world under an umbrella known as the TAPS Family (TAPS Family, 2015). This includes groups spanning Brazil, Europe, Israel and Australia. Overall, at the time of viewing[3] 117 groups were featured as operating under this organisation. The quote provided from the TAPS website is typical of the type of professional discourse presented of MPG websites. There is often assurance of confidentiality, an expression of the difficulty individuals may have in talking about their 'issues' and the guarantee of a personal and professional service, supporting the helping image portrayed by the group. The same webpage contains phrases in the text such as; "sensitive cases", "the psychology of making someone feel comfortable during these times of fear and uncertainty", and "trouble dealing with paranormal influences in your life" (The Atlantic Paranormal Society, 2015). The paranormal then is situated by these groups in a context that is problematic if unresolved and therefore open to the help of professionals. The use of this kind of discourse enables the MPG to establish serious foundations to their otherwise unusual activities.

"Our main goal is to help people understand why they are experiencing paranormal activity & put our clients minds at ease, while doing something we are passionate about." (Louth Paranormal, 2012)

"Professionalism and courtesy are of the utmost importance when investigating ANY location…Individual and client privacy is also important to us and confidentiality guaranteed." (Avon Paranormal Team, 2012)

"…if you think you are having Paranormal activity, and feel funny about contacting a group like ours don't, you are not alone we are here to help. with over thirty years of experience in the Paranormal and the Occult, we can offer sound advice and help, we are a spiritual based group but we still look for logical reason first, if it is a true haunting then the spirit will let us know." (Northern Ireland Paranormal Research

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[3] Accessed on 01.09.2015

Association, 2012)[4]

However, it is worth expressing here that although MPGs will often claim to offer psychological and experience-based advice, individuals within the group rarely have any formal or professional training – rendering this claim questionable. Organisations such as, ASSAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena) and TAPS, as well as smaller groups including Louth Paranormal, offer a variation of training including basics in parapsychology, managing a group and interacting with clients.[5] These training courses, for a fee,[6] enable MPG members to gain a level of credibility in the field that is recognised amongst other groups. However, although these courses do provide a level of basic knowledge within the area of the paranormal, interestingly they do not address the key service that MPGs actively promote; their ability to offer psychological comfort, and therefore lack in the skills that may be deemed necessary for such 'help' to be administered.

This public image of a 'helping' service has been further enhanced by the largely popularised television shows that are now widely accessible to individuals. The appearance of shows such as the British-based *Most Haunted* initially broadcast on Living TV in 2002, can undoubtedly be seen as sparking a huge public interest in the paranormal. Viewing figures for the show are reported to be in the millions, with each new episode attracting an audience of approximately one million, and *Most Haunted Live* bringing in viewing figures exceeding five million (Fielding, Acorah & Paul, 2005:16). Situated in the subgenre of "supernatural reality TV" (Koven, 2007), *Most Haunted* gained tremendous coverage and in doing so managed to capture a wide audience keen to watch paranormal investigators experience unusual phenomena and present this to the wider public. Each episode focused on the production team consisting of former children's television presenter Yvette Fielding and a number of reported experts, including a historian, medium and parapsychologist, investigating a reportedly haunted location. As discussed by Koven (2007), each expert plays a specific role during the production of an episode with the medium facilitating contact with any spirits, the historian validating any information provided by the medium, and the

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[4] Extracts are presented as provided on the group's website inclusive of grammatical errors.

[5] The word 'client' is often given to the individual whose premises the group are investigating.

[6] Training can be expensive, for example, a course run by the TAPS Family costs £70pp.

parapsychologist ensuring a "scientific" investigation is conducted and when appropriate debunking claims of paranormal activity. In each episode the crew will walk around the venue usually with a medium to establish contact with the spirits. This will be followed by several vigils in which the crew will attempt to make contact with spirits by asking them to respond to their various requests, for instance to make a sound or show themselves. The audience watched in excitement as mediums became possessed, the team were subjected to disembodied physical attacks and spirits were sent into the light,[7] and although in its eight years of production not one shred of paranormal evidence was uncovered, the public remained hooked. Spin off shows appeared, such as the aforementioned *Most Haunted Live* which enabled the audience, for a fee, to join the team as a live audience as they investigated a haunted location. The huge popularity of *Most Haunted* acted as a catalyst for further TV shows. With one of the main criticisms being the lack of evidence presented by the show, a new proof-driven series emerged in 2004, *Ghost Hunters*. Using a range of electronic pieces of equipment, the *Ghost Hunters* team endeavour to help clients who report paranormal phenomena, finding alternative explanations to reports and capturing physical evidence of spiritual activity. In contrast to *Most Haunted*, *Ghost Hunters* did not use mediums or spiritualistic practices on their investigations, and focused largely on helping the individuals reporting the activity, including a 'reveal' section at the end of each episode where the team were featured revealing their findings to the client. These television series, amongst an array of other media, have helped to enhance the public image of paranormal investigation as more than just a 'ghost hunting' expedition, and into a serious profession. Furthermore, the interest sparked by these shows led to a surge in amateur groups forming under the same pretence, and with public acceptance being at a high MPGs started to gain formal recognition within society.

Although the structure and social presence of these groups is important, it is the interactions that take place during their activities that forms the focal point of this research. The proceeding section will therefore be dedicated to exploring the activities and practices of MPGs.

Typically MPGs will carry out some form of investigation into reports of alleged haunting or spiritual phenomena at either a public or private location. Public locations

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[7]A term used to refer to the practise of helping a spirit to move on from its earth-bound ties, often also referred to as encouraging a spirit to 'move on'.

are defined as, open to the general public (such as a library, historic building or pub), and private locations usually defined as a person's home. Popular destinations for these investigations often have historic grounding in traumatic human events, for example castles and prisons, or those locations that are well-known for their haunted reputation. Groups will often research potential venues of interest and request permission to investigate, or as is often the case the groups may be called upon by the owners of a location who are looking for answers to their 'paranormal issues'. As mentioned earlier, larger bodies such as The Atlantic Paranormal Society, exist as an umbrella for groups internationally to work under, stating particular rules and standards that groups must abide to if they are to be considered as participating members of the organisation. These may include rules of conduct on investigations, number of years the group has been running and their public presence. When groups operate under TAPS Family they may be called upon by the members of the organisation to carry out investigations. This will be with the intention of helping members of the community who have contacted the TAPS Family in need of assistance usually due to some form of haunting phenomena. In exchange, paranormal groups obtain access to other participating groups through forums, conferences and training sessions, as well as enjoying the prestige of being part of an internationally recognised body.

Once the group have secured a location they will begin the process of planning the investigation, for a number of groups this then becomes known as a 'case' – one which for all intents and purpose needs to be solved. Group members will collate information about the case by researching previous reports of spiritual encounters, visiting the location prior to investigating and often talking at length with the location owners. This process all forms part of the professional service offered by the group, building relationships, offering advice and ensuring that they have enough case background to run a well-informed investigation. Once this is achieved the group will then collaborate their information to form a strategy for approaching and solving the case. It is at this point that groups adopt either a scientific or spiritual approach.

For the purpose of this discussion the divide will be categorised into two distinct approaches; the 'scientific' and the 'spiritual'. The position taken by the group – that is whether they believe their activities to be grounded in a scientific or spiritual philosophy - will greatly reflect the methodological approach adopted by group members. In doing so it affects a number of aspects of their investigative approach,

from the tools used to the language spoken, and it is therefore important to draw a distinction between these two areas. The proceeding section will therefore consider these two perspectives, however, consideration should be made to the individual differences that exist within this field. Therefore, although these two approaches are addressed, it is a simplistic overview and crossovers between these areas exist as well as variations in methods.

### *1.3.1 Modern Paranormal Groups: The 'Scientific' Approach*

Those groups adopting a scientific approach to investigating the paranormal will often present this as their ethos, as demonstrated in the quote below:

> "The CPRS works in a scientific and professional manner. The basis of the scientific approach to our research methods is to firstly investigate and rule out where possible all natural causes that can mistakenly give rise to reports of paranormal phenomena. Our basic methods are one of observation, recording, data collection and background research." (Cambridge Paranormal Research Society, 2012)

MPGs claiming to take a scientific approach will often clearly state that they use technology and 'tested' methods to conduct investigations, often excluding communication methods such as the Ouija board, séances or divination. The group justify this decision by stating that these methods are not reliable due to their susceptibility to human manipulation. Other groups may also state that these methods can invite in 'unwelcome' paranormal activity or negative spiritual entities, and are seen as an unnecessary form of spirit communication.

> "UKSPI's aim is to find the cause of paranormal phenomena using the most high tech equipment available to us. UKSPI is a non-profit organisation that welcomes anyone who is interested in paranormal phenomenon. UKSPI will achieve valid results using only the most professional methods created by UKSPI through intense research. Any result that can be questioned, or experimented without fair conditions will be discarded." (United Kingdom Society for Paranormal Investigation, 2015)

The focus of the groups' investigations will be on collecting physical evidence with a lesser reliance on the use of mediumistic or psychic abilities; this may include exclusion

of personal experiences due to the groups' inability to sufficiently record these in a physical manner. To aid data collection groups will use a variety of equipment including camcorders, cameras and dictaphones to record phenomena. They may also use other pieces of equipment based on the theory that spirits cause atmospheric fluctuations during manifestation, such as thermometers and humidity readers. Alongside this other equipment including EMF (Electro-Magnetic Field) readers, full-spectrum and thermo-imaging cameras, motion sensors and strobe lighting may be used. It is worth noting that MPGs tend to follow the current trend when using equipment based on the practices of other groups and technology popular amongst televised paranormal shows without necessarily any real understanding of the meaning and implications of their use. It is therefore common to find reports from investigations that highlight fluctuations in temperature, anomalous EMF fields and other claimed phenomena, without any real attempt to explain what this means to the group's research. It is worth stating, however, that groups will often use equipment such as thermometers and EMF readers to provide natural explanations for phenomena; for example linking a high EMF field caused by an overhanging fuse box with people reporting apparitional experiences in that location.

The structure of a scientific investigation will usually be fairly formalised. Initial research will be carried out into the location, individuals will be interviewed to obtain details on the phenomena reported and an action plan will be drawn up for the investigation. Members of the group will have various roles to play, such as Team Manager, Equipment Specialist, Cameraman and Case Manager, and often a meeting before the investigation will be planned to talk through the details. On arrival at the location there is usually a debunking session[8] and a tour of the location will ensue. During the investigation the group will often separate into smaller teams to cover the location and each team will be equipped with various pieces of equipment. Although the method used by each group varies, at each location of interest the group will attempt to capture physical proof of the claimed phenomena. This often involves a member of the group 'asking out' - talking to the reported spirit and asking for physical proof to be presented (i.e. "please can you move that chair", "can you use your voice", "give us a sign that you are here"). Teams will move between areas of the location repeating this process and recording their progress.

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[8]A term given to the process of discrediting any claimed paranormal phenomena and finding alternative 'normal' explanations.

"We are very selective with locations simply because of the amount of work and study we put into every location investigated…There will be an investigation brief and presentation on the night. The brief will consist of facts and targets, equipment and experiments to be used, and a general idea of the evidence we're looking for in order to meet the expectations and objectives." (Paranormal Intelligence Gathering Service, 2015)

Investigations usually last between 4 to 8 hours, and usually take place at night, in the dark. Post-investigation the group will review their footage, capture and discuss any recorded phenomena and usually present this along with a written report to the client. This process of presenting the client with evidence to support or discredit phenomena is often seen as an integral part of the process, and acts as a means of further developing the group's reputation as a service assisting the community. It is also common for the reports and footage to be displayed publicly on the group's website and social media networks. Finally, it is worth emphasising that the purpose of this method is to provide physical evidence of phenomena and natural explanations for those events that are not deemed paranormal in nature.

### 1.3.2 Modern Paranormal Group's: The 'Spiritual' Approach

MPGs adopting the spiritual approach use similar methods to those popular in the rise of the Spiritualist movement, with a strong reliance on the presence of a medium.

"Our most important link with the world of spirit is our Medium. They have the ability to not only sense their presence but also to make contact and find out vital information." (Spirit Quest UK, 2015)

Information about a location revolves around the medium and their ability to detect and communicate with the reported spirits. There is usually emphasis on séances and divination with personal experiences being considered as important evidence of spiritual communication. The spiritual approach will, however, often use recording equipment and there is still an emphasis on capturing physical phenomena as well as validating the information provided by the medium. Traditional forms of communication will also be

used such as pendulums and dowsing rods to detect spirit activity. In terms of the investigation, there will often be less formality and group members will be encouraged to follow their personal instinct or the designated mediums' intuition about the whereabouts of the spirit. There is less if no intention to debunk phenomena and the presence of a spirit is often assumed rather than questioned.

The spiritual approach may also involve groups attempting to carry out 'clearings' and other rituals to help the spirit 'move on'. They may consider this element of their investigation as a means of helping the individuals who have allowed the group to conduct the investigation as well as the spirit itself. This part of the investigation will often involve the group asking the spirit to move 'towards the light' (believed to be a way of transitioning the spirit beyond its earth-bound ties) and can often be an emotional experience for the group members.

> "Here at SKPI, we are fully trained and have numerous case histories and references to show that we are professional in our work and specialise in clearing your house. We would come to visit your home and communicate with any spirit that may be present. Then we would talk with them and understand why they are visiting your home and see how we may help them. After we have spoken with them, we would proceed to move them onto the light and then continue with a house cleansing."
> (Spirit Knights Paranormal Investigators, 2015)

It is worth noting that the spiritual approach in general attracts members who believe in spirits, in contrast to the scientific approach that attracts a range of individuals from believers through to sceptics.

### 1.3.3 Experiencing and Reporting Paranormal Events

Regardless of the approach adopted by a group paranormal experiences are frequently reported during MPG investigations. Although these experiences range from individual through to shared group experiences they are inherently social events, with the group members participating in activities such as claiming, describing, exclaiming and denying their experiences with others. To highlight the social processes involved during these events an illustrative example of an activity undertaken on a MPG investigation is

provided below.[9]

The following event takes place during a paranormal investigation in a historic building in the city of York in 2009. The paranormal group consists of three members, all female, including one member of the group (referred to as Participant A) who claims to be a medium. The location has reported numerous haunting-type experiences from guests and staff alike, and the group have decided to conduct their investigation in the basement of the building where the majority of paranormal events have been reported. This description presents a series of experiences that are encountered by the group over a four minute period. During this time the group are participating in an Ouija Board session,[10] and as such could be considered as adopting a spiritual approach to their investigation. They are, however, also recording the investigation on a camcorder which is facing the group and using a Gauss Meter[11] and Dictaphone to record and monitor any additional unusual activity. The group are sitting around the Ouija Board which has been placed between the group members in the middle of the table. Each group member has their finger placed on a glass on top of the Ouija Board which is currently located in the centre. Participant A (the medium) asks the spirit to spell out its name by moving the glass to the corresponding letters on the board. Within a few seconds the glass starts to move and the group follow the movement of the glass as it lands on the first letter "M". Once the glass stops the group all look at the letter, and Participant B states the letter "M" which Participant A then writes down on a piece of paper located next to her. Participant A then asks the spirit to spell out the next letter. The glass starts to move and lands on the letter "U". Again, the group look at the letter, which is spoken and then written down. This process continues for five more letters; "N", "T", "H", "O", "B". As the glass lands on the letter "B", Participant A looks at the piece of paper she has written the letters on and says the word "Munthob". Both participants B and C then repeat this word whilst looking at each other. At this point the Gauss Meter which has been located behind Participant B starts to make a low buzzing noise (believed by the MPG to be indicative of a spiritual presence). Responding to the sound of the Gauss Meter Participant A asks the spirit if it is called "Munthob", and as she does this the Gauss

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[9] The illustrative example provided is based on ethnographic observations from the "Munthob Experience" extracts detailed in the analysis section.

[10] A board with letters and numbers positioned on it, usually in a circular or half-moon set up. Used as a tool to communicate with spirits which is indicated by the planchette moving to different letters or numbers on the board in direct response to questions from participants.

[11] A Gauss Meter measures electromagnetic fields (EMF). MPGs use Gauss Meter based on the theory that spirits produce an EMF and as such can interact with the device, which will create a high pitched sound when it detects an EMF field in the vicinity.

Meter sound becomes louder. The group members look towards each other with surprised facial expressions, Participant A states "yeh" acknowledging the potential response to her questions, Participant B greets the spirit with the statement "hello Munthob", and Participant C claims "it is definitely Munthob".  As Participant C makes her claim Participant B closes her eyes, exhales and says "Jesus". Participant A and C then look towards her. When asked if she is okay, Participant B claims that her eyes are watering suggesting that she has had a private experience to cause this sensation. The Gauss Meter sound continues to increase and the group look towards the direction that the sound is coming from, and once again Participant A states "Hi Munthob" addressing the spirit. As the sound increases the group members look towards one another displaying surprised expressions. When the sound stops Participant A and B look towards each other, place their hand over their mouths and produce an audible expletive, demonstrating joint surprise over the event. Following this Participant B wipes her eyes, and Participant C responds to this by asking why her eyes are watering. Participant B answers her by stating that she experienced something "really strong" and asks Participant C if she experienced the same thing. Participant C denies experiencing the sensation described by B, and instead makes a joke about the reactions of Participant A and B towards the experience. The group respond to C's joke by smiling and laughing with her, and then all return to place their finger back on the glass and continue questioning the spirit.

This illustrative example highlights a number of social features of MPG investigations. Group members produce descriptions of their activity and the experience as it occurs, make claims about their own experiences and the features of the event, and in reaction to the experience produce exclamations. In addition, they visually interact with each other and the environment, touching, looking, seeing, and producing facial expressions in response to phenomena. In this example, the experiences encountered included the physical movement of the glass on the Ouija Board, the audible sound of the Gauss Meter, and the private sensation encountered by Participant B. These types of experience are not uncommon during MPG investigations with individuals reporting a range of sensory, physical and psychic experiences.

"Several members of the investigation team reported hearing sounds like heavy items being dragged across the floor, this was reported by both teams and no cause could be found, as people were present in the area at the time objects being moved about

would have been seen." – *Investigation Report from Woodchester Mansion 2009, UK Paranormal Events*

"Barry noted cold spot forehead height whilst sitting in chair by cupboards. Moved from left to right dropping slowly down the right side of my face. Also experienced by Lisa and Joan. We thought it was a draught but that was impossible as vents above were closed and there were no windows in the room. When leaning forward to write notes cold spot stayed behind me on the back of my head. Also orange pinpricks of light observed by myself and Lisa appearing and vanishing very quickly in various places around the room" – *Investigation Report from Robert Burns Cottage 2014, The Ghost Club*

The extracts provided above have been taken from reports written by MPGs following an investigation, and highlight the various experiences that they have encountered as well as the activities the groups engage with during these events. For instance, in both descriptions the groups record that they collectively investigated the area for a potential rationale cause, although none was found. In addition, it is evident that individuals have claimed and described experiences during the investigation. This is particularly important as it is evident through sharing these experiences that the phenomenon was experienced by more than one member of the group. As such, it is evident in the context of MPGs that paranormal investigations are constituted out of a variety of social and interactional activities.

### 1.3.4 The Public Face of Paranormal Groups

Although the strategic approach may differ for groups following either the scientific or spiritual perspective there is a general interest in sharing findings and accounts of paranormal phenomena. This is often done through the group's website and various social media sites, sharing detailed written reports, data and videos. In particular, YouTube has become a popular means of establishing an online presence and enhancing reputation, with groups often displaying their findings through short films edited together with opening scenes, a theme tune and closing credits *(see for instance, Torchlight Paranormal Investigations, YouTube, 2015)*. Within these films groups members are often identified by role, and clips will be put together to show evidence

that the group deem appropriate to support their case conclusions. The process of publicly sharing findings further enhances the 'for the greater good' mentality as they allow the general public access to, potentially extraordinary data, free of charge. However, it is worth noting that as MPGs have grown in number and the public's interest has increased in paranormal investigations, there has been a shift towards groups offering paid paranormal events. As such, there has been a move from social interest group to a paid consumer service, with companies such as *Mysteria Paranormal*, *Fright Nights* and *Alone in the Dark Entertainment*, offering the 'ghost hunting experience' for costs of anything from £20 up to £200 a night. These events allow members of the public to adopt the role of paranormal investigator often combining activities from across both the scientific and spiritual spectrum. Individuals may be invited to use various pieces of equipment, work with a psychic medium, take part in development classes[12] and join séances, all at a variety of haunted locations. The events are popular, usually taking an average of 20 people depending on the venue, and businesses are often able to generate a large loyalty base of customers who are keen to participate in future events. For instance, Mysteria Paranormal Events operate a 'ghost club' which offers its members (for free) 5% off the cost of any future investigations that they choose to join (Mysteria Paranormal Events, 2015). Little to no experience is required to run events, and other than public liability insurance, there are no general expectations or restrictions placed on how the business operates. It is a service based on the pretence of offering a paranormal experience to consumers – albeit one that cannot be predicatively guaranteed.

The paranormal experience and in particular the ghost hunting experience, therefore, appears to have become somewhat of a commoditised item - an experience that can be paid for and consumed. They have become part of what Pine and Gilmore (2011) would recognise as the experience economy, in which individuals seek out meaningful and memorable experiences through their purchasing decisions. Similar to the rise in popularity of Dark Tourism destinations (Stone, 2006) described by Lennon and Foley (1996: 198) as; "a phenomenon which encompasses the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites", the significant number

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[12]The purpose of a development class is to enable individuals to enhance or discover their own psychic ability, and within this context it is often seen as a means of helping the group to connect with the spirit world during the investigation
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of groups now offering paid paranormal events suggests a similar allure to haunted locations. Indeed, many of the categories that dark tourism sites sit within, including prisons (Strange & Kempa, 2003) and war-related sites (Smith 1998; Bigley et al. 2010) are likely to be of interest to those looking to partake in ghost-hunting activities. However, it is worth highlighting that in addition to the allure of a dark tourism site, ghost hunting provides the opportunity for individuals to immerse themselves in a context where observing and possibly even interacting with the dead, rather than just learning about them, may be possible.

### 1.3.5 Why study Modern Paranormal Groups?

The MPG is not solely an interest group adopting the role of being ghost hunters for an evening. They are a social group that believe they offer an important service to the community: that distribute their public image and activities through the media; are influenced by popular culture; and in some cases even capitalise on this service. The MPG's activities are determined by a philosophical approach to their work existing within a hierarchy of group members whose roles help to build upon and shape this mentality. Furthermore, organisations exist to categorise and unify groups, bringing homogeneity to their methods and conduct. Thus, paranormal groups have become organised social structures founded with the purpose of providing evidence and answers to confirm or deny the existence of life beyond death. Perhaps what makes the commitment to this purpose profound is that whilst so many groups exist, there is still a lack of substantial evidence that would help to bring society closer to a conclusion about this. Therefore, it appears that the presence of criticism from inconclusive evidence which surrounds these groups is not a deterrent to their continued and growing existence. As examined, for group members unusual events *do* happen, and these events happen when they use the various tools and methods that they have become accustomed to, further reinforcing a belief that their activities are providing results. The activities that groups participate in are collaborative, and experiences are often shared and communicated within others. Furthermore, the investigations that groups conduct are regularly filmed and shared with the public, providing access to a range of visual and written data of these practices. MPGs therefore present an excellent opportunity to examine the interactive processes that unfold as an experience takes place. As such, they provide the prospect of examining an intriguing feature of human experience which has

its origin in a rich social and cultural history. To situate this research further, the social and cultural history of paranormal investigation and research will be examined.

## 1.4 A Social History of Paranormal Investigation and Research

MPGs have come into being in the past 10-15yrs, however, the formation of groups whose intention is to experience paranormal phenomena can be traced back to tribal beliefs and practices. These religious groups both historically and presently in certain cultures, use similar practices to those demonstrated by MPGs to engage in paranormal-type experiences.

The emergence of early shamanism is a key example of such activity, and arose through the congregation of small communities that used trance-like states to generate anomalous experience, subsequently attaching ideologies to these experiences (Houran, 2004). It is these early ideologies and experiences that have provided the foundation of many modern religions, and involved practices relying heavily on magic and divination (Inglis, 1979), shamanistic leaders and a belief in contact with spirits. Rituals were often carried out in groups with a strong reliance on participation from the individuals, an atmospheric environment, and often the inducement of altered states of consciousness (Noll, 1985).[13] Similar beliefs and practices are echoed throughout religion, and although the terminology differs significantly the prospect of communication, invocation and observation of supernatural forces is acknowledged.

These anomalous experiences have helped to provide a position and reason for religion in society, perpetuating the belief in an existence of life after death. Leading on from this, the powerful nature of religion has defined it as a driving force for the formation of society and culture. It is therefore not surprising that humanity had retained an interest in anomalous experience and its origin from an early age attempting to seek answers and justify its existence. As a result of this, methods to explore a belief in life beyond death have undergone continual change, and establishing ways of monitoring, interacting and capturing evidence of some form of spiritual encounter has been an ongoing concern. For instance, the acquisition of knowledge other than through the five senses can be seen across tribal communities (Inglis, 1979) and managing ways of

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[13] It is interesting to note the parallels between these historical practices and the Modern Paranormal Group which encourage participation in various activities, conduct investigations in dark and historic surroundings, and often use meditative type activities to induce an 'open' state of mind.

acquiring this information was seen as an important part of society. In the early stages this was achieved through forms of divination which often took place during ceremonial proceedings, leading to individuals taking on the ability to communicate through spirit, control natural forces and perform healing rituals (Noll, 1985). Throughout history, however, the methods of obtaining information from a 'paranormal origin' have changed, arguably driven by a shift in cultural development. An example of this can be seen in early reference to a communication tool much like the modern day Ouija board used by Greeks in the fourth century. The group of men responsible for the use of this communication method which is described as a table with "a metal dish on it, round the rim of which were inscribed the letters of the alphabet" (Inglis, 1979: 71), faced execution for the crime of conspiring against the Emperor Valens[14] after they admitted to the tool spelling out the name of the Emperor's successor. Communication with extra-mundane agencies through the use of letters is also developed by Giovanni Pico de la Mirandola who used 'The Cabala', a tool that used letters to spell out messages from God and summon up angels and spirits during séance sessions (Beloff, 1993). It is worth noting that the use of letters for communication could only be conceived as a possibility after the invention of the alphabet, it is therefore, not surprising that new tools of communication have arisen through progressions in society.

In terms of observing and studying the paranormal, reference to early controlled experiments can be traced back to the neo-platonic period. At this time the curiosity of Porphyrys and his pupil Iamblichus, led them to conduct "spiritist experiments", examining the possession and trance states undergone by mediums. These experiments provided information about the effect of lighting conditions on the mediums, physical changes that appeared to take place and somewhat barbarically the results of inflicting pain on individuals in this state of consciousness. Perhaps controversially there is even mention in the bible of psychic experiments during the demonstration of Elijah in the Old Testament. It is said that Elijah displayed his magical powers, under various controlled settings, by summoning the 'fire of the Lord' and subsequently ended the drought by summoning a cloud of rain from the sea (Inglis, 1979).

These early examples of groups converging to experience paranormal-type phenomena highlight a number of similarities with the MPG; the participation of more than one

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[14] Emperor Valens was an Eastern Roman Emperor between 364 to 378 AD.

person, the use of various tools and methods of interaction, and a desire to control or monitor the activity taking place. This would then suggest that the MPG is not simply influenced by modern societal influences, but is driven by a belief in the potential to communicate with a spirit world that has existed for centuries.

It is, however, the mid-19C in an era governed by advancements in science and understanding, one that was riddled with new ways of thinking and studying the natural world that the recent characteristics of the MPG start to emerge. It was also a time that the concept of examining anomalous experiences gained serious academic attention, leading to the discipline known today as parapsychology (Irwin & Watt, 2007). The literature points to two key periods of time that contributed to the foundations of parapsychological research; the mesmeric era and spiritualism (Beloff, 1993; Irwin & Watt, 2007).

Dr Franz Anton Mesmer is responsible for the rise in mesmerism after employing the use of a theory he developed during his doctoral thesis in 1766, called 'animal magnetism' (Edge et al, 1986). This rather controversial theory led to an interest in the trance-like state that was induced in some patients through this practise, termed 'somnambulism', and consequently the extrasensory perceptual abilities that were observed during this state. These Somnambules appeared to be able to diagnose illnesses without any awareness of the patient's condition, practise travelling clairvoyance (as in the case of Emma L[15]), and recover lost objects (Beloff, 1993). Due to these incredible feats that appeared to be achievable through 'magnetism', followers of Mesmer would use this technique to recreate their own parapsychological experiences. It is this contribution of magnetism that allowed researchers to start devising methods to authenticate these experiences and see beyond its application in quasi-religious contexts (Irwin & Watt, 2007).

Furthermore exploration in this field of research was influenced by the rise in Spiritualism in the mid-ninetieth century. Initiated by the unusual occurrences surrounding the Fox Sisters in 1848 (Beloff, 1993; Doyle, 2006; Edge et al, 1986; Irwin & Watt, 2007; Wesiberg, 2004). Spiritualism grew rapidly across America and Europe,

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[15] Emma L was a domestic servant and case study of Dr. J.W.Haddock who also conducted experiments into mesmerism. Emma reportedly demonstrated the ability to travel telepathically to destinations, and recover lost items whilst under mesmerism (see Anderson, 2006).

providing a comforting belief system for those confused by the conflicting views of developing science and traditional religions (Irwin & Watt, 2007). Although incidents of spiritual communication in some form or another had occurred prior to this event, the case of the Fox Sisters stands out as a major catalyst for the tremendous shift in perception that occurred across society towards spiritual matters (Owen, 1989). Perhaps the most significant episode that occurred during this case is described by Arthur Conan Doyle,

"It was on this night that one of the great points of psychic evolution was reached, for it was then that young Kate Fox challenged the unseen power to repeat the snaps of her fingers...The child's challenge, though given with flippant words, was instantly answered. Every snap was echoed by a knock. However humble the operator at either end, the spiritual telegraph was at last working, and it was left to the patience and moral earnestness of the human race to determine how high might be the uses to which it was put in the future." (Doyle, 2006: 29)

For it is this episode that paved the way for the possibility of two-way communication with a spiritual world, one in which requests made by the participating group are answered by the participating spiritual entity. In doing so, providing the antecedents of MPG activities. As a consequence of the spiritualist movement individuals claiming mediumistic abilities started to frequently announce themselves (Opponheim, 1988), and distinguished forms of spirit communication began to appear. It is at this point that public attention is drawn to the use of tools for spiritual communication such as table tilting, automatic writing, séances and trance mediumship. These tools were used by mediums during public sittings to aid in both invoking and demonstrating their ability to make contact with spirits. During these sessions the public could bare witness to objects moving without an apparent cause, private information being presented by the medium, and a range of other physical and sensory phenomena. Unsurprisingly these practices were controversial, and the claims of mediums to communicate with spirits, particularly on a physical level (such as the famous medium D.D.Home), attracted the attention of investigators. A desire to investigate these claims paved the way for the first academic studies into paranormal phenomena and psychical research (Irwin & Watt, 2007).

Although earlier attempts to look at psychical phenomena are recorded by researchers such as William Crookes and William Barret, it is in 1882 on the formation of the

Society of Psychical Research that scientific investigation into this area was established. The members of this organization were from both the academic and public sphere, and gathered with the aim of investigating a wide breadth of phenomena from telepathy to physical phenomena and apparitions (Edge et al, 1986). Between the formation of the SPR and the 1930s these studies largely consisted of surveys, field studies of mediums and séances, and qualitative studies into phenomena such as precognitive dreams (Walach et al, 2009). In 1930, J.B.Rhine established a parapsychology laboratory at Duke University, and the study of phenomena shifted to a focus on experimental methodologies. The movement towards experimental studies came in part as a reaction to the potential for fraudulent activity by mediums, and additionally due to an interest in developing a science from psychical phenomena. As such, phenomena which had previously largely been subject to qualitative study could now be tested in controlled laboratory settings (Walach et al, 2009). In particular, parapsychology focused on psi-related phenomena with the intention of examining claims related to psychic abilities such as ESP and telepathy, and designing experiments that could be repeated and subjected to statistical analysis. As such, with the exception of a few notable cases[16] interest in phenomena associated with physical activity (for instance, poltergeist cases and haunting experiences) lessened in the early 20th century. It is not until around the 1960s that interest in physical phenomena started to appear again, perhaps instigated by a number of famous poltergeist cases that occurred around this time; Sauchie Poltergeist Case (1960), Thornton Heath Poltergeist Case (1972), and the Enfield Poltergeist Case (1977). These cases often involved seemingly inexplicable phenomena such as the movement of objects, disembodied noises, apparitional experiences, electronic phenomena and physical harm to individuals (Irwin & Watt, 2007). During this time advancements in technology allowed for the potential to not only study this phenomena, but also to record and analyse it. As such, some of the previous challenges associated with the study of physical phenomena were reduced and new ways of investigating the paranormal emerged.

The methods of recording paranormal events have seen significant change from spirit photography which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century (Kaplan, 2003), to the thermal imaging equipment that is adopted in today's paranormal investigations. Indeed the use of technological equipment to capture physical evidence of life beyond death

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[16] For instance the reported poltergeist cases of Gef the Talking Mongoose (1930s) and the possession of Roland Dee (1940s) the case that inspired the popular horror, The Exorcist.

has become a popular medium through which the paranormal is presented and evidenced to the wider public. Furthermore, the accessibility of recording equipment and the ability to share footage through the internet has opened up the opportunity for amateur investigators to record and share evidence of their own paranormal experiences. As a result, as accessibility to technology and media concerning paranormal investigation increased so to did the rise in public research groups, and inevitably the MPG. It is worth noting that although the popularity and indeed acceptability of paranormal research has grown in recent years, parapsychology is likely to distance itself from MPG investigations. Whilst MPGs (in particular those adopting a scientific philosophy) have borrowed much from parapsychology as a discipline such as adopting a sceptical stance, the use of technology, often the avoidance of a medium, and attempts to conduct controlled investigations. The parapsychological community associate MPGs with popular entertainment and an approach that would not be deemed entirely scientific.

The study of paranormal phenomena has therefore emerged from a rich history with academic interest in this area increasing substantially in the 19th and 20th centuries. It can be suggested that the Modern Paranormal Group borrows much from significant movements that occurred within this period. In particular the activities common during the rise of Spiritualism have informed communication methods and practices adopted by spiritually-orientated groups. Likewise, influences from parapsychological research are evident in those groups following a scientific philosophy. Whilst the investigative methods used and evidence gained by MPGs is given little academic credibility, it is evident that in recent years they have popularised and made accessible an area that has previously been reserved for those in the scientific or spiritual communities. The contemporary nature of the MPG has, therefore, invited a new approach to the study, investigation and acceptance of the paranormal in mainstream society.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has considered historic and contemporary interest in experiencing, investigating and studying the paranormal. In particular, the MPG has been considered as a recent social development which has emerged from popularised culture and influences embedded in the practices of Spiritualism and parapsychology. MPGs

represent a community that consider their activities to be offering an important addition to paranormal research through their investigations, public engagement and on occasions, dark entertainment. It has been discussed that through their investigations MPGs actively seek, report and share paranormal experiences with each other and the wider public. These experiences are evidenced through social practices as group members collectively describe, claim, see, point, deny and explain phenomena during investigations. As such, MPGs provide a rich context within which paranormal experience and the interactional activities accomplished during these events can be studied.

In earlier discussions it is highlighted that a significant number of studies that have examined paranormal experience, have often studied these in the context of paranormal belief. This has led to a rich set of findings that examine broader psychological and sociological concerns regarding *who* believes and *why* (Goode, 2000; Markovsky & Thye, 2001; Irwin, 1993). However, as discussed by several researchers (Castro, Burrows & Wooffitt, 2014; Irwin, 2009) belief in or indeed cultural knowledge (Hufford, 2005) of a phenomenon does not necessarily determine an experience. It is, therefore, argued that research into paranormal experiences separate from belief is required. Markovsky and Thye (2001) call for a *meso* level of investigation into paranormal experiences, and encourage the investigation of interpersonal and small group interactions. Considering the rich social environment that is evident in MPGs a closer analysis of the interactional activities present in this context provides an opportunity to examine collective paranormal experiences at a micro-social level. Thus, enabling new insights to be drawn from these experiences, and the discovery of how individuals come to see and understand ostensibly paranormal events. This study, therefore, intends to address the following question: What are the social and interactional practices through which people see and experience potentially paranormal events in mundane environments?

# Chapter Two

# Reviewing the Academic Study of Social Interaction

## 2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, the rising participation and involvement in Modern Paranormal Groups was discussed. Additionally, a discussion on the contributions of research both historically and more recently provides insight into academic interest in paranormal belief and experience, as well as indicating the scale of broader social interest in this particular area. However, as evidenced in the type of research that has been highlighted in the previous chapter a large proportion of studies into the paranormal have focussed on questions of ontological importance. Parapsychology has largely focused on empirical studies that aim to discover the reality of experiences, examining underlying psychological traits that may influence belief and subjectivity to such experiences (Glickson, 1990; Hough & Rogers, 2007; Irwin, 1990; Kennedy, 2005;). In addition, studies have also engaged with the impact of neurological causes for experiences (Palmer & Neppe, 2004; Persinger & Valliant, 1985), drug induced experiences (Luke & Kittenis, 2005; Luke, 2008), and mental illness or trauma (Berkowski & MacDonald, 2014; Irwin, 1994; Rogers et al, 2006; Thalbourne, 1994). Sociological and cultural studies have also primarily focused on 'who' believes, and 'why' (Goode, 2012), as such an eclectic range of findings have emerged identifying the significant size and range of paranormal beliefs across continents (Castro, Burrows & Wooffitt, 2014; Rice, 2003), and the potential reasons for this (Emmons & Sobal, 1981; Fox 1992; Markovsky & Thye, 2001). Research into paranormal experiences has, therefore, primarily been proof orientated examining either the ontological reality of experiences, or the truth behind such claims. As argued by Childs and Murray (2010), this focus on objective proof orientated research is potentially restrictive, viewing 'truth' as something that can be examined through an objective lens and dismissing the potential social constructions that may inform such accounts. Emerging from this concern and with the aim of appreciating the communicative practices that may be present during accounts of paranormal experiences, researchers have recently started to engage with qualitative methodologies that compliment this approach; primarily conversation analysis, discourse analysis and discursive psychology. This chapter will examine some of these studies in relation to the paranormal, and the broader contributions provided by

conversation analysis (which will be the methodological approach of this study) towards the study of group interaction and experience.

## 2.2 The Paranormal: Adopting a Social Gaze

Recent studies have looked to explore the paranormal from a position of ontological independence, in which experiences are appreciated for the important sociological, cultural and psychological research that may be gained from this perspective. In particular, and of interest to this study, there has been a growing branch of research investigating the interactional processes and communicative practises involved in paranormal accounts. As such, research has highlighted how accounts are constructed (both individually and collaboratively) in ways that present experiences as paranormal, whilst managing the position and status of the speaker. For instance, in Wooffitt's (1991, 1992) study into accounts of anomalous experiences he presents the "I was just doing X when Y" two-part structure. Wooffitt details several accounts of spontaneous cases in which individuals encountered paranormal phenomena and discusses how participants regularly describe mundane activities (X) when an anomalous event (Y) occurred. Wooffitt argues that the presentation of 'mundaneness' is an interactional resource, and that by developing a narrative that suggests the speaker was aware of the mundane setting that the event took place in, they are able to demonstrate their rationale perspective of the phenomena. Additionally, Wooffitt (1992) has also discussed the ways in which the non-naming of phenomena is used by participants. He argues that individuals "cannot be seen too readily accept the existence of the phenomenon they believe they have encountered" (Wooffitt, 1992: 105) and that by not labelling phenomenon speakers can avoid showing a commitment or position towards it. This is supported by Child and Murray's (2010) study in which they present similar findings to suggest that group members mitigate the potentially negative labels associated with having a paranormal experience (i.e. that they may be gullible or irrational). As well as not naming phenomena group members present accounts as personal opinions (i.e. "personally having been there, I think" p.26) and employ contrast structures (i.e. "paranormal or not paranormal" p.26) to show evidence of logical thinking. Furthermore, group members present and dismiss alternative explanations during their account, and in doing so imply a paranormal status to the event whilst demonstrating their rationale stance towards it (Child & Murray, 2010). During Woods and Wooffitt's (2014) study into the tellings of UFO sightings they also note the tendency for features

of the experience to be presented as a resource for mitigating against a potential 'normal' explanation. For instance, the way that lights are described as moving in the sky is not representative of a plane, and as such may indicate the presence of a UFO. As such, by identifying and orientating to these features in conversation transgressive qualities for the experience are implied.

In addition to managing the status of the speaker and the way that an experience is presented to others as paranormal, research also suggests that discursive work is done to manage the belief systems of individuals. Lamont (2007) reveals how when presented with a situation where there is no normal explanation, individuals with a sceptical belief system will employ various interactional strategies to maintain this perspective (even when a rationale explanation is unavailable). By drawing upon "definitely/ something" constructions (see p.551), and candidate explanations for phenomena (such as the knowledge being available, just not accessible at current to the speaker) speakers are able to maintain a sceptical perspective when challenged with an 'inexplicable' phenomena. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Wooffitt (2006) conversational tools can be used to manage the epistemic authority of individuals claiming to have paranormal abilities. For instance, topic shifts may be employed by mediums during demonstrations of their psychic ability to manage occasions where there is some trouble in the relevance of the information they have provided. When presented with these situations mediums produce repair-orientated topic shifts to shift the topic away from troublesome talk which may lead to the sitter questioning the authenticity and validity of their 'psychic' claim.

Research examining the processes and practices employed by individuals as they account for and share their experiences has therefore revealed a number of significant analytical findings. It is evident from these studies that accounts of paranormal phenomena are constructed and produced in particular ways, and through this achieve particular functions. Paranormal accounts are, therefore, interactionally and socially organised. As such, understanding these practices is essential in providing further insight into paranormal events, and their significance as meaningful individual and social experiences. Given the reliance on everyday language and interactional practices during paranormal accounts this chapter will now focus on broader studies that have examined interaction in order to place the proceeding study and methodological approach in context.

## 2.3 Studying Social Interaction: Emergence of a Conversation Analytic Approach

Until recently the study of talk and interaction has been considered a fairly trivial topic for sociological study, seen by mainstream sociology as a mechanism through which social processes occur but not in its own right a significant area of serious research. Instead sociology has largely focused on unobservable phenomenon such as class and deviance, with talk featuring simply as a way in which these processes unfold (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). However, the pioneering work of individuals such as Harvey Sacks, Gail Jefferson and Emanuel Schegloff, has contributed to the development of this area by providing an analytical framework capable of examining natural human behaviour for social research purposes. This methodology, termed Conversation Analysis (hereafter, CA) and founded by Harvey Sacks, emerged from the influence of two main researcher interests: Erving Goffman's study of the 'Interaction Order', and Harold Garfinkel's Ethnomethodological inquiry. In order to examine this closer, two key influences will be examined further.

### 2.3.1 Key influences for the emergence of CA

Goffman was interested in the everyday interactions that occur in the social world, an area that had been neglected by sociology. Initially this involved studying the everyday actions of individuals and how they presented themselves (Goffman, 1959), which he coined the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1983). His work was particularly concerned with the rituals used during interactional conduct, and this applied equally to those interactions that concerned talk, which Goffman believed contained both 'system' and 'ritual' properties (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008:26). As well as research regarding production of talk (Goffman, 1981), Goffman was also interested in the interactional features present during the presentation and management of the self (Goffman, 1959, 1968), the social organisation of experience (Goffman, 1974) and rules of social conduct (Goffman, 1963). Through his research Goffman developed a 'dramaturgical approach' to human interaction which became a significant influence in the emergence of micro-sociology. As a student of Goffman's, it is clear to see the influences that Harvey Sacks took from the theories surrounding the 'interaction order', primarily the concept that everyday activities were worthy of study and could contribute profoundly to our understanding of social interaction. However, it is worth noting that although

many of Goffman's basic theories can be seen within CA, there are a number of differences that are apparent (Schegloff, 1988). Firstly, Sacks did not differentiate between rituals and systems in talk, due to its sequential nature, and secondly whereas Goffman tended to find data that supported his theories, Sacks strongly believed that research should entail the process of 'unmotivated looking' (Sacks 1984: 27). Secondly, Conversation Analysis drew strong influences from Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), which was developing at a similar period of time and also appreciated the importance of everyday interaction to sociological study. Conversely, though, ethnomethodology was concerned with how individuals accounted for their actions, rather than functionalism's view that concerned internalization, reproduction and deviation of norms. It considered that individuals were tacitly knowledgeable of their actions, and it is this common-sense knowledge that should be studied (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008: 31). In order to study this, Garfinkel (1967: 44) used 'breaching experiments' to disrupt the natural order of ordinary routines, to examine how individuals coped with this deviation. For example, Garfinkel took the common routine of asking an individual, "How are you?", and invited his students to deviate from the expected answer of, "Okay" or "Fine". Instead the experimenters would follow the question with further enquiry, adding complexity and confusion to a question that would ordinarily result in a straightforward response. He observed that this often resulted in embarrassment and a loss of control on the part of the questioner, adding some credibility to the theory that everyday actions are routinely produced and maintained. However, Garfinkel (1967) observed that his method for analysing everyday interaction was open to criticism and that by constructing scenarios he was in fact not observing phenomena as it occurs in the natural mundane setting. Gaining access to the common-sense knowledge that Garfinkel required proposed difficulties; ethnography and participant observation presented issues concerning the researchers account and purposely disrupting interaction produced data that was only true to that single episode (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008:33). To counter the issues that faced ethnomethodology, Harvey Sacks developed a method that utilised recorded conversations to analyse everyday talk-in-interaction; Conversation Analysis.

### 2.3.2 Harvey Sacks: The foundations of a CA approach

The development of Conversation Analysis first emerged when Harvey Sacks received a

fellowship at the Centre for the Scientific Study of Suicide, Los Angeles, in 1963-4 (Have, 2002: 6). It was here that he was introduced to a number of audio tapes that had been recorded from telephone calls made to the Suicide Prevention Centre. It is from these that Sacks was presented with his first puzzle, one that would influence his continuing interest in conversational order. The puzzle initially seemed fairly simple, one of the priorities of the staff at the Suicide Prevention Centre was to gain the name of the individual calling, however, this was often not achieved. Sacks became interested not in 'why' this occurred, but 'when' it became apparent within the conversation that the staff member was not going to gain the name of the caller. From this initial observation, he realised that certain strategies were put in place by the callers to avoid giving their name, and that these strategies appeared to be organised and structured within conversation. One example of this in the recorded data involved the use of the sentence "I can't hear you" to fill the space where they would ordinarily be required to give their name, and therefore move the conversation forward (Sacks, 1992: 16). It was this structure that interested Harvey Sacks and led him to develop the transformational view that language was not simply a mechanism to transfer common sense knowledge. It was, in fact, a socially organised function of interaction that existed regardless of the information being transferred (Wooffitt, 2005:8). The methodological principles of Conversation Analysis were therefore routed in the concept that talk-in-interaction is systematically organised, and is produced methodically (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008:23). Through his research Sacks (1984) argued that talk is social action, and expressed concern that the study of talk-in-interaction has often been subsumed by the "big issues" that dominated social science research. As such, Sacks called for the study of talk which he suggests "may give an enormous understanding of the way humans do things and the kinds of objects they use to construct and order their affairs" (Sacks, 1984:24). Furthermore, Sacks maintained that it was essential for talk-in-interaction to be analysed from naturally occurring data sets and through the process of 'unmotivated looking' (Sacks, 1984).

Subsequently, interest in the order of conversation led to further investigation into the types of sequences that could be produced by speakers. Through their research, Sacks and his colleagues (most notably Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson) identified structures in talk such as 'adjacency pairs' and 'turn-taking' (Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) that have formed the foundation of many subsequent CA studies. To aid the identification of these sequences transcriptions

were used, initially just simple copies of the words taken from audio recordings. However, as the emphasis on detail increased within the CA paradigm greater need was placed on how the transcript was constructed, and it is Gail Jefferson who is to be acknowledged for her substantial contribution to developing the fully comprehensive symbolic model of verbal transcription that is now available (Have, 2002:7).

Thus, the early contributions of Sacks influenced by the pioneering studies of Goffman and Garfinkel, embraced a new way of analysing social interaction. Through the collection, transcription and analysis of naturally occurring data Sacks and his colleagues developed a new way of researching the processes and practices employed in face-to-face interaction. As such, a wide range of studies have emerged utilising a conversation analytic approach to further academic understanding of talk-in-interaction in a range of settings.

## 2.4 Further Studies on Talk in-Interaction

### 2.4.1 Institutional talk

Contrary to the stance adopted by traditional sociology, Conversation Analysis deviates from the perspective that the context in which individuals enter and interact within causally influences their behaviour. This is not to say that context will have no influence, however, this perspective that has largely dominated sociological thinking raises the issue of "cultural dopes" (Garfinkel, 1967), regarding individuals as having little control or knowledge of their own behaviour. Conversely, CA appreciates that individuals are knowledgeable social agents, and actively display this through their interaction in relevant contexts. As a result of this a number of CA studies have focused on various institutional settings with the aim of revealing some of the distinctive features of interaction relevant to different environments.

Whilst it is difficult to define the boundaries between ordinary conversation and institutional talk as overlaps can occur and are apparent (for instance a relatively ordinary conversation may occur in the workplace), there are some distinct characteristics of institutional talk that make it of particular relevance for CA study. In particular, whilst ordinary conversation is privy to an array of potential rules and

practices, institutional talk is constrained by its context, and often involves specialism in regards to the type of talk and interaction produced (Heritage, 2005). Particular social roles are evident and actively enforced within both formal and non-formal (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1989) institutional settings, and as such talk and interaction orientate to these contextual relationships. In the context of MPGs, it could be argued that these groups exhibit institutional features with their talk and activities embedded in the structure and cultural requirements of the investigation they participate in.

One of the first influential studies examining institutional talk was conducted by Atkinson and Drew (1979) who examined talk within courtroom settings. Using a CA approach they identified a number of features of talk including detailing how accusations, excuses and justifications are produced during a cross-examination. Expanding on this Levinson (1992) observed that during cross-examination in court, question-answer types formats are produced (the interviewer asking questions, and the interviewee responding). In a particular extract, a rape trial, he observes that although the questions asked of the interviewee appear to probe details of the case they are not necessarily information-seeking as the answers are often already known by those present. However, by engaging in this particular format of questioning, the interviewer is able to frame the case in a particular way – that the interviewee was dressed and behaving in such a way on the night of the reported crime that this could imply she was seeking a sexual encounter. As such, the interviewer uses the question-answer format to present the evidence and his argument in a particular way, and thus potentially influences how the case is perceived by the courtroom audience. The question-answer construct identified in court is also visible in a range of other institutional settings although as discussed by Heritage and Greatbatch (1989) may be used in different ways. In news interviews, for instance, whilst the questions being asked are information-seeking, they do not follow the conventional rule of a third-part acknowledgement of the information received. A practice common in settings such as classrooms where teachers ask a question, seek an answer and then acknowledge this through a third-part turn *(question-answer-acknowledgement)* (McHoul, 1978). Instead, reporters do not orientate to a third turn and minimise receipt tokens and news-markers during interviews, a practice which Heritage and Greatbatch (1989) argue enables them to locate the audience rather than themselves as the recipient of the news. Thus, the structural organisation of talk within particular institutional settings enables actions relevant to the context to be achieved. Beyond identifying relevant structures in the

organisation of conversation such as the question-answer construct, studies have also identified additional features of institutional talk relevant to particular contexts. For instance, studies into medical practices such as doctor-patient consultations, reveals how patients frequently withhold turns during a diagnosis, which Heath & Hindmarsh (2002) argues helps to maintain the professional status of the doctor whilst enabling the medical assessment to evolve. Additionally, the series of interrogative talk produced during 911 calls enables the call taker to gather relevant information from the caller whilst determining whether emergency assistance is required (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1990). It is evident then, that different institutional settings make relevant different forms of talk and as such the context within which conversation is produced is an important consideration during the analysis of face-to-face interaction.

### 2.4.2 Storytelling

Storytelling plays a substantial role in the production of everyday talk and conversation providing a platform through which events and knowledge are shared between individuals. In relation to paranormal events, the prevalence of accounting for experiences, as demonstrated in Wooffitt's (1991) work, suggests that storytelling is also a frequent conversational resource within this context. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is common for individuals and groups to share descriptions of paranormal events and experiences with each other during MPG investigations. Research into storytelling has identified that the telling of stories is more than just an extensive narrative produced by the speakers about a particular event, but is socially constructed and routinely achieved.

In several unpublished lectures produced by Sacks (1974) he first observed that stories are sequential objects. He identified that stories were often initiated by a story preface where the teller projects a forthcoming story. This is followed by a participant indicating their presence as a story recipient, a next turn in which the telling of the story takes place, and a final turn where the recipient talks about the story (Jefferson, 1978). Indeed the departure from ordinary turn-by-turn talk and into a telling is a carefully managed process with speakers employing a number of entry devices (such as disjunct markers and repetition) to ensure that the story is considered relevant and appropriate to ongoing talk (see Jefferson, 1978). Lerner (1992) suggests that these story prefaces may also provide an opportunity for participants with a shared understanding of the event to display this, becoming what Lerner termed a "cosociate" in the story (p. 248).

Additionally, story prefaces provide an opportunity for recipients to display whether or not they have heard the story before, and subsequently influence whether the telling continues. As such, the participation of story recipients and cosociates during the initiation of a story is significant indicating whether the telling is appropriate, and who may participate in the production of it. As Lerner (1992) demonstrates both during the initiation and telling of a story cosociates aid in the development of it providing assessments, anticipatory laughter and contributing to the accuracy and unraveling of the telling. Thus, he argues that the telling of a story is collaboratively achieved. Furthermore, Goodwin (1990, 1997) suggests that the "byplay" (p.78) (which Goffman (1981) described as a form of subordinated communication – such as teasing) of recipients during storytelling and the production of side-commentary and even heckling (see Sacks, 1974), may act as a resource to establish alignment to particular moments during the telling. The introduction of byplay during storytelling is carefully negotiated by the speaker through multimodal activity, engaging with collaborative talk where appropriate whilst managing their floor as the speaker. Therefore, whilst talk such as byplay may be considered secondary to the speaker account, it has a function to play in ongoing talk, and whilst speakers may present a story in a particular way, recipients have the option of hearing and interpreting stories differently. Thus, Goodwin (1997:100) views "stories or descriptions as dynamically constructed speech events".

Speakers and recipients, therefore, jointly contribute to the initiation, delivery and, as demonstrated by Jefferson (1978), ending of stories. As such, the act of storytelling and the distribution of socially shared knowledge is a collaboratively produced process, and a present and relevant feature during group interaction. In the context of paranormal investigations, the act of storytelling is a present feature as individuals account for and describe experiences with others.

### 2.4.3 Displays of knowledge and understanding

In addition to tellings, the exchange of information between individuals who both assert and request knowledge is an unavoidable feature in the construction of social action. Asking questions, providing assessment and making claims about certain events, experiences and information is an inevitable consequence of human interaction. As such, the study of the exchange and distribution of knowledge in social settings has

become a significant focus of CA studies, and in particular how epistemic rights are produced and maintained.

Discussions concerning epistemics and conversation analysis initially emerged when it was observed that in the course of conversation there are some events that are known to one individual but not another – which Labov & Fanshel (1977) termed A-events and B-events. Pomerantz (1980) also distinguished between what he refers to as two types of knowables – Type 1 in which the individual has rights and obligations to know from first-hand experience, and Type 2 in which knowledge is gained from reports, hearsay and inference. Kamio (1997) developed this notion further and identified that individuals had differing 'territories of information' (p.100) or 'epistemic domains' (Stivers & Rossano, 2010: 7). These epistemic domains vary between speakers and hearers and may differ (one is knowledgeable whilst the other is not) or be similar (they both have access to the information). Indeed, Heritage (2012a) observes that territories of information exist along an epistemic gradient which varies in depth, from shallow to deep. Individuals may occupy different positions on this gradient whether they are more knowledgeable (K+) or less knowledgeable (K-) (Heritage, 2012a:4). In ordinary conversation, fluctuations between the epistemic domain and the status of speakers and hearers is evident and is expressed through the sequential organisation and linguistic structure of turns of talk. Through these turns individuals display their own epistemic status towards particular referents displaying 'unknowing' (K-) and 'knowing' (K+) stances towards them. In doing so, interactants invite elaboration and sequence expansion by displaying a K- position, and initiate, expand and make assertions by adopting a K+ position (Heritage, 2012a). However, as discussed by Heritage and Raymond (2005), this negotiation between K+ and K- positions may also result in a tussle for epistemic primacy, as individuals assert their epistemic authority over each other in an attempt to establish 'first position' in their assessment. This is often achieved through an expansion to questions and assessments that assert epistemic rights including employing "oh" prefaces, tag questions and negative interrogatives (Heritage, 1988). In doing so, individuals are able to negotiate first and second position assessments within talk. This is demonstrated in the extract below, in which Emma deploys an "oh"-preface in response to Lotties assessment of her trip to Palm Springs. This response positions Emma as having primacy in assessing the locations attractions. However, Lottie then follows this with a further competitive "oh"-preface agreement in which she affirms her primacy on the matter whilst also shifting the referent of the conversation back to her

own trip by using the past tense "wz". In doing so, Lottie asserts her exclusive knowledge of this particular reference – her own trip – and asserts her epistemic authority on this topic

(22) [NB IV.10.R:1]

```
1    Emm:      .h ↑How wz yer tri:p
2    Lot:      Oh:: Go:d wonderful Emm[a,
3    Emm: ->                          [Oh idn't beautiful do:wn the:re,
4    Lot:  -> Oh:: Jeeziz ih wz go:rgeous::.
5    Emm:      Wh't a ni:ce ↑wut time'djih git i:n. Jst a li'l whal ago?
```

*(extract from Heritage and Raymond, 2005:27)*

Mondada (2013a) recognises the reflexive nature of these shifts in epistemic status and determines that these challenges can lead to the renegotiation of the distribution of knowledge within a group, and reaffirm or transform an individual's membership category. As discussed by Mondada this is even apparent in situations where the knowledge status of an individual is prominent, such as guided tours. Indeed, Heritage (2012b) suggests that the negotiation of epistemic status can be seen as a driving force behind conversation. The production of talk being driven by the process of (re)balancing the variations between K+ and K- stances between speakers, for which he adopts a hydraulic metaphor – the epistemic engine.

Displays of epistemic stance are particularly noticeable in question-answer formats. Questions are a typical example of a first pair part of an adjacency pair (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Schegloff, 2007), and have been the subject of a number of CA studies due to their sequential terms with interest focused on both the questions produced and the responses provided. Polar questions which invite either an affirmative response or rejection to a certain proposition (i.e. yes or no), are of particular interest due to the close relationship with epistemics. As discussed by Lee (2015) the epistemic stance of the speaker is evidenced through the form of polar questions produced. For instance an interrogative type questions (are you married?) suggests as 'unknowing' stance, whereas declarative and tag question formats (i.e. you're married? Or you're married aren't you?) indicate a knowing stance (p.22). As a result of this an interrogative-type question is likely to invite an expanded turn to provide information, whilst on the other hand a

declarative or tag question will invite confirmation and potentially the end of a sequence (Lee, 2015). As such, responses to questions are constructed based on the epistemic stance of the questioner. Heritage (2002) and Koshnik (2002) also suggest that the questioner produces questions in ways that orientate to their epistemic stance. In doing so, they display their epistemic stance and invite a preferred response to their question. This is often achieved through the production of negative interrogatives and reverse polarity questions (RPQs) which may act more as assertions of a stance rather than questions (Heritage, 2002; Koshnik, 2002). As identified by Heritage (2002) speakers are often aware of the conduciveness of these forms of questions and the position they imply. For example, in Heritage's study into news interviews questioners openly acknowledge the restrictions implied by a negative interrogative question and regularly correct and restart their turns to favour a more neutral question form. In this particular context then, speakers account for the possibility that their turn may impact the response given and limit their accountability by re-framing the question. Thus, speakers demonstrate an awareness to the form of turn produced and the type of response it is likely to engender, often designing turns to invite a preferred response.

As discussed, during interaction individuals, therefore, display and negotiate knowledge through turns of talk. By structuring the production of talk in particular ways, most notably questions, individuals design turns that not only display knowledge, but also establish their own status as a knowing or not-knowing participants. In doing so, they produce turns that elicit particular next turns, and exhibit to others their stance and authority within conversation. During paranormal investigations individuals regularly make claims about both private and shared experiences, and attempt to establish the paranormal potential of these events. In doing so they frequently draw upon their own knowledge and status as an experiencer to determine how an event is seen, and categorised by others.

## 2.5 Beyond Talk

Until this point the contributions made by conversation analysis have been discussed in regards to their focus on talk-in-interaction. Whilst these studies have produced significant findings they do in their own right reflect a dominant preference towards the study of talk, and somewhat of a disinterest in bodily conduct in the material

environment. However, there is a growing body of research interested in the social and interactional organisation of talk, visual and embodied conduct. In particular, as Heath & Hindmarsh (2002) discuss research has focused in on 'situated conduct' with an appreciation and sensitivity for the context and ecology within which action in produced. As such, a range of studies have emerged that examine situated human conduct in institutional settings such as medical centres (Heath, 2002), offices (Heath et al, 1994; Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000) and, museums and galleries (Heath et al, 2002b; Hindmarsh et al, 2005; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b). Aiding the growing interest in visual conduct has been the increased accessibility and use of video recordings as a source of data collection and analysis. Whilst relatively neglected within sociological research, the use of video data can provide a number of benefits for the study of social interaction beyond the audio recordings that have dominated CA research (see Special Edition of *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Knoblauch et al, 2008) for numerous discussions on the benefits of visual data use). The use of video provides access to a rich set of data capturing the finer details of human conduct as it occurs, allows for repeated scrutiny and analysis of data, and enables data to be shared within and across disciplines (vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001). As such, video data provides access to forms of human conduct that would be restricted by conventional forms of sociological research such as interviews and fieldwork *(a further discussion on the benefits of video data is discussed in section 2.7.2)*. Increased access to video as a form of data collection intersected with CA most prominently in the 1970's when Harvey Sacks and Gail Jefferson encountered Charles and Marjorie Goodwin in the summer of 1973 at the Linguistics Institute. Along with Gail Jefferson, the Goodwin's had begun pioneering work into the organisation of bodily action during interaction, using video data recordings (Sacks & Schegloff, 2002). Thus, an interest in the orderliness of bodily action as a branch of CA research began inspiring a range of further studies. This study will examine collections of video data from MPG investigation with a focus on multimodal interaction. The following chapter will, therefore, explore a collection of studies that have used video data to examine visual conduct and the contributions provided by this approach.

### 2.5.1 Gaze and Configuring Awareness

During co-proximate interaction it is clear that both speakers and hearers look towards

and attend to different spaces within the environment. Whilst the assumption could be made that where people look and when is a fairly trivial, and possibly irrelevant feature within conversation, maybe even expected (i.e. one would expect a hearer to attend to a speaker as they produce a turn), gaze and the way it is organised within talk has become a topic of study within CA research. This research has addressed gaze as not simply a by-product of conversation but an interactive resource within which people demonstrate engagement and disengagement with talk.

In 1981, Charles Goodwin published a number of videotaped recordings of everyday conversation. Whilst he identifies a range of conversational features in his work, he also offers a valuable insight into the role of gaze during interaction. In doing so, he observes that the production of a coherent sentence during conversation often relies on the speaker obtaining recipient gaze. If recipient gaze is not achieved at the start of a sentence, the speaker will deploy various procedures in an attempt to obtain it – namely pauses and restarts as demonstrated below.

```
(11)
Lee:      Can you bring?- (0.2) Can you bring me here that nylo[n?
Ray:                      ...................................[X__
(extract from Goodwin, 1980:8)
```

In the extract provided above, the dotted lines (…) indicate the start of Ray shifting his gaze towards Lee, reaching a position where he is gazing towards him at 'X' in the transcript. As detailed here, the pause of 0.2 seconds is produced after "can you bring", and at this point Ray is not gazing or starting to gaze towards Lee as he produces his turn. However, as Lee produces his pause and restarts Ray starts to shift his gaze to look towards him. Goodwin (1980, 1981) illustrates using a range of examples from this collection that gaze is sought by speakers from hearers during the production of a turn. As such, he argues that gaze can be used as an interactional resource by both speakers and hearers playing an important role in displaying orientation towards particular turns.

The awareness of participants to shifts in gaze during interaction and the subsequent orientation to these is illustrated further in Heath's (1984a) study of doctor-patient consultations. In his study, the subtle relationship between when a patient chooses to produce and withhold an utterance about their condition can be seen to operate in

conjunction with the doctors shifts in gaze between the patient and their records/ computer screen. Heath observes that patients withhold and pause utterances when the recipient's (the doctor) gaze shifts away from them, continuing their complaint when their gaze returns. Furthermore, Robinson (1998) suggests that doctors and patients use gaze alongside body orientation to communicate levels of engagement and disengagement. Beyond gaze Robinson illustrates that orientations of different parts of the body are used to communicate strong and weak engagement towards each other. Movements of the lower half of the body indicating a longer-term engagement and commitment towards the recipient, creating a frame of space where actions occur.[17] In the doctor-patient context, this is demonstrated when the doctor moves from a position orientated towards their desk and records (usually when welcoming the patient into the room), to a position where they are facing the patient and as such ready to engage in the complaint/diagnosis. Thus, doctors communicate their engagement and disengagement with patients at different points within a consultation relative to the activity they are performing (i.e. reading records, diagnosing the patient). This supports Goodwin's (1981) observation that people do not necessarily fully engage with each other continuously in collaborative action, however, gaze and body orientation is a tool in which availability for engagement is communicated. Shifts in gaze and body during collaborative action, therefore, enable individuals to communicate their attention, availability and participation in others actions (Goodwin, 1981; Kendon, 1990; Robinson, 1998).


### 2.5.2 Co-participation and Interactional Space

As discussed, shifts in gaze and body orientation during interaction may be produced to display engagement or disengagement in an activity. Through this individuals can negotiate their status as co-participants in action. In addition to these findings, further research has also shown the relationship between visual conduct and the ways in which individuals frame interactional space, and experience. Adam Kendon first acknowledged the role that body movements and gaze contribute towards the framing of new interactional space between different parties – which he termed the 'F Formation system' (Kendon, 1990). Kendon states that this is formed when "two

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[17] See also Kendon (1990) for a detailed study on body orientation and speaker/ recipient engagement during face-to-face interaction.

or more people cooperate together to maintain a space between them to which they all have direct and exclusive [equal] access" (Kendon, 1990: 209). He observes that by orientating to an F-Formation individuals gain access to each other's actions whilst also deliminating a space in which the interaction is occurring. Whilst these spaces do not necessarily have a defined shape, Kendon (2010) observes that casual groups often form in a circle and that the shape of the interactional space will alter during the course of interaction. Changes to the shape of the space may display changes in the conversational focus and sequence, potentially inviting orientation to a new topic or indicating an upcoming end to the interaction (i.e. a person taking a step back from the formation). Furthermore, Kendon suggests that the spatial positioning of individuals within this framework may suggest their orientation to a spatial arrangement of a certain sort dependent upon the kind of interaction taking place. An earlier study by Lebaron and Streeck's (1997) into the interactional framing of space during murder interrogations supports this theory. In this particular context, the positioning of the interrogators towards the suspect shifts from a typical F-Formation at the start of the interrogation, to a much more dominant position as they attempt to extract a confession. Additionally, Mondada (2009) demonstrates how strangers orientate to each other during encounters in the street when asked for directions. Instead of adopting a face-to-face position throughout the interaction, their bodies shift shortly after the opening sequence towards the landmark orientated to in the verbal exchange. In doing so, they are able to engage in a discussion about the directions sought, and refer to these through their visual orientation and gesture. Thus, the orientation and spatial organisation of co-participants alters during the course of interaction and is sensitive to the context and activity being performed. Orientation towards particular spaces throughout interaction is therefore closely related to the particular types of interaction that are likely to occur.

More recently research has also looked at how spatial orientation alongside visual conduct and talk develops in the course of collaborative action in different settings. Studies have largely focused on workplace environments, however, branches of research have extended to public spaces, such as museums and galleries. This extensive body of work, largely carried out by researchers from the Work, Interaction and Technology Research Centre located at Kings College London, have contributed significant findings to the study of situated activity and social interaction. Through these studies it is evident that in settings where collaborative activity is required which Suchman (1997) terms centres of co-ordination (such as control rooms, surgeries etc.) individuals produce

visual actions to align the awareness of others to their conduct (Heath et al, 2002a). For instance, in an example provided from a police call station a police officer attempts to draw her colleague's attention to an incident being reported on her screen. However, her colleague is currently engaged in the activity of responding to a request over his radio. After she unsuccessfully attempts to verbalise her request for him to look at the screen (due to her turn being interrupted by the ongoing activity of her colleague) her visual referral to the screen (including lifting her eyebrows, thrusting her hand towards the screen and pointing) succeeds in aligning his orientation to the incident. Following this, at the end of his current activity her colleague starts a new activity that orientates to the incident on the screen (Heath et al, 2002a: 328). Through her visual conduct the police officer is therefore able to render an object in the local milieu noticeable and relevant for her colleague. In settings such as this when multiple independent activities are happening at once, the ability to co-ordinate activities and co-operate is vital. Therefore, as demonstrated the ability to render objects momentarily noticeable to others through visual conduct and orientation towards these, enables co-participation in an activity and engenders sequentially relevant activities to occur. This is of particular relevance to the MPG context in which individuals invite others to see and co-experience ostensibly paranormal events.

Additionally, Heath et al (2002a) observe through the analysis of a range of collaborative settings that, as in this occasion, individuals are sensitive and aware of the conduct of others within their own framework of activities, responding and producing relevant next actions as a result of this. This is supported further by a range of studies that have examined visitor conduct in museums and galleries in which it is evidenced that visitors orientate to others actions as a means of noticing, understanding and seeing exhibits in particular ways (Heath et al, 2002b). Indeed, vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh (2001) discuss how the presence of others in a gallery can influence which exhibits visitors choose to see. Using the example of a science exhibit, they observe a moment when a child approaches an exhibit and calls his father over to also look at it with him. When the father arrives he picks a particular section of the exhibit and starts to explain what it means to his son, pointing to it with a rolled up map he is holding in his hand. Through this interaction the child and father come to discuss and jointly understand the exhibit in particular ways. As such, vom Lehn et al, determine that it is not the exhibit that has attracted the two individuals separately to it, but the interaction between father and son in relation to it that makes it relevant. Furthermore, beyond making exhibits

noticeable and relevant, the actions or others invites participants (both current and future) to see exhibits in particular ways. Thus, visitors may come to see exhibits as surprising (Heath et al, 2002b), funny (vom Lehn, 2006b) or embodying a range of other features through "virtue of one person noticing someone else noticing something" (Heath et al, 2002b: 23).

## *2.5.3 Gesture*

A significant part of the discussion regarding co-ordination in collaborative settings has involved the analysis of visual conduct. As demonstrated above, gestures such as pointing can render certain features visible in the environment and encourage others to notice and collaborate in action. Thus, the questions of why people gesture and when has become a relevant topic for the study of social interaction.

Whilst non-visual conduct has been largely subsumed by academic interest in verbal communication, several researchers have recognised the significance of gesture in communication and there is now a fairly substantial body of work developing in this area. Of specific interest has been the observation that different types of gesture appear to be produced during conversation, and that these serve different functions. In particular, it is worth considering the contribution of both David McNeill and Adam Kendon who have engaged in significant research in this area of non-visual communication. Indeed, both McNeill and Kendon appreciated that speech and gesture are produced together, and as such should be considered a single process (Kendon, 1972, 1980a; McNeill, 1985, 1992). Although McNeill's research interests predominantly lie within the field of psycholinguistics, his interest in gestures within discourse has provided some insight into the types of gestures produced during interaction. For instance, he distinguishes between what he terms 'iconic' gestures which were used to represent things that could be observed, and 'metaphoric' gestures, which render abstract ideas into visible form. In addition, he also discusses the use of rhythmic hand movements which mark new information within a conversation, which he termed 'beats' (McNeill, 1992). Importantly, McNeill was particularly interested in the study of gesture from the perspective of its integration with, rather than separation from language, which he believed were inseparable components of communication (McNeill, 2008). Although substantively the work on gesture has not examined ostensibly

paranormal events, McNeill's study on abstract diexis, the practice of pointing at nothing, may be of particular relevance to conversation about paranormal accounts, or indeed ongoing paranormal experiences. As McNeill et al (1993) describe, the process of pointing at nothing during conversation is a fairly common phenomena and provide a space for abstract ideas to be expressed and formulated. This practice was also observed by Haviland (2000) who showed that empty space was often used by speakers as they were telling a story and provided a means of created an imaginary narrated space (p205). In one particular example, the teller is describing an imaginary space where a narrated 'demon' is located. Whilst there is no material referent in the space that he points towards, by producing the gesture in an imaginary space the speaker is able to create a referent. Afterwards he continues to narrate the story further using this space to represent different features and the spatial relationship between the 'demon' and the other features he describes in his story (in this case a cross).

Furthermore, Kendon's research has focused predominantly situated on semiotics and gesture. He focuses on the production of gestures within the "process of utterance" (Kendon, 1980b) and has provided valuable insight into the ways in which gestures are produced. He identifies three gestural phases; preparation, stroke and retraction (Kendon, 1980b). Kendon illustrates that gestures often start from a rest position (preparation), and move towards the main gesture (stroke), which is then followed by the gesture going back to its point of rest (retraction). He also observes that there are occasions where gestures may skip some of these phases as speakers hold gestures in conversation. Additionally, Kendon examined gesture in different cultural settings, including studies into Papua New Guinea and Australian Aboriginal sign language (Kendon, 1980c,1981, 1988, 1992). From this, and building on Ekman and Friesen's (1969) work he identifies that some gestures become part of a culture's inventory of communicative signs which are shared amongst that particular group, which he calls 'emblems' (Kendon, 1992). For instance, particular hand shapes are often drawn upon within conversation to express a particular shared meaning – such as a thumbs up indicating something 'good' or 'agreeable' in British culture.

LeBaron and Streeck (2000) extend the notion of gestures communicating socially shared symbols and build upon some of the early research conducted by both Kendon and McNeill. However, they observe that gestures are not just located in the process of

utterance or from mental representations alone, but indeed are interlinked with the material world and their indexical ties to it. Through their investigation of a 'do-it-yourself' workshop and architectural practice they identify that gestures are designed to appeal to a recipients' shared knowledge of material action in the physical world. For instance (drawing upon an example from LeBaron & Streeck, 2000:123), when a speaker produces a gesture that represents using a 'scraper', they assume shared knowledge of the action of handling and using a scraper in the physical world. As such, this particular gesture makes sense in the context of a group of recipients who are familiar with this action – those that may have used or been taught to use a scraper previously (Lebaron & Streeck, 2000: 123). Thus, gestures are designed for particular recipients whose shared knowledge has been derived from their familiarity with and action within particular cultural settings.

Gestures have also been examined in relation to talk and their emergence in natural conversation. Of particular interest has been the study of gesture within turn construction and its organisation during interaction. As such, several studies have shown how different forms of gesture are positioned alongside utterances to achieve different functions. For instance, it has been observed that iconic gestures often start before the lexical item associated with them (Schegloff, 1984; Kendon, 1997), and in doing so aid in projecting upcoming speech. Speakers will also not only orientate to their own iconic gestures but also solicit listeners to attend to their gesture through gaze-shifts between their hands and the recipient, thus indicating the gestures interpretive relevance within conversation (Streeck & Knapp, 1992). As discussed by Goodwin (1986), iconic gestures may also accompany deictic references, such as this (i.e. "it was *this* big"), and in doing so alert a recipient to visual information that may be important to the utterance being produced. Furthermore, gestures can be used by the hearer to assure the speaker that they are attending to the conversation through synchronisation of actions with the developing talk. This is demonstrated within Charles Goodwin's study when gestures at a dinner table, in this example the serving of soup, are used in co-ordination with talk to show reciprocation and appreciation of the story being told (Goodwin, 1984:240). In addition, the use of actions such as a nod can be used by the hearer during disengagement with talk to show that they are still listening. Variations in the types of gestures used to interact within a conversation can act as a means of expressing the level enthusiasm and interest in a topic (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984; Goodwin, 1981). Similarly, as with talk, interactive actions between individuals can be repaired if the

appropriate engagement is not established (Goodwin, 1981), demonstrating that gestures are not simply complementary to the verbal, but act in their own socially organised manner.

Gesturing is, therefore, considered an important component of conversation bringing (even abstract) ideas into a spatial domain, providing visual representations of speech to aid understanding, highlighting relevant information, and demonstrating co-participation and attendance in talk, amongst others. However, gesture also plays a role in highlighting features and information in the material world that may be relevant to ongoing interaction. Indeed, this particular function of gesture and its role in establishing shared participation in activity has gained the attention of a number of studies into institutional settings. For instance, in Heath and Luff's (2007) study into auction houses they observe the turn-taking structure that is apparent, and facilitated by gesture, during the bidding process. The bid is interactionally arranged between auctioneer and buyers as the auctioneer invites and accepts bids using hand gestures to identify and elicit bidding between different parties. In doing so the auctioneer is not only able to facilitate the bidding process, but also create competition between buyers and thus raises the price of the bidding item. Studies have also shown how gestures may not only highlight relevant features in the environment for others (Hindmarsh et al, 1998; Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 1999; Heath et al, 2002a, 2002b; Svensson, Luff & Heath,, 2009), but in conjunction with the verbal may be used to encourage others to see features in certain ways, shaping how individuals experience and see the material world (Heath et al, 2002b; Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999; vom Lehn, 2006b). In institutional settings these gestures may also be used to develop a professional vision of the practice being produced or described (Goodwin, 1994; Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007; Suchman, 2000). Svensson, Luff & Heath, (2009) discuss how indeed the ecology of the environment emerges through action, and that the use of and orientation to objects may help to mediate interaction. As demonstrated in Hindmarsh et al's (1998) study into interaction in virtual environments, when the ability to gesture is limited, collaborative communication and sense-making may be hindered. Thus, visual actions are not only important for understanding communication between parties, but also for making sense of the local milieu and the features within it.

*2.5.4 Embodied action*

Until this point we have discussed a number of ways that individuals come to elicit and display co-participation and understanding in the actions of others. In doing so we have discussed the role of gaze, body orientation and gesture, and their production alongside the verbal. However, each of these activities is not alone in establishing the attention or participation of another in interaction, and each co-exists as part of a broader framework of bodily activities. Thus, a combination of talk, gaze, body orientation and gestures, will all contribute to a reflexive understanding of an object or feature in the environment. As Hindmarsh and Pilnick (2007) argue, the organisation of embodied practice, and how people see and orientate to bodies, is an area worthy of serious sociological study.

Emerging from an interest in embodied practice several studies have focused on the organisation of bodies within institutional settings including anaesthetic clinics (Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007), doctors surgeries (Heath, 2002), dental clinics (Hindmarsh, Reynolds & Dunne, 2011), museums (vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b), debates (Mondada, 2013b) and other professional practices (Goodwin, 2000). These studies have largely focused on how the body is used in these settings to engender a joint understanding of an activity, object or experience. For instance, Mondada (2013b) illustrates how during public debates the chairman deals with competition for speakership and potential conflict from the group, by using his body to display orientation to legitimate turns of talk (by pointing at the designated speaker) and manages overlapping talk by producing 'stop' hand gestures towards individuals producing uninvited turns. Through embodied action he is able to not only facilitate the debate, but manage the rules and behaviour expected in a debating context. In a somewhat different environment, vom Lehn discusses how visitors use their bodies when examining exhibits to display an understanding of them (2006a), and though the use of embodied action and talk frame experiences in particular ways (2006b). Furthermore, whilst it is evident in each of these studies that the embodied practice of the speaker is relevant to interaction, it is also observed that the bodily action of all present individuals is conducive to the production of activity (Hindmarsh & Heath, 1999; Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007; Mondada, 2013b). Indeed, as in the context of Hindmarsh and Pilnick's (2007) study into anaesthetic clinics, an orientation to and understanding of the embodied actions of others works to engender collaborative

activity. As stated by Hindmarsh and Heath (1999: 1868) in a study of embodied referential practices, "an interest in the 'body in referential practice' leads to a consideration of 'bodies in referential practice'".

Finally, Heath (2002) provides insight into how embodied action acts as a resource for evoking and displaying embodied experience. In his study of doctor-patient consultations, he reveals how patients evoke embodied gestures to display symptoms of pain. For instance, patients may grab certain parts of their body to display where pain is experienced, and produce exaggerated gestures to engender a sense of distinctiveness for their suffering. Furthermore, in addition to patients producing embodied gestures doctors may produce similar gestures on their own bodies to exhibit a joint understanding of the symptoms expressed. Vom Lehn (2006a) illustrates how this is also seen during the study of interaction between visitors at the art exhibition 'Body Worlds'. The exhibits displayed in this particular study are real human bodies which on occasions show various medical ailments suffered by the individuals when they were living. Vom Lehn observes how visitors not only orientate and gesture towards particular features on the exhibit bodies, but also use their own bodies to relate to and display an understanding of the ailments with others. Thus, embodied action does not only constitute the production of action using the body but may act as an interactive resource through which inner experience may be evoked and shared with others.

## 2.6 Summary

By highlighting just some of the research currently accessible on talk and action it is evident that research into the organisation and production of multimodal conduct provides a valuable contribution to our understanding of social interaction. The influential work of Harvey Sacks and colleagues has provided not only a new approach to the study of human behaviour, but also an analytical framework within which the structure of talk and action can be observed; conversation analysis. Whilst the CA framework is not without its limitations (explored further in chapter 3), it does provide access to a detailed micro-sociological perspective which can be applied to a range of social contexts. Thus, research into the organisation of talk and action has offered valuable contributions towards furthering our understanding of social interaction.

As discussed, this approach has provided insight into the ways that individuals come to understand the social and material environment they inhabit, and how the structure of talk and action differs between context as it shapes and is shaped by the physical world around it. Additionally, it is evident that talk and action is organised to engage others in collaborative activity, and that individual's comes to communicate and shape experience (both in their external and bodily world) through these multimodal practices. In doing so, relevant features of interaction and the environment are also rendered visible and intelligible to those co-present and co-participating within an interactional space. The application of a CA perspective to interaction within different social spaces, therefore, provides a view of how people construct and make sense of their own experience and that of others in the context around them.

The ability of researchers to observe and analyse features of social action has been made increasingly possible through the use of visual data. The proceeding section will discuss the history of video data analysis, identify key issues in regards to its use as a tool for the examining social phenomena and identify some of the benefits and limitations imposed by this approach.

## 2.7 Exploring Visual Data in Sociology

### 2.7.1 A historical account of the use visual data in sociological research

The benefits of using visual data to analyse the occurrence of everyday activities can be traced back to the emergence of instantaneous photography during the 19C, when it was recognised as a valuable tool to study humans and their behaviour. It is during this period in the 1870s that Eadweard Muybridge along with the help of Leland Stanford recognised that photographs had the potential to be aligned sequentially to capture an action. Famously, they captured the movements of a horse at gallop, bringing to an end the highly debated discussions regarding the particularities behind this equine activity. As a consequence of this, Muybridge identified the potential of film to reveal 'elusive' phenomenon, and proceeded to carry out a range of further studies into a variety of human actions (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010:3). In response, researchers Etienne-Jules Marey (1895) and, Braune and Fisher (1895) also carried out research examining the movements and activities of humans, using photography. The invention

of a technology capable of producing visual representations of events, along with the knowledge that these could be used to highlight a sequence of actions rapidly brought it to the attention of the wider academic community interested in human behaviour.

The anthropological community, particularly social anthropologists, were the first to embrace photography, and later film, as a research tool. Initially, the visual acted as a means of illustrating a variety of different scenes that the anthropologist selected to portray the culture being studied, working as a complementary tool to the main ethnographic framework. Examples of this use of photography can be see in well-known texts such as 'Argonauts of the Western Pacific' (1922), where photographs are used to demonstrate various actions of the culture, including dancing, the gathering of food and spiritual rituals. However, it was Alfred C. Haddon in 1898 that first realised the, "analytic potential of moving images to capture everyday life and as a resource for the analysis and presentation of cultural practises." (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010:4). Haddon used video footage during his Torres Straight expedition in 1898 to capture the rituals, including ceremonial dancing, of the native people from the Torres Strait Islands. This had an influential effect on a number of other researchers who proceeded to follow in Haddon's footsteps, and he can undoubtedly be acknowledged as a key influence in the corpus of visual data that has been collected proceeding his work.

Interestingly, although social anthropology and indeed psychology have been quick to utilise video in both empirical and fieldwork research (Heath, 2004), sociology has remained fairly apathetic and almost suspicious of the opportunities that visual data can afford. In fact, Margaret Mead who carried out a study in the 1930s with Gregory Bateson, analysing children's play with sequences of photos, described the attitude of the social sciences towards video as a research tool, as; "the criminal neglect of film" (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010:2). Developments with visual data in sociology appeared to be progressing in the early 1900s, with photographic representations of data being collected by researchers such as Maclean (1903), "The Sweatshop in Summer", and Woodhead (1904), "The First German Municipal Exposition", as well as 31 articles that included images being published in the *American Journal of Sociology* between 1896 and 1916 (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010). However, by the 1920s, this had rapidly declined, perhaps hindered greatly by the presence of a new editor for the American Journal of Sociology, a positivist sociologist named Albion Small, who banished photographs from the journal in favour of "causal analysis, high-level

generalisations and statistical reports"(Chaplin, 1994:198). Visual images were considered to be too subjective, and riddled with issues concerning their specificity, and lack of noticeable structure in terms of collection and analysis. Furthermore, in contrast to anthropologists that considered photography as "sound objective evidence" (Chaplin, 1994:199), sociologists were concerned that the use of visual data would imply that reality is purely observable and can therefore be captured and recorded (Pink, 2007). Finally, concerns arose regarding the presentation of photographic data in papers, which on occasions fell below the acceptable standards, portraying research data that was out of context, poorly structured and occasionally manipulated (Chaplin, 1994). Therefore, numerous debates arose about the contribution, if any, that the use of visual data could bring to observational research within sociology. However, it cannot be dismissed that traditional sociology has strong routes in ethnographic methods and capturing data *in situ*. In relation to this, as ethnography faces notable criticism due to its lack of transparency, often with a total reliance on the experiences of the researcher and difficulty replicating these events, the use of visual data can act as a tool to help overcome the persistent criticisms so often faced by sociologists in the field (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010).

Although a number of exceptions exist, including Lewin's (1931) study that used film to study the life of a child in an urban environment,[18] it is not until the 1950s that visual data starts to re-emerge, largely instigated by studies into verbal and non-verbal behaviour performed by the Institute of Advanced Study at Stanford University. The project, named the 'Natural History of the Interview', led by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, a German psychiatrist, gave rise to the division of study into human interaction known as 'context-analysis'. Her work prompted a number of further studies including Scheflen's (1965) analysis of psychotherapy sessions, Birdwhistell's (1952) studies into body motion and conduct, and Bateson and Meads' pioneering work that used video footage to examine naturally occurring social data as part of the 'Palo Alto group' (Knoblauch et al, 2006). All of these studies utilised video data and continued to raise the credibility of the visual as a means of capturing and analysing social interaction. Most notably, the area of work place studies has benefited from the use of video data. Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) used an array of audio-visual equipment during a long-term ethnographic research project to capture natural working activities in a busy

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[18] The film study called *Das Kind und die Welt* (Children and their World) used hidden cameras to present various aspects of child development.

airport. As a result of their efforts they theorised from analysis of video footage that perception is a social rather than psychological phenomenon. Furthermore, as noted in earlier discussions, Goodwin (1995) was able to demonstrate how orientation to different spaces and artefacts occurs in work-relevant, situated practises, and, leading on from this, LaBaron & Streeck (1997) examined the symbolic organisation of the environment and how space shapes interaction, utilising a 'birds-eye-view' video system to record a 'real-life' murder interrogation. More recently, studies into 'natural' settings have also embraced the use of visual data alongside conversation analysis and prominent researchers such as Kendon, have had a profound effect on the analysis of visual communication and gesture (for example, see Kendon, 1980b, 1980c, 1990, 1992, 1995).

### 2.7.2 Benefits of visual data to sociological research

A rise in the popularity of visual data within sociology has consequently led to many of the fallibilities it was previously tarnished with being addressed and scrutinised. Perceived as an endogenous part of ethnography, the capture and analysis of visual data is treated as essentially complimentary, not replacing words but acting as an important addition to the research as a whole. Pink (2007) further emphasises the potential comradery between the two, suggesting that the reflexive approach adopted during ethnography should also apply to the collection of video data, and that video can be used to enhance the way that we 'see' and interpret the information presented. Visual data provides the potential to present an event to others repeatedly, and the benefit of this stretches from the research project concerned to the wider academic community. It can be used to gain opinions from the participants observed in the footage or to access the broader perspectives of researchers from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. An example of this can be found within a study conducted by Radley, Hodgetts and Cullens (2005) into the lives of homeless people. Their research project centred around images photographed by the homeless subjects of their environment, who were then asked their reasoning and choice behind the images taken. Many of the images included snap shots of the cardboard boxes and doorsteps where the individuals would sleep, and provided Radley and colleagues with a unique perspective concerning what was important to this culture. Thus, photographs and video footage can be used to expand the range of data collected and the forms of analysis that can be used to interpret the social situation.

Indeed, it can even be used as a tool to see through the 'eyes' and 'conscious experience' of others, capturing an essence of the social world that would not ordinarily be accessible to the researcher (Pink, 2007).

The use of video data has, however, consistently raised concerns about the effect it has on the subjects being examined, and this has in recent years been addressed. Different attitudes towards the use of recording equipment will exist across societies and subcultures, and undoubtedly this will impact the type of data that is collected and the extent that it captures the 'true' social environment. In Pinks (1997) study into female bullfighters, she was able to capture and illustrate the role of gender differences in Andalusia, through the use of visual and ethnographic methods. However, Sarah Pink also discusses the importance of integration into the bullfighting culture, and defends her decision to use photographic methods as oppose to video due to the strong tradition that existed for amateur photographers in this environment. As her research progressed she describes developing an 'eye' for the type of photographs that best represented this activity, through talking with the audience at the events and presenting her photos to fans and professionals in this particular culture. Pink describes this as, "the ability to see and thus understand local phenomena in the same way as the people with who the researcher is working" (Pink, 2007:105). Visual methods can, therefore, be a valuable tool for gaining insight into a certain culture, but it is important to consider the levels of integration and subtlety that can be achieved. In addition Pink (2007) also cautions that researchers should be aware that their own personal approaches towards photography and filming may overlap with that of the researcher, due to a natural familiarity with these forms of technology in the modern world.

Until now, visual data has mainly been discussed in terms of the benefits it can bring researchers who wish to gain deeper and broader perspectives into the people and area that they are studying. However, visual data can also offer profound advantages to the analysis and presentation of the project. Images can not only help to visually depict an event, that words may find difficult to describe, but they can also create their own narratives. Presenting photographs or video stills in juxtaposition with text or a sequence of images, can provide a level of detail and context that words alone would struggle to achieve. Although it may be disputed that images are selected and presented in a manner that is chosen by the researcher, it is also true that all accounts verbal or visual are constructed. As the social sciences have traditionally been dominated by the

verbal it would seem inappropriate and perhaps naive to compare these two methods of illustrating social science theory. Perhaps instead they should be seen complimentary to each other, providing autonomous levels of insight, that when combined can help to increase our knowledge and understanding of the social world. As expressed by Elizabeth Chaplin; "aspects of culture never successfully recorded by the scientists are often caught by the artist" (Chaplin, 1994:210).

Furthermore, there is a public interest in photography and video, and individuals and groups may find the appeal of images of their own, or those of others, actions and activities attractive. Therefore, visual data can be used to 'give something back' (Pink, 2007) to those being studied, whether this be through copies of the various images and recordings taken, or through sharing the final piece of work. In addition, there may be social and political good that can come from studying cultures that may be prone to discrimination or in need of social change. Images and video footage have a strong emotional influence on those who view them and are often observed being used to illustrate emotive topics such as suffering, war and indeed, also, moments of celebration. A study conducted by Barnes, Taylor-Brown and Weiner (1997) demonstrates the potential for visual data to be used for more than just research during their research into the potentially sensitive issue of HIV. During their study which involved interviewing the mothers of children who had contracted this terminal disease, they also invited those who participated to create a short film that they could give to their children after they had passed away. In doing so, they were able to 'give something back' to the community under study. Visual data, therefore, does have the ability to provide information that can potentially do more than its intended research purpose, and perhaps even promote change where it is needed. Although this is not a necessity and will often be determined by the researcher's personal preference, it can help to position sociological research in a positive public position, where research is not just contributing to academic understanding but to wider community, social and political goals.

Finally, the visual is a large part of modern society, we communicate to each other through the aid of visual materials, express how we feel and influence others through the manipulation of imagery. Innovations in technology, from advanced recording equipment (i.e. the GoPro) to social networking sites that encourage and enable the sharing of visual materials (i.e. Facebook, Vine, YouTube), invite society to interact and

participate in visual representations of our everyday lives. We, therefore, share an interest in the visual, and although words are equally as important many aspects of society would be missed without the acknowledgement of the important contribution that the visual has in our lives. As Elizabeth Chaplin states:

"So words still dominate. But yes, visual images, successive images, play an enormous part in our lives today, larger than ever before. Those images can show the same insecure inventiveness as do our manipulations of words." (Chaplin, 1994:197)

As researchers, recognising the importance of the visual and exploring ways to incorporate this into modern sociological research is not just simply a means of keeping up with technological developments. It represents a move towards understanding the broader context of sociological phenomena, and positions the researcher in a place where they are able to reflect on, share and embody the social experience undergoing study.

## 2.8 Collecting Visual Data

It is difficult to imagine a situation that cannot be caught on film. Whether it is an event, a working environment, a home, public street or wilderness adventure, the provisions that technology now allow make it possible to capture these moments on camera. It is even possible to film underwater, in the dark, at great heights, travelling at speed or inconspicuously, and all of these situations have the potential to provide an interesting perspective into social life. However, it is fairly obvious that the many situations that present themselves for film carry with them various different challenges and circumstances that must be considered (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010). Knoblauch, Schnettler, Raab and Soeffner (2006) discussed the collection of video data as presenting two different challenges; the way that the data is manipulated and the level of recipient design. These will be used as starting point to discuss the different decisions that must be made by the researcher when undergoing audio-visual recording.

### 2.8.1 Different types of video and camera orientation

An abundance of video footage is available to use for research purposes, and this data

exists in a variety of different forms. This can range from diary-type entries, such as an individual recording their experiences and opinions whilst starting a new job, through to filming an event, such as a wedding, or simply capturing natural everyday environments. Regardless of the type of video they all provide intriguing insights into the social world and a palatable platform to examine different aspects of social life. Conversely, due to this variation the researcher must make decisions regarding the most appropriate kind of footage for their research. As one can imagine the orientation of a camera at a children's birthday party may be very different to that in a natural working environment. Initially, this may involve making the decision to use either pre-existing 'home videos', or to film the social situation with the research intentions in mind. The use of 'home videos' and pre-existing footage can offer valuable data *in situ* and aid in dealing with issues of reflexivity. However, footage captured by the researcher can focus attention to various aspects of social interaction that would perhaps be averted by the 'participants' eye' and can draw attention to those situations in the social world that would not ordinarily be captured on film. Therefore, the way that video is collected and used is determined greatly by the analytical interests of the researcher. Furthermore, if the researcher decides to film the situation they must make a calculated decision regarding the positioning of the camera, and whether they will adopt a fixed or roving position (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010). The roving camera is nicely demonstrated in Pink's (2004) study into the design and organisation of homes, which involved interviewing home-owners as they showed her around their property discussing the domestic environment. The camera in this case is carried by the researcher documenting activities and acting as the researcher's 'eye'. This approach is often used within visual anthropology, and requires a familiarity to be established with the situation. The fixed position on the other hand orientates the camera to a single view point, providing access to a constant stream of activities, and providing an environment where the researcher can remain fairly unobtrusive. This can work well in situations that require the participants to remain in an environment for a prolonged period of time such as job interviews, counselling sessions, dinner parties, and also public places such as shops. Fixed positioning can provide an excellent means of collecting data without interference with the camera, enabling the researcher to concentrate of additional elements of the research. Examples of this are seen in the work of Heath, Hindmarsh and vom Lehn who have examined various work and public settings using fixed camera positions to capture organised activity (for instance see Heath, 2002; vom Lehn, 2006a; Hindmarsh, Reynolds & Dunne, 2011). Deciding which approach to adopt depends

greatly on the type of data that the researcher is looking to achieve and practical considerations. Roving camera positions can present problems capturing the whole situation as they are often 'catching up' and fixed positioning, even in small environments, can only capture a single angle potentially missing large bodies of data. Therefore, considerations should be made when deciding on the most appropriate form of video data collection. Additionally, there may also be a degree of personal preference; Bateson and Mead for example express differing opinions about fixed and roving positions, favouring them respectively (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010).

### *2.8.2 Taking a reflexive position*

As touched upon briefly, reflexivity plays a large role when dealing with video data, primarily due to the researcher's need to interact with the camera. This works on two levels: firstly a reflexive approach should be applied when examining the orientation of a camera in different environments, and secondly the effect that the presence of the camera has on participants should be acknowledged. Mondada (2006) argued that video has a tendency to orientate towards the orderliness of the social action that is occurring and therefore a reflexive approach that 'sees with the camera' rather than 'through the camera' is important. Furthermore, in order to understand 'what' is actually being accomplished during the social activities recorded by video and the meanings behind these, researchers such as Goodwin & Goodwin (1996), and Schnettler (2008), suggest the incorporation of ethnographic study with video data collection. This enables researchers to gain a deeper perspective regarding the actions of participants and why these are occurring, rather than trying to adopt a removed interpretive view from the other side of the lens. This would, however, be entirely situation dependent, and whilst Goodwin and Goodwin's (1996) study at a busy airport facilitated long term ethnographic work, this would be unsuitable during LaBaron and Streeck's (1997) examination of a murder interrogation. The effect that the camera has on participants should also be considered; however, as Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff (2010) observe it is important not to assume that recording equipment will have a resounding effect on the individuals being observed. Audio-visual equipment is now commonly used in society, ensuring that the presence of recording equipment is easily habituated by participants. Additionally, as this form of data provides a visual representation of the scene being observed it is also easier to identify moments when pre-occupation with the camera is

an issue (Heath, Hindmarsh & vom Lehn, 2010). Rather than the camera, it is more likely to be the researcher themselves that has the greatest impact on the participants' behaviour. Goodwin addresses this issue:

> "The camera, though intrusive and perhaps disruptive in other ways, does not focus attention on the gaze of either party (especially if not pointed at one participant in particular but includes both speaker and hearer within the frame) and is not itself an orientated-to feature of the process under observation. In the particular case, use of a camera is less destructive of the process being examined than direct participation-observation would be." (Goodwin, 1981: 45)

In order to help reduce the effect, if any, on participant behaviour researchers such as Sarah Pink stress the importance of knowing the cultural practices and norms of the environment being studied. In Pink's (1997) study into female bullfighters in Andalucía, she ensured that her method of collecting data fitted with the local culture of amateur photography. Similarly, utilising video in environments that are familiar with filming practises, when possible, can help to ease the data collecting process (for example, MPGs).

### 2.8.3 Visual data and ethical considerations

Finally, it should be addressed that video data collection brings with it an abundance of ethical and legal considerations. The problem of 'informed consent' arises particularly when researchers are interested in capturing naturally occurring behaviour or examining a large body of people in a public place (Knoblauch et al, 2006). The benefits of video use, above all the ability to share data with others for further analysis is, therefore, brought under scrutiny to protect the privacy of participants. Remaining an unresolved issue it is a restraint on video data collection that awaits a practical solution (*a discussion on the ethical issues of video use in the context of this study is addressed in chapter 3*).

## 2.9 Interpreting Video Data

The collection of video data is merely the beginning of a long process of analysis

leading to the interpretation of a complex data set. As suggested by Mondada (2006) this should be an ongoing reflexive process during video collection as well as the analysis stage. Video provides us with a unique data set that can serve a range of analytical interests and as described by Heritage and Atkinson:

"In sum, the use of recorded data serves as a control on the limitations and fallibilities of intuition and recollection; it exposes the observer to a wide range of interactional materials and circumstances and also provides some guarantee that analytical considerations will not arise as artefacts of intuitive idiosyncrasy, selective attention or recollection, or experiential design." (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984: 4)

We are, therefore, presented with an abundance of data that can be viewed repeatedly and from a range of different, multi-disciplinary perspectives. This iterative process can be incorporated into both qualitative and quantitative models of analysis, enabling a detailed and thorough enquiry into social actions (Jacobs, Kawanaka & Stigler, 1999). From this we can develop an understanding of the smaller details and larger scale patterns of behaviour that may have previously remained unobserved.

As discussed in this chapter an insightful analysis of video data can be achieved using the framework of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. However, the modes for interpreting these differ from the method of transcription to the depth of analysis. Video provides one of the most complex forms of data involving audio, visual and kinaesthetic (Knoblauch et al, 2006) stimuli, all of which needs to be analysed in a form that can be transcribed and interpreted. The researcher must, therefore, strike a balance between microanalysis and broad interpretation, as well as making an intuitive judgement regarding the areas of data that should be analysed in further detail. As addressed by Schnettler (2008), one of the most prominent problems in video analysis is the selection of fragments to scrutinise further and the reasoning for this. Justification for the choice of certain selections may be accounted for by conducting ethnographic research, and providing explanations for the decisions to include and exclude certain portions of the data (Schnettler, 2008). Similar to traditional audio based CA, video data may also afford the opportunity to examine collections of instances regarding a particular social activity in a particular setting for example the interactive processes that occur during a dinner party (as in Goodwin, 1984). Whilst the selection of data based on the examination of a particular social activity or phenomena may be perceived as

context-dependent as discussed by Schegloff (1987, 1993) the analysis of local situated activities, are no less important, and indeed represent the abundance and variation of social phenomena:

> "Even if no quantitative evidence can be mustered for a linkage between that practise of talking and that resultant 'effect', the treatment of the linkage as relevant – by the *parties* on *that* occasion, on which it *was* manifested – remains... And no number of *other* episodes that developed differently will undo the fact that in these cases it went the way it did, with that exhibited understanding." (Schegloff, 1993: 101)

Moreover, the relationship between talk and visual data, and how this is presented to others in a way that accurately represents the findings of a study is an important, and often challenging, consideration. The method in which visual data is presented may impact the way in which findings are interpreted and, therefore, choosing how to represent visual information (such as gestures and gaze shifts) may inform the value that it provides as a method of data collection. Examples of the different ways that these can be represented can be found in the works of Goodwin (1981) who adds notations within the transcript to communicate gestures and gaze, Schegloff (as cited in Heritage & Atkinson, 1984) who describes gestures prior to and after the transcript, and Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010) who add visual stills of activities within the transcription. In addition, the interpretation of visual data is aided by the reader's ability to apply sequence to the various social actions that are occurring within the environment. Presenting data that facilitates this enables the full potential of video data as a method for analysing social action to be recognised (Knoblauch et al, 2006).

In essence, the analysis and interpretation of video data is not a simple process and although it resides within the framework of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, there are still complex problems concerning interpretation of the analysis that need to be addressed. The main issue that is encountered by researchers during this stage is trying to interpret complex data and communicate this in a fluid, sequential and comprehensible manner. However, in doing so, social researchers that invest in video analysis are able to penetrate the boundaries imposed by traditional modes of enquiry and uncover new areas of research, methodological approaches and social practises.

## 2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the evolution of studies into social interaction. Through discussion, the contributions of researchers such as Erving Goffman, Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks have been identified, and it is observed that their pioneering work has provided much of the basis for a fundamental change in the way that human action and interaction is observed and studied. This change has invited a perspective towards social interaction that appreciates an analysis of the detailed features of our social world, and in the case of Sacks encourages the appreciation of naturally occurring data sets. As a result, a number of studies have emerged contributing profoundly to our understanding of both verbal and visual conduct and its organisation within everyday social settings.

More recently CA studies have moved beyond a focus on purely talk, and have appreciated the valuable insight that can be gained from the study of the broader interactional framework in which talk is produced. In doing so, research has revealed how talk and action is organised to engage others in collaborative activity, and through multimodal practices shape how individuals experience the world. In relation to the study of MPGs and paranormal experiences these studies exhibit particular relevancy. MPGs are constituted from particular social practices and activities which as discussed in Chapter 1 involve groups individually and collectively claiming, seeing and describing paranormal events. During these activities individuals engage in a variety of multimodal practices, whilst also displaying sensitivity to the context and environment in which they take place. For MPGs paranormal events, unlike in the environment of a control room (Heath et al, 2002a) or museum (vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001), encounter and communicate experiences that are largely ambiguous and for all intents and purposes invisible. However, whilst the object (the spirit) being referred to may be unobservable to the researcher, similar to the studies examined in this chapter, it is possible through a CA informed approach to examine the group activities that occur during these events. In particular, the use of video data, which essentially is embedded in the MPG culture, allows for the study of the broader interactional framework that occurs in these settings.

As discussed, previous research has revealed organised features of talk during paranormal accounts (Woods & Wooffitt, 2014; Wooffitt, 1991, 1992, 2006). However,

this research has not examined the collective production of experience in organised group settings, nor the visual conduct that may inform these activities. By drawing upon the studies discussed within this chapter, and in particular recent work that appreciates the relationship between talk, action and context, this study aims to identify the interactional dynamics present during collective paranormal experiences. The proceeding chapter will discuss how the principles of conversation analysis discussed in this section and the use of video data have informed the methodological approach adopted by this study.

# Chapter Three

# Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters we have discussed the emergence of paranormal groups and their relevance as a topic for social study. We have also considered the contributions that studies into social interaction, mainly conversation analysis, have provided in relation to developing our understanding of situated social activity. In these discussions, we touched upon some methodological considerations concerning the examination of paranormal experiences and social action more broadly. Whilst we identified several recent studies that have explored the conversational organisation of experiential accounts (Wooffitt, 1991, 1992) and psychic claims (Wooffitt, 2006), it is evident through these discussions that the study of paranormal experiences has predominantly been focused on issues of ontological importance. Thus, further research into this area will help to develop current research, and provide new insight into the interactive resources that are produced during extraordinary experiences. The following chapter will explore the methodological approach adopted, and the issues raised during this study. It will be argued that the use of naturally-occurring video data, and an analytical framework taken from Conversation Analysis, was the most appropriate form of methodology for this research project. The chapter will outline why this is an appropriate approach and detail the type of data used and the analytical approach adopted. Furthermore, reflections will be provided regarding the limitations of such an approach.

## 3.2 Conversation Analysis

Previous discussion in chapter 2 has provided an overview of the emergence of conversation analysis as a research method. In doing so, some of the contributions afforded by this approach to the study of social action have also been examined. It has been highlighted that the analytical focus of CA is grounded in an interest in the intrinsic orderliness of everyday interactional phenomena. By using a detailed transcription system and examining talk, it seeks to reveal the structures, actions and

sense-making processes evident in social interaction. In particular, CA has focused on the structure of utterances within talk, revealing that interaction is not simply a disordered and random occurrence, but has organised and structured properties. Furthermore, a CA approach suggests that individuals are not ignorant to these structures, but are implicitly aware of them. As such, individuals orientate to the structures and rules of conversation during interaction, and draw upon various linguistic resources to display understanding of prior utterances and produce relevant next turns. As stated by Schegloff (1997:184) "it is the product of organisation of practices of conversation itself, whose consequence is that contributions display their speakers' understanding of what has preceded". Turns of talk are, therefore, linked to one another and produced sequentially.

Conversation Analysis thus seeks to describe and analyse this order with the intention of identifying how interaction is routinely produced and maintained in a variety of settings and circumstance. Through this the researcher does not intend to provide generalisations or attempt to interpret 'why' an event is occurring (Psathas, 1995) but to show "the detailed ways in which actual, naturally occurring social activities occur and are subjectable to formal description" (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984: 21). By illuminating these features of interaction through a CA approach the actions of relevant participants can be observed, and the way in which they utilise these to accomplish certain next actions analysed. This can be particularly revealing when examining interaction in various different settings, and as a number of CA studies have shown talk is sensitive to the context in which it occurs. As Goodwin and Heritage (1990) observe since its inception CA has insisted "that in the real world of interaction sentences are never treated as isolated, self-contained artefacts…[and] are understood as forms of action situated within specific contexts and designed with specific attention to these contexts" (p.6). As a result, those studies that have applied a CA methodology to the study of different institutional settings have revealed various different common properties of interaction relevant to the context it occurs within (see Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1989; Heath, 2002). The application of a CA methodology to certain settings, therefore, has the potential to reveal social phenomena relevant to a particular environment that would otherwise be missed by broader forms of analysis, such as ethnography.

Whilst CA can bring numerous benefits to the study of social interaction it has not been without criticism. Most notably it has been argued that the approach of forgoing broader

analytical concerns in favour of examining, at a micro-analytic level, limited portions of interactional data is restrictive to analysis (Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherhell, 1997). Further CA has been criticised for not considering the broader 'sociological agenda' due to its unwillingness to make links between the micro and macro levels of social analysis such as power, deviance and class (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Indeed Billig (1999a) suggests that CA invites an overly optimistic view of social life by presenting participants as having equal power relations in the context of interaction, which he argues is inaccurate. In contrast to methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis, the resistance to link talk with higher-level features of society and culture, and traditional sociological theory, is considered to be a critical oversight of CA (Fairclough, 1995). However, Wooffitt (2005) argues that to reduce CA to the analysis of micro-interaction is inaccurate and "obscures its primary focus on generic properties of intelligibility, structure and order, and constitutes a serious misunderstanding of its objectives." (p166). Furthermore, those who support the benefits of a CA perspective suggest that assuming broader social phenomena, such as power, impact upon individuals and discourse in a manner that suggests they have little control over this, is perhaps naïve.[19] In addition, it leads to a situation where researchers are opened up to making assumptions about the contextual factors that may not be wholly accurate. Conversation analysts argue that by examining the organisation of talk it is possible to observe how individuals orientate to contextual factors, and how they display these understandings and produce relevant next turns. Whilst in some cases these turns may at first appear to demonstrate issues of power relations, by examining the turn-taking structures of talk it is possible to see that these turns are actually interactionally relevant (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Moreover, it would be inaccurate to suggest that CA cannot contribute to broader sociological issues with studies that have examined features such as rights to talk (see Drew, 1992; Hutchby, 1996) and epistemics (see Heritage 2012a, 2012b; Mondada, 2013b), providing valuable insight into how individuals negotiate issues relating to the 'power to talk' in interaction. As such, it is argued that CA studies are not resistant to linking analysis to broader macro concerns, however, they are resistant to *assuming* that this relationship exists.

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[19] Further discussions concerning these issues can be seen in exchanges between Wetherall, 1998 and Schegloff, 1997; 1998 and Billig, 1999b and Schegloff, 1999.

### 3.2.1 CA and the analysis of Paranormal Experiences

In earlier discussions, several studies have been identified that have investigated paranormal experiences from a conversation analytic approach. Most notably, Wooffit's work has provided insight into the organisation of verbal accounts of paranormal experiences (Wooffitt, 1991, 1992) and the presentation of psychic knowledge (Wooffitt, 2006). However, research thus far has largely focused on the organisation of talk, and with the exception of Wood's and Wooffitt's (2014) study which examined ah-hoc groups, have focused on individual accounts. This study proposes that Modern Paranormal Groups provide a distinctive context within which to examine 'in the moment' events as they are experienced collectively. The interactional activities that are present during paranormal investigations have arguably become somewhat institutionalised to the MPG culture. As such, they provide rich setting in which these practices and activities can be studied. In addition, the visual data collected by paranormal groups enables the interactive features of both talk *and* bodily action to be examined. The justification behind studying experiences in this way, and a discussion on how it is possible within this particular context will form the proceeding discussion.

Paranormal experiences are generally considered to be subjective, personal, psychological and even spiritual. Indeed, as examined in chapter 1, the majority of academic studies regarding paranormal experiences have been grounded in this perspective. However, as discussed by Wooffitt (1994) all accounts of paranormal experiences are communicatively organised practices, that is they use language to describe, explain and justify the features of the experience that they encountered. Whether describing a sighting of a UFO (as in Wood's & Wooffitt, 2014), accounting for spiritual experiences (Child & Murray, 2010), or claiming psychic abilities (Wooffitt, 2006), language is used to share and inform these events. Therefore, whilst it may not be possible to examine the phenomena being experienced, it is possible to examine the structure of multimodal activities that occur during the event. As such, whilst we cannot access 'real' or psychological phenomena through this approach, we can assume that displays of the mind and experience are produced through these discursive activities (Wooffitt, 2001a).

In addition, in contrast to studying issues relating to the reality of paranormal experience, the study of the interactional organisation of talk and bodily conduct

"liberates" (Wooffitt, 2001b) research from the ontological ties it has been constrained to. Instead, it opens up the opportunity to ask questions that can be empirically analysed (i.e. when do individuals choose to disclose to others that they are having an experience? What kinds of actions are produced when this happens, and what do these do?). In doing so, this approach invites a different perspective and new approach to the examination of paranormal experience – a change which has been called for in the field of parapsychology for some time now (Wooffitt, 1994). Moreover, the findings discovered through this approach are not only of interest to the production and management of paranormal experiences but to the wider academic community. They present opportunities to analyse issues concerning everyday experience and communication, including how we describe, interact with, and understand the world around us.

Thus, examining paranormal experiences as they occur from a micro-sociological perspective, and by using a CA framework to identify the organised structures of multimodal action that occur within them, a fresh, and empirically grounded approach can be adopted. In the context of this particular study, this is further aided by the availability of naturally-occurring video data acquired from the researcher's involvement in a Modern Paranormal Group prior to the research project. Before discussing the details of this in further detail, some reflection on the use of video as an expected tool within MPGs and the relevance of this is provided.

### 3.2.2 Visual data and Paranormal Groups

Speer and Hutchby (2003) identify several concerns related to the collection and analysis of recorded data, namely issues of reactivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), the impact that recording devices may have on participants, and the integrity of the data collected. Stubbs (1983) also suggests that the language of those being studied often changes when they know that they are being observed and recorded. As such, the notion that recorded data enables the study of naturally occurring situations may be brought somewhat into contest. Thus, a social setting that is familiar with devices such as video cameras will likely help to alleviate some of these concerns. As discussed below, the Modern Paranormal Group, is arguably a social environment in which this is the case. The Modern Paranormal Group falls in to an era that has embraced video as an effective way of capturing everyday experiences in the world. The use of camcorders to capture

everyday situations, blogs, the documentation of events and video diaries, is increasingly popular. It has become a normal and detailed way of storing social history and experience. Previous barriers that would have existed to deter the unprofessional from using filming equipment, such as cost, lack of knowledge and incentive, have now been overridden by advancements in technology and access to the internet. The Modern Paranormal Group is an example of this turn towards the visual documentation of events, with a large number of groups using video to record and produce evidence from their investigations. Recording the group's activities enables them to develop the group's identity, improve their integrity, establish their ethos and act as a means of verifying the anomalous activity experienced by the group. It, therefore, constitutes a natural part of the group's interaction, all participants are aware of the camcorders presence and each person understands the role that it plays in the activity they are performing. A website extract taken from two Modern Paranormal Group's, Shadowseekers and North Cornwall Paranormal, highlights the use of video cameras during investigations:

"We use all types of night-vision camcorders which record on Hi 8, Mini DV, HDV (High Definition Mini DV) and DVD format. We diligently check the footage after each investigation and if any Paranormal Activity is captured we download to DVD to be shown and discussed at our meetings." (Shadowseekers, 2015)

"We use quality night vision camcorders in the hope of capturing something not visible to the eye. Some locked off on tripods and others handheld. The recordings are then scrupulously checked for any anomalies." (North Cornwall Paranormal, 2015)

As seen, the video camera acts to document the events of the investigation and the team's activities. Whilst it is highlighted in both extracts that the purpose of the video camera is to 'capture' paranormal phenomena, through the nature of this activity it is also true that it regularly captures the reactions and interactions of the team members. It is also worth noting that often a single participant will be given the role and responsibility of filming, carrying the potential burden of missing interesting or vital footage that could enhance the groups reputation. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that the participant shouldering this role will aim to capture as much detail as possible during filming. Similarities can be drawn here between this role and the role of the

researcher filming in the field as an ethnographer or observer, however, the important difference is that the role of the camera person in a Modern Paranormal Group is naturally embedded within this culture.

In this environment the orientation of the camera should also be considered as it often varies between the fixed and roving positions defined by Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010). This is largely defined by the type of activities being undertaken and how the group is positioned in order to conduct these. For example, the camera is likely to adopt a fixed position during a 'séance'[20] where the whole group are required to participate and a roving position when the group is exploring the location. Importantly, it is also worth bearing in mind that in this environment the camera will be set up with the intentions of the Modern Paranormal Group rather than the social researcher in mind. Whereas participant interaction is of key importance to the sociologist, alternatively the camera man in the Modern Paranormal Group is interested in following the aims of the group, and potentially capturing the anomalous experiences being reported. Due to this the camera is often located towards the object or phenomena of interest at the time rather than the group. Although this may initially raise concerns about the quality of this footage from a sociological angle to the fore, it does provide data that is captured truly in situ, and this can be viewed as fundamental to capturing the authentic nature of this type of social setting. The issue of dealing with varying quality of data brought about by these challenges will be addressed in more detail at a later stage in this discussion.

As a result, the visual footage captured and shared by MPGs presents a unique opportunity to access visual data of paranormal experiences as they occur in situ. In doing so the integration of video data collection with the culture under study is achieved through its role in the group's activities. It, therefore, fulfils the fundamental concern of culturally embedding methods of data collection expressed by Sarah Pink (2007), whilst also providing access to naturally-occurring data sets so often sought in CA research (Sacks, 1984).

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[20] Typically, a séance involves the group sitting or standing in a fixed location using a variety of tools and communication methods to attempt to make contact with a spirit.

### 3.2.3 CA and ethnographic reflections

Traditionally, CA has avoided combining its vigorous form of analysis with more interpretive methodologies. This, for the most part, has been to ensure that the analysis of phenomena remains descriptive, with a focus on the structures and orderliness of interaction, rather than ethnographic interpretations (Psathas, 1995). Indeed, Schegloff (1991) notes that focus on social structures can distract, and even blind researchers, from the details and organisation of social action that concern CA study. However, in recent years researchers such as vom Lehn and Heath (2007) have recognised the contribution that the addition of fieldwork and observations can bring to a CA approach towards social research, providing relevant contextual and situated information for analysis. Pink (2007) has also emphasised the congruence that can be achieved by combining visual data collection with ethnography, thus being better able to understand and 'see' the social phenomena through the eyes of the culture being studied. Therefore, the notion of combining CA and video data collection with additional methods of analysis is not an uncommon practice. In context of this particular study, the data used presents a unique situation for the researcher whom has personal experience and retrospective knowledge of the events analysed due to direct participation in them prior to their use for research purposes. Due to the objective nature of CA analysis this at first appeared to present some challenges. A history of my involvement with MPGs and a reflection on these challenges will be discussed in a first person narrative due to the personal perspective attributed to these circumstances.

My involvement in Modern Paranormal Groups started as an undergraduate student in 2006 when I noticed an advert in the University bulletin looking for individuals to establish a paranormal research society. I put my name forward and shortly after this helped to establish a paranormal research group called East of Scotland Paranormal. I was involved with the group for 4 years participating in over 20 different investigations in the North East of Scotland and York. During this time we were part of the TAPS Family and whilst the majority of investigations took place at public locations, we did also participate in some private investigations in peoples homes. The groups adopted a largely scientific philosophy to investigations sharing findings through a website, and social media networks. In addition to being part of this group, I also accompanied other MPG groups in Scotland and Yorkshire, a number of whom adopted a spiritual philosophy towards investigations. This also included helping on several commercial

investigations (in which members of the public would pay a fee to join the investigation) for companies and charities. During my involvement with East of Scotland Paranormal I recorded all of our investigations for the purpose of capturing potential paranormal events. As a result I am often present in the footage and a participant in the activities and events being examined for this study.

This has presented several challenges and opportunities which I have needed to address prior to and during the analysis of my data. For instance, because I was analysing data that regularly contained sections in which I was participating, I was presented with the task of analysing my own talk and actions in an objective manner. Secondly, due to the sections selected a paranormal experience is often taking place. On occasions I am the person encountering the experience and as such I am able to recognise 'why' I am acting in a certain way, and can recollect the subjective feeling at that time. For example, in the "Munthob Experience" data examined I know that when I produce the turn "Jesus" and claim that my eyes are watering, that I was encountering a strong 'buzzing' sensation at this time. I do not, however, explicitly state this. In other occasions a different participant is encountering phenomena and whilst I may not have encountered the experience myself, the cultural and personal knowledge I have of others enables me to recognise familiar features of their experience and also recollect how they described and interpreted these experiences outside the visual gaze of the camera. Finally, the cultural knowledge and experience gained from being a participant has the potential to engender a certain perspectives towards particular events. As such, from my participation I am aware that some of the experiences encountered engender a certain 'strangeness' given their inexplicability both on camera, and at the time during the encounter. As a result of these challenges, I was aware from an early stage in the process that my relationship as both a participant and a researcher needed to be addressed and understood in the context of the project under study.

In acknowledging these challenges, it is also worth noting that it became evident at the start of data analysis that the unique perspective gained from being an 'unaware' participant in the data also provided opportunity for invaluable insight into this cultural setting. This was particularly highlighted in early data sessions when it became clear that non-participants observing the data for the first time interpreted the talk, actions and setting of the activity under analysis in very different ways. In one particular case, on observation of the "Grandfather Clock" data, a particular incident was highlighted in

which a participant in the data states that her "legs are going". From the knowledge and insight gained as a participant in this particular incident I am aware that the participant's reference to her legs 'going' is for her an indication that a 'spirit' is nearby, which was a relevant piece of talk given the experience occurring at the time. However, for the non-participants this section of talk was considered simply strange and potentially irrelevant given its out of context nature. In addition, cultural knowledge of the activities that paranormal groups were involved in provided the opportunity to understand and situate data in the context it occurred (i.e. during a séance or Ouija Board session). In essence, as a researcher I had a professional vision (Goodwin, 1994) of the activity, and was able to 'see' it through the eyes of the participant's under study (Pink, 2007).

Due to the objectives of the study an analytical framework based on a CA approach was selected. However I was aware that simply ignoring my participation in the data could potentially impact upon the analysis, both in terms of clarity and integrity. As such, ethnographic reflections have been incorporated into the analysis. The reflections are drawn from a rich personal insight into the MPG culture and the experiences encountered during paranormal investigations. In his study into Thai culture Moerman (1988) discusses the benefits of integrating ethnography with CA studies, and calls for a culturally contexted conversation analysis. This enables the finer details of interaction to be analysed, whilst still appreciating the situated context within which talk and action occur. Through the analysis of non-Western cultures Moerman (1996) proposes that the combined approaches of CA and ethnography can help researchers understand how social life is experienced within and across cultural settings. Moerman (1988:57) writes:

> "Sequential analysis delineates the structure of social interaction and thus provides the loci of actions. Ethnography can provide the meanings and material conditions of the scenes in which the actions occur" (p.57)

Maynard (2003) also recognises the advantages of a combined CA and ethnographic approach. His discussion of limited affinity between these two methods most closely resembles the approach adopted for this study. Maynard (2003) suggests limited ethnographic detail can aid in complementing analysis through descriptions of settings, explicating unfamiliar terms and phrases, and explaining 'curious' patterns that may emerge through analysis but are not explicit through CA scripts alone. However, it should be acknowledged that whilst both Maynard and Moerman integrated

ethnography during data collection, this study draws upon retrospective ethnographic knowledge to inform the analysis. In order to appreciate the value of retrospective knowledge available to the researcher alternative methods including autoethnography were considered as a potential form of analysis (Ellis, Adams & Boschner, 2011). However, whilst drawing upon the principles that inform autoethnography may allow for a deeper insight into the culture and experiences encountered during paranormal events to emerge. It does not allow for a detailed analysis of the interactional accomplishments involved in these events.

This study is concerned with understanding the multimodal practices that inform paranormal events. Whilst the concerns of Schegloff (1991) and Psathas (1995) are acknowledged a combined approach that integrated CA and ethnographic reflections was best suited for this study. This approach allowed for the principles of CA to inform the main analysis enabling a detailed description of activities to emerge. However, as supported by Moerman (1996) and Maynard (2003) the inclusion of ethnographic detail (in this case drawing upon retrospective knowledge) benefitted the analytical process by adding clarity to context (including describing the tools and activities under observation), providing understanding of cultural talk and practices (such as common procedures during spirit communication), and on occasions providing clarity to ambiguous experiences or events. Ethnographic detail is often included in the main body of the analysis as well as in accompanying footnotes. In doing so, the incorporation of ethnographic knowledge enabled the unique perspective gained from participation to be included, whilst enabling the main analytic framework of CA to take precedent.

## 3.3 Introducing the Data

Video footage from Modern Paranormal Groups is captured during lengthy investigations carried out by the group into a location deemed to be experiencing paranormal phenomena; these are referred to as 'paranormal investigations'. The paranormal investigations used in this data have been taken from a corpus of video footage captured during my involvement running and participating in Modern Paranormal Groups for 4 years, between 2006 and 2010. These took place in a variety of locations in the North East of Scotland and Yorkshire that varied in their notoriety as

'paranormal hotspots'. Footage varies between 4 and 8 hours in length, and investigations are fully documented from start to finish. The number of participants in the groups varied, ranging from three to ten individuals at any one time, and although in most cases the footage includes both male and female participants there are some incidents where a single sex group is the focus. The age of participants varies from 19 to 50, and their occupational backgrounds are wide-ranging. Overall there are more than 15 paranormal investigations in the corpus of video footage available. Video was captured on handheld analogue and digital camcorders that are either being handheld or static dependent on the context of the investigation. The investigations recorded include groups adopting both scientific and spiritual practices, as such there are a range of activities captured including use of technology, séances, Ouija board sessions and 'asking out'. They are, therefore, extremely rich in content capturing an array of social activities, including the preparation of the group prior to the paranormal investigation, moments where phenomena is witnessed and recorded, and discussions by the group regarding the experiences that they have encountered.

Importantly, the data used in this study were captured prior to my knowledge as a researcher that it would be used for current research purposes, and was filmed with the intention that it would become part of the collection of footage gathered by the Modern Paranormal Group. Therefore, although as a researcher I participate in all of the data collected, I was a true participant in the sense that my focus at the time was utterly binded to the ethos and mentality of the social group. Schnettler (2008) recognised the benefits of combining ethnographic research with video data collection, and it is my intention during this study to take this one step further as a reflective and retrospective researcher. The opportunity during analysis to adopt a unique perspective through both the eyes of the participant and researcher will contribute to the rich nature of this data and allow a deeper understanding of the social events occurring to be analysed and communicated. It truly allows one to "see and thus understand local phenomena in the same way as the people" (Pink, 2007: 105), because the researcher at the time of data collection, was a true participant in the phenomena under study, void of research-led interests. The analytical implications and issues this has afforded will be discussed further in the analysis section.

The decision to utilise the selected data was realised early in the process of establishing a direction for the research project. This particular data provided an opportunity to fulfil

a fundamental concern of conversation analytic research and observe naturally occurring data (Sacks, 1984) in a context that allowed for spontaneous paranormal experiences to be examined. As such, data provided a unique opportunity to gain insight into the social and interactive processes that unfold during these uncanny encounters.

## 3.4 Analysis

In total 19 sections of video were selected to form the corpus of data examined for this research study. A single case analysis was carried out at the start of the study to aid with the identification of relevant phenomena that would warrant further investigation. This particular case was selected as it provided an experience 'in the moment' and as such offered a relevant representation of the type of research setting required. A conversation analytical approach was assumed to examine the data and from this several phenomena were identified and the focus of analysis developed. This led to a subsequent analysis of the additional video sections which were transcribed and analysed accordingly. The process of analysis is explored in the following section.

### *3.4.1 Data selection*

As already noted, the content of the video data available is expansive and complex in content providing the potential to select a range of areas to study. Selection of appropriate portions of data is necessary not purely due to practical constraints of analysing such as large corpus but also to provide a specific focus for this research. As identified by Schnettler (2008), the process of selecting appropriate footage and providing justification for this selection is one of the most prominent issues in the use of video data. Data was, therefore, considered in relation to the content it provided, the quality of the footage and the researcher's ethnographic knowledge[21]. As a result and with the aim of providing new contributions to this area of sociological research, portions of data that specifically focus on an 'active' paranormal experience occurring have been selected. An active paranormal experience in this sense refers to those episodes within the data when one or more members of the group report verbally, or

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[21] By drawing on ethnographic knowledge the researcher was able to identify incidents in a large corpus of video data that contained relevant sections appropriate to this project (i.e. when a paranormal experience was occurring). Given the many hours of footage, and sometimes poorer quality of footage in places, this was invaluable in identifying relevant pieces of data.

through their gestures suggest implicitly, that they have experienced or are experiencing, an ostensibly paranormal event (an ethnographic description of such an event is provided in Chapter 1, section 1.3.3). In addition, in order to deal with the variation that occurs in the quality of footage, which is often filmed using night vision in the dark, those portions of data that display clear visuals of the group interacting have been selected. Portions of data with the camera in a fixed position have also been selected as this enabled the researcher to observe a larger number of participants as they engage with an activity. Roaming footage often focused into empty space and as such did not afford the same opportunity to study the multimodal actions of participants.

### 3.4.2 Transcriptions

In order to transcribe data this study draws upon conventional conversation analysis transcription, as developed by Gail Jefferson (a full transcription key can be found in Appendix A). In addition to transcription of relevant verbal features, all transcriptions also include situated descriptions of multimodal actions within the transcripts. Due to the number of participants and as such the added complexity that the transcription of actions adds to the written transcript, actions are included in bold text where they begin and a description of the action is provided. Therefore, these transcripts do not provide the level of detail observable in transcripts such as Goodwin (1980) observations into gaze, as incorporation of this level of detail would impact upon the readability and clarity of the data provided. However, as discussed in the proceeding section during the analysis of data transcripts were scrutinised in conjunction with observation of the video footage, and as such consideration of the organisation of bodily action alongside the verbal was fully considered.

All participants were transcribed anonymously using alphabetical letters to identify their positioning in the footage. Thus, participants are assigned a letter from A through to Z, dependent on the number present, and these are consistently assigned in a clockwise format to aid with identification of participants in the visual stills provided. Verbal speech is presented as it is produced in the data, as such speech errors have been included.

Transcripts have also been annotated to clearly identify relevant features within the transcripts. Appendix A contains full details of these additional annotations.

### 3.4.3 Analysing the data

The analytical process started with the identification of a range of phenomena from a single case analysis. The "Alley Cat Experience" data formed this analysis and was selected as it represented a typical MPG activity, using an Ouija Board. Through this single case analysis it became apparent that a methodological approach grounded in conversation analysis could reveal several allusive phenomena, and as such was an appropriate means of approaching this data. Single case analysis is a form of initial analysis regularly employed by researchers interested in conversational features. By examining a single piece of data Sacks states that:

> "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 conversation we examine. The point is, then, to come back to the singular things we observe in a singular sequences, with some rules that handle those singular features, and also, necessarily, handle lots of other events." (Sacks, 1984b: 413)

The purpose of a single case analysis is, therefore, to reveal organised features of a particular episode and as such generate a range of analytical issues that warrant further investigation. In this instance, by breaking down the interactions of Modern Paranormal Groups during these active experiences to a micro-sociological level, a new sociological perspective of paranormal experience void of psychological interpretations started to emerge, and reveal organised processes of interaction between participants, objects and the environment. Three main analytical themes emerged throughout this data and form the analytical basis for the three analytical chapters that follow and examine the communicative practices involved in; noticing and referencing experiences, locating experiences in the environment and embodied experiences.

This led to a further focus of these particular phenomena within the collection of cases, starting with the initiation of paranormal experiences through to their conclusion. The characteristics of paranormal experiences as observed in the data enabled a fairly clear structure to be established at the beginning of the analytic process – this observation

being that the account of an experience is often initiated, its features and paranormal potential are discussed, and then it is concluded. Whilst the circumstances that the experience occurred within differ, identification of this broad structure enabled analysis to focus on the relevant sections of the data and transcript relevant to the themes identified. An iterative process was then adopted to examine multiple transcripts and visual footage to identify particular phenomena and organised structures across the 19 cases. This enabled the consideration of multimodal features of interaction, whilst also illuminating some of the interactive processes as they occurred in context. Collections of similar phenomena were then established and considered in relation to several CA focused questions including; where were they located in the sequence of interaction? What did they do? And what did they achieve in the context of the paranormal experience unfolding? From these analytical questions particular organised interactional practices emerged across the cases, and it is these observations that form the basis of the subsequent analytical chapters.

Given the ethnographic knowledge of the researcher and to try and prevent unnecessary interpretation of the data, the researcher assigned letters to each participant, including herself. Whilst this aided with the anonymity of the participants (as discussed below), during the iterative process of analysing transcripts and video footage, it also aided with establishing a more objective gaze of the data. Indeed, over the analytical process it is noted that participants became seen as the letter assigned to them, rather than by their real identify (a process that even became true of the researcher herself). Thus, whilst it cannot be dismissed that an ethnographic insight remained, by applying anonymity to the participants' identities the description of activities from a CA perspective was aided.

### 3.4.4 Presentation of data

Throughout the analytical chapters data is presented as segments of the transcripts and where it is deemed to enhance the interpretation of data, transcripts are accompanied in a similar manner to Heath, Hindmarsh and vom Lehn (2010), and LeBaron and Streeck's (1997) work, by incorporating still video footage of the interaction undergoing study. Still images have been lightened and annotated to help draw attention to the relevant interactional features. Due to a reduced quality of some of the footage in print a diagram has been included to illustrate the direction of gaze movement, as this is difficult to view in the still images provided. In addition, access to the original visual

footage is provided in Appendix B.

The provision of footnotes is also provided to incorporate ethnographic comments where required.


## 3.5 Ethical Considerations

When considering whether or not a study should take place it is inevitable that ethical and indeed moral concerns will emerge (Kimmel, 1988). Ethical issues are often complex, and raise various moral dilemmas, often requiring the researcher to strike a balance between the authenticity and integrity of research, and the values and rights of those under study. Thus, it is essential in the process of research to consider the ethical implications of the study being conducted. This section will discuss the ethical concerns raised during this study and highlight actions taken to deal with these issues. In order to review these issues effectively I have considered Kimmel's (1988) typology of ethical problems which observes three levels in which ethical issues may arise; research participants, the society the research is conducted in, and the broader impact on social research and scientific knowledge. These will be discussed in the proceeding section.


### 3.5.1 Informed consent

The issue of 'informed consent' continues to be a significant topic of debate within social science research (Kimmel, 1988). Gaining the consent of individuals and ensuring that they are properly informed about the research topic is perceived to be ethically responsible, however, it is also widely recognised that informed consent is not necessarily appropriate for all research studies. For instance, studies that intend to observe naturally occurring human behaviour may be impacted by reactivity issue caused by the participants' knowledge that they are being observed. In particular, Knoblauch et al (2006) recognise that for researchers considering the use of video, and indeed any recording device, 'informed consent' can add complexity to this issue. Individuals may act differently when they know that they are being filmed, and as such this may impact upon the integrity and authenticity of the visual data collected (Speer & Hutchby, 2003).

The video data used for this study was collected prior to the research project. Whilst informed consent was not explicitly gained for the use of data for this particular research, the data used informed part of a collection of footage gathered for the purpose of sharing with the public. As such, much of the data used is already accessible in the public domain, most notably through YouTube. Issues related to ethics and the use of data made publicly available through the internet has been considered by several researchers (Svenningson, 2004; Whiteman, 2007). As discussed by Svenningson (2004) whilst some data is openly available in public domains, these spaces do not always feel 'open' to participants. As a result a complex relationship exists between what can be considered a public and private space on the internet, and consent cannot necessarily be assumed. Furthermore, issues concerning the common use of aliases online can lead to ethical concerns regarding the 'real' identity of the participant under observation (Whiteman, 2007). In the case of the data used for this study whilst video collections have been made available online they have not been collected from the internet, but from a corpus of footage collected by the researcher as a participant. Although the researcher was not operating under the guise of a researcher at this time, due to the objectives of the group (to record and share investigations with the public) all participants were informed that visual data would be made accessible to the public, and may be made available for further research purposes. Thus, this video footage provides a valuable corpus of data in which implicit consent has been gained for the public and academic study of findings, whilst avoiding some of the reactivity concerns noted.

### 3.5.2 Anonymity of participants

Like any social research context, the study of paranormal accounts and experiences should consider the confidentiality and privacy of individuals participating in the research project. Association with accounts of paranormal experience may have the potential to attribute particular associations with individuals regarding their beliefs, interests and even psychological state of mind. Therefore, the rights of individuals to privacy should be addressed. For the purpose of this study, individuals have been anonymised within all transcripts and assigned letters to depict their status as a speaker. However, it is noted that due to the use of visual footage and the decision to include visual stills within the thesis, participants are not fully anonymised. Furthermore, there are instances in the transcript where individual's names are used by participants, and on occasions these are relevant for the interaction taking place. For instance, in the single

case analysis examined in this study, the group deduce that the spirit is making a joke about one of the group members being an 'Alley Cat'. This realisation is reached through the connection between the participants' name 'Allan' and the experience discussed by the group. As such, there are occasions when the name of the participants has direct relevance to the interactive activity of the group, and where this is the case, the names have remained within the transcript content. Punch (2014) recognises that within social research total anonymity, unless following the method of a closed question survey, is often difficult to fully achieve. Instead, he observes that different levels of anonymity exist, and that the researcher will often attempt to limit the traceability of the participants as much as possible. For the purpose of this study, the limitations imposed by total anonymity have been recognised, and whilst names have been omitted (with the minimal exception of cases as mentioned above) the decision has been taken to include visual stills of participants to enhance the analytical quality of the research project. It is, however, worth noting that due to the use of night vision footage in all cases the quality of the visual stills is somewhat compromised, and whilst this poses some analytical and representational issues it does limit the recognisability of participants. Moreover, it should be reiterated that consent for use of footage in the public and academic domain was acquired.

### 3.5.3 Impact on society and the paranormal community

It is acknowledged that the topic of paranormal experiences is somewhat contested within both the academic community, and broader society. Issues relating to the truth behind such experiences and the implications this has for belief systems and the scientific community suggest that consideration should be given to the impact of research that may contribute to this highly debated area. Furthermore, the very community under study, that of paranormal groups, and indeed the commercial entities that have evolved from this, may be impacted by findings that support a paranormal or sceptical perspective regarding these events. It is argued, however, that this research project through its methodological approach avoids making substantive claims about the reality of such accounts. Instead it promotes a perspective that appreciates the analytical discoveries that can be gained from studying features of interaction, regardless of the ontological issues surrounding the event taking place. As such, whilst this research

contributes to the body of work concerning paranormal experience, it should not be considered to offer a claim regarding the existence or reality of paranormal-type events.

### 3.5.3 Impact on academic research

Babbage (1969) (as cited in Kimmel, 1988) observes that research and data can be manipulated in several ways and that through this the integrity of the study, and indeed academic research more broadly can be impacted. He identifies several violations including cooking (the researcher selects data that fits their research hypothesis), trimming (the researcher manipulates data to make them look better), and forging. Throughout this research project I have endeavoured to pursue Sacks' (1984) approach of 'unmotivated looking' towards data. Whilst it is acknowledged that a refined focus was developed following the single case analysis, these collections of data were selected based on the single requirement that they contained an 'active experience'. Beyond this each piece of data was observed, transcribed and analysed through an iterative process of examining multiple pieces of data and identifying common features. The collections were then gathered, and a full analysis of the particular feature concerned was carried out. Thus findings were only established once data had been analysed as a collective. Furthermore, due to the transcription system adopted through CA the transcripts provide a thorough description  of what is occurring and when in interaction. These transcripts are presented alongside the written analysis, and are accompanied by both visual stills and a link to watch the video footage. As such, the original data is accessible to the reader enabling the analysis and interpretation of data to be a transparent process.

## 3.6 Summary

This chapter has addressed the methodological considerations undertaken for this study. Drawing upon discussions in chapter 2, the argument to adopt a CA perspective to analysing collective paranormal experiences has been presented. It is argued that this method provides the opportunity to examine, in detail, multimodal action and as such affords the researcher with an analytical framework to examine the organised social practices that inform paranormal events. Furthermore, the decision to integrate an ethnographic perspective has been addressed and whilst it has been acknowledged that this presents challenges in regards to the underlying approach of CA, the benefits it

affords in relation to the data available have been discussed. Video is the chosen form of data for this study, and it is argued that given the purpose of this research it provides a rich and accessible form of data for analysis. The challenges posed by the complexity of this medium in relation to the transcription, analysis and presentation of data are highlighted, and the methods used to overcome these are addressed. Finally, this chapter presents a discussion on the ethical considerations that informed this study.

# Chapter Four

# Single Case Analysis: The Alley Cat Experience

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a single case analysis examining video data captured during a paranormal investigation. This single case provides a basis from which sequences of interaction can be identified as potentially interesting and relevant to the group management of extraordinary experiences. Although this section of data forms part of several hours of footage, this portion has been selected as it offers an example of a typical group activity performed by paranormal groups (using a Ouija Board to contact spirits) and a common event reported (that of being touched by an unseen presence). In order to identify the key interactional sequences that will form the focus for this thesis, this chapter will work through this piece of video data sequentially. The analysis will, therefore, begin shortly before the experience is noticed and disclosed by the participant, and conclude when the group finalise their assessment of the experience and start to pursue a new course of interaction.

## 4.2 Single Case Analysis

As discussed by Schegloff (1987,1999), the analysis of single cases of interaction is a useful tool to extrapolate what is occurring interactionally, and how this is getting done. By examining a single case "the resources of past work on a *range of phenomena* and organizational domains in talk are brought to bear on a *single fragment* of talk" (Schegloff, 1987:101). In the proceeding chapter, the orderliness of a single episode is examined through the lens of previously known findings regarding the organisation of conversational activities. In doing so, it is possible to identify key interactional phenomena and orderly processes that are relevant to this particular activity.

By the end of this chapter the analysis will establish that something as extraordinary as a paranormal experience is embedded in, and emerges from, ordinary practices of social interaction. I intend to present a paranormal experience, which may at first seem abnormal

and even obscure, as being subject to the ordinary rules of social engagement. Like any ordinary social encounter the mechanisms used to engage others in conversation or encourage participation apply. This is encouraging, and suggests that whilst the ontological reality of paranormal experiences may remain a mystery the opportunity exists to examine how these experiences become part of the wider group activity as they are shared and assessed with others. At the end of this single case analysis three areas of analytical interest will be highlighted. These will address sequences of multimodal actions and how these play a role in the performance, disclosure and management of extraordinary experiences. It is these areas that will form the basis of the subsequent analytical chapters.

### 4.2.1 Background to data

Throughout this analysis a letter has been assigned to each participant from A to E, with A being the participant on the nearest left of the screen with the person on their left being allocated the next letter, and so on around the circle (see figure 1.1 and 1.2). As we see it, the group of five have gathered around a table with their fingers positioned on a glass which is on top of the Ouija Board in the centre of the group (illustrated as OB in figure).
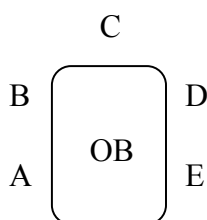


*Figure 1.1: Alley Cat: Group positioning*

Within this case, and others, we consistently observe the group forming in a centralised arrangement similar to this (most usually a circle) often surrounding an object that will be used to aid communication with the spirit. In this case the object is the Ouija Board. This position (body and gaze facing towards the Ouija Board and finger touching the glass) is where the interaction with spirit commences and is also where the group return to once they have performed certain sequences of action. As this position emerges as a significant factor in the analysis, it will be termed the home position (Sacks & Schegloff, 2002). It is this position from which actions most often start and end, and also forms the focal point from which the interaction with spirit is concentrated, in its initiation, management and closure. This term also allows for the appreciation of bodily actions within their own

sequential organization, both alongside the verbal and independently. This becomes increasingly important as the data shows the role that body movements play, often in the absence of verbal interpretation, in realising and demonstrating an experience.

**Figure 1.2**
**Alley Cat: Group at Ouija Board**



In addition to referring to the home position this analysis will also draw upon a number of pioneering studies that have investigated gesture in relation to communication – for example, Birdwhistell (1970), Kendon (1980a, 1992), Heath (1986, 2002), Heath and Hindmarsh (1999), Hindmarsh et al (1998), Goodwin (1981), McNeill (1985, 2000), Goodwin and Goodwin (1992), Streeck (1996), LeBaron and Streeck (2000), vom Lehn (2006a, 2006b) and Svensson, Luff and Heath (2009). As will become apparent, particularly in relation to the performance of an experience, gesture plays a significant role. Whilst studies into gesture have so far provided evidence for its use within everyday interaction, as Heath (2002) discusses, relatively little work has focused on how personal experience is handled in a social setting and revealed to others. Heath's (2002) work into 'demonstrative suffering' explores the use of gestures to exaggerate and characterise a personal experience alongside the patients' verbal description of their health symptoms. These gestures may include movements such as touching, grabbing areas of the body and pointing. In doing so, as Heath describes, "They enliven, if only momentarily, different parts of the body and provide dramatic display of the symptoms and suffering incurred by the patient...her subjective experience of the symptoms is overlaid, played out, across the relevant parts and surface areas of the body" (Heath, 2002:601). This study in particular provides an interesting comparison with the demonstration of extraordinary experience

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which will be discussed later in this analysis. Other researchers (Kendon, 1997; Bavelas et al 1992; McNeill 1992) have also explored how individuals perform gestures alongside speech to help lend explanation to the verbal, make reference to others (Haviland, 1993) and the environment (Heath et al, 2002a, 2002b; Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999; Hindmarsh, et al, 1998; Goodwin, 1994; Svensson, Luff & Heath, 2009), and bring abstract ideas into a spatial domain (McNeill, 1993). Streeck and Kallmeyer (2001) also place importance on the use of gesture and the stage of interaction (*the mise-en-scene*) and how a particular performance of actions can highlight and make private scenes visible to others. Additionally, vom Lehn (2006a, 2006b) demonstrates how referential actions in museums and galleries enable visitors to share their 'way of seeing' exhibits.

In the context of paranormal experience, we encounter a situation where, unlike the familiar setting of a doctor's surgery (as in Heath's 2002 study), or a conversation about the ordinary (such as the 'stave' conversation in Kendon, 1997), the group are actively seeking an experience of the extraordinary – an interaction with spirit. These experiences, as the data will show, are subjective and ambiguous. The following data will show that the performance of gestures and movements of the body (grabbing, looking, touching, pointing) in conjunction with the verbal plays an important role in the initiation, management and progression of collaborative group experiences.


## 4.3 The Alley Cat Experience Analysis

In order to provide an overview of the case data included in this chapter, an ethnographic description of the scene and actions that follow are highlighted below.

The following MPG investigation takes places in a private residence in the North East of Scotland. There are five participants present during the investigation, and they are currently taking part in the activity of attempting to contact a spirit through a Ouija Board. To try and communicate with a spirit the group have their placed their fingers on a planchette[22] which is located in the centre of the board. Through the movement of the planchette to different letters on the board the spirit has so far 'told' the group that she is a female spirit and that her name is Gurt. The spirit has also indicated that she is a young girl

---

[22] A planchette is an object that rests on the top of the Ouija Board. Group members will rest their fingers on the planchette and whilst asking questions of the Spirit the planchette may move to different letters – ostensibly indicating the presence of a spirit and the message being communicated.

and that she is in the room with them. In addition to the group and the spirit there are also two pet cats in the room that belong to the resident of the location, which are currently located by the door. Participant A tells the spirit about the cats in the room and asks the spirit if she can interact with them. The planchette starts to move. It is shortly after this question that C grabs his left arm and looks around the group. He then proceeds to tell the group that he feels as if he was touched on his arm (presumably by the spirit). The group members react to this experience in different ways and whilst a couple joke about the experience – implying that the spirit was calling the participant a cat - others use the information gained about the spirit to continue with the group activity. Once the group have concluded joking about Cs experience, A asks the spirit if it can touch a different member of the group, and the interaction with the spirit and Ouija Board continues. Throughout this piece of footage the group deviate from the intended activity several times and appear to pay little attention to the response initiated by the spirit which seems misplaced given the groups intended purpose of discovering and communicating with spirits.

At the start of this case, A is talking to the spirit[23] about the pet cats which are in the room. He has asked the spirit to indicate whether she likes the cats to which the spirit has replied 'Yes' using the planchette on the Ouija Board. Participant A then asks the spirit a question (17). This request for the spirit to do "something"(20) rather than a specific action is fairly ambiguous.

Extract 1.1
Alley Cat

```
17 A      We have two cats[ in the room with us now (1.0) is-
18                       [ (C looks down towards left arm and
19        then looks back towards A)
20 A      there any chance you could do something[ that would make
21                                               [(B look down
22        towards her left-hand side)
23 A      them [react?
24             [(C looks at A suddenly, then looks at door)
```

Questioning the spirit as in line 17 (also in lines 1, 57 and 91 within this case) is common in these situations and as in ordinary mundane conversation there is an expectation on the part of the speaker that the recipient (in this case, the spirit) will engage in the same rules

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[23] To allow for a fluid discussion of this case the term 'spirit' has been used to refer to the entity that the group are attempting to or believe they are communicating with. This expression is used solely for the purpose of maintaining consistency in the flow of discussion and is not intended to imply an ontological reality for the entity.

of turn-taking and adjacency pairs (Schegloff, 1968). Indeed, participation of the spirit in this turn taking practice may be an indicator of the spirit's presence (or even existence) and willingness to respond to the group's request. By receiving a response the group have in essence 'made contact'. For example, when A asks the spirit whether she likes cats the response of the spirit is determined by the movement of the planchette to 'yes' (13). This is treated as an adequate second turn from the spirit after which the group accept the turn by stating 'okay' (14, 15) and move the planchette back into the centre of the Ouija Board ready for the next question.

```
       Extract 1.2
       Alley cat

       1   A      Do you[ remember I asked you if you liked cats:[:?
       2              [(C puts hand on planchette)
       3                                                       [(E puts
       4          hand on planchette)
       5          (C followed by B and D look towards the door. As C
       6          returns to home position the planchette begins to move; as
       7          this movement starts D looks back towards the board, and B
       8          looks down towards her left side before returning to
       9          face the Ouija Board also)
       10  A      She had to wait a bit mmm::::::: yeah I do actually h[u
       11  B                                                           [hu
       12         huh
       13         (Planchette has moved to 'yes' on the Ouija Board)
       14  B      k[ay
       15  A       [okay[ hhh.
       16              [(group move planchette back to the centre of OB)
```

Turn taking is enacted through the Ouija Board by providing a platform in which the group can present their questions and receive a visual response represented by the movement of the planchette to various letters/symbols on the board. It can, therefore, also be assumed that as with ordinary conversation the speaker will expect the answer to be contextually relevant to the first-part pair (Schegloff, 2007). In this instance this is provided for the speaker, and indeed the rest of the group, as the glass moves to "yes". However, it is the actions performed by C during both the turn of A and the spirit that is of particular relevance (as shown in figure 1.3). Just after A's request for the spirit to interact with one of the cats C turns to look to his left side – where the cats are located. As the glass starts to move he looks back towards the Ouija Board, and just before it stops on "yes", looks to his left again, withdraws his right hand and reaches over to hold his upper left arm. This disengagement with the Ouija Board is important, firstly because it demonstrates a move away from the home position and disengagement with the group activity taking place, an activity that is essentially ostensible evidence of spirit participation (the glass is moving).

Secondly, it is considered in the performance of this activity (using an Ouija Board) to be detrimental during interaction with a spirit (and even dangerous for a participant) to remove both hands from the glass.[24] Therefore, the withdrawal of both hands from the Ouija Board to perform a separate activity is significant, and one that is likely to generate distinctive sequential trajectories.

**Figure 1.3**
**Alley Cat: C grabs arm**



As C holds his left arm he shifts his gaze around the other participants. Gaze is used to communicate to others participation and engagement in collaborative action (Argyle & Cook, 1976; Goodwin, 1981; Kendon, 1990; Robinson, 1998), and as such this shift in gaze by C as he encounters his experience could be considered an attempt to elicit co-participation in this event. However, in this instance the group do not respond to C's attempt to gain recipient gaze and instead continue with the business at hand (the planchette moving on the Ouija Board). Given the purpose of paranormal groups – to communicate with spirits – the absence of C's verbal disclosure of his experience at this point raises an interesting question. If C feels that he has had an experience that he believes is a result of an encounter with spirit, why would he not explicitly share this with the group? The answer to this may be two-fold. Firstly, the question posed to the spirit whilst C encountered his experience is not contextually relevant. The spirit was asked whether they could interact with the cats, not C, and therefore this experience represents a departure from the expected response. As a result of this, and as a second point, the group are not primed to notice C's experience as being relevant to this sequence. When C shifts his gaze

---

[24]Folklore on using the Ouija Board suggests that the removal of both hands from the Ouija Board whilst the group are interacting with a Spirit 'breaks the circle' and therefore disrupts the communication channel. Furthermore, some suggest that this enables 'evil' spirits to break free from the board, potentially attaching themselves to one of more members of the group.

between the group members following his experience they are already involved in participating in the turn of the spirit (the movement of the planchette on the Ouija Board) which is the expected course of interaction. At this point C withholds his disclosure. It is not until a later point in the interaction (as examined shortly) that C verbally discloses his experience to the group. This suggests that whilst C's experience could be deemed relevant and news-worthy (even extraordinary given the circumstances), it is managed according to the same talk-in-interaction that would be expected in everyday conversation. C withholds his disclosure until a relevant opportunity presents itself in the course of interaction.

### 4.3.1 Disclosing private experiences

Following the glass reaching "yes" on the Ouija Board most of the group disengage from the activity, and B and D look towards the area to the left of C. It is at this point that C repeats the gesture he had previously produced during his experience, bringing his right hand up on to his left arm and rubbing his hand up and down (as shown in figure 1.4).

**Figure 1.4**
**Alley Cat: C repeats gesture**



41: B looks towards door

47: C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B

The shift in gaze by B and D away from the home position to the empty space to the left of C (the area which given that C was poked on his left arm could indicate the location of the spirit) suddenly makes this space a point of interactional interest, and it is at this point that C verbally discloses his experience (46).

Extract 1.3
Alley Cat

```
32 E      Lets hope she's nice
33 A      yeh
34 E      [huh[ hh hhh[ I'm joking I'm joking[ h hhh
35 B         [huh                              [mm
36 A            [(ill grab) the torch so I can see-
37              [(A grabs torch and shines on the left-hand
38       side of E)
39       [(C continues to rub left arm and look around the group
40 A     [excuse me can't see
41       [(B looks towards door)
42 E     [(I think they're turning it up) the problem with cats are-
43       [(C looks to left again towards the door and grabs left
44       arm. D Looks towards the area that B and C are looking
45       at)
46 C     [Uh I just got-[ felt like I got touched in the arm
47       [(C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B)
48                      [(D looks towards C)
```

By disclosing his experience at a point when B and D's gaze has shifted to the area within proximity of his own experience, C's next turn is contextually relevant to the current interaction. However, whilst B and D are positioned for recipiency for C to now reveal his experience, the remaining two members of the group still appear to remain unaware of C's attempts to demonstrate his experience. Instead they are attending to the cats and as E begins to verbalise this (42), C interrupts and begins his verbal disclosure (46). Of particular interest is the repair and restart that is used by C when he changes from, "Uh I just got" to the epistemologically weaker statement "felt like I got touched in the arm". Repairs are brought about in conversation by problems of understanding (Have, 1999), and phrasal breaks such as restarts can act to gain recipient gaze (Goodwin, 1979, 1981; Heath, 1984b). In this instance although it is difficult to see the eye line of each member of the group we do notice that as C produces his utterance "Uh I just got" he has still not obtained gaze from all members of the group, including D who is still looking to the space to the left of C. On production of the phrasal break D re-orientates his gaze towards C and it is at this point that C restarts his disclosure. C's downgraded description of his experience could also serve another purpose. His initial "Uh I just got" implies an epistemic certainty about the origin of his experience and this confidence (given his previous failure to gain participation from the group) may have helped to secure the group's attention. However, this places C in a position where his confidence could be questioned given the subjective nature of his experience. The self-repair and epistemic downgrade performed by C to "felt like I got touched in the arm" is likely to invite a greater level of enquiry rather than scepticism from the group. For instance, if he were to pursue his initial course of disclosure and state that he had 'just got touched in the arm' the group may question his certainty

about this given that it was an entirely subjective experience. Considering that the group are still in the process of assessing the existence of the spirit his confidence in this may be treated with scepticism. It could in fact be suggested that C may also be questioning his own confidence about the experience given the nature of it. However, by changing this to "felt like" C has been able to share his experience whilst leaving the source of it open to discussion. By managing the disclosure in this way, C has been able to obtain participation from the group, safe guard his epistemic stance as an experiencer, and also provide a further route of enquiry for the group (i.e. did the spirit touch C? Can the spirit do this again? To someone else?). The manner in which the disclosure is managed by C opens up potential trajectories of interaction both enabling and preventing certain courses of action.

This analysis, therefore, reveals that the disclosure of an experience in this context does not occur immediately after the event. Speakers are sensitive to the recipiency of other participants when disclosing an experience and produce turns that accounts for and orientate to the current interactional achievements of the group. In addition, it is evident from this case that speakers manage their epistemic status through the construction of turns, and as such mitigate against any responses to their disclosure that may question the validity of their claim.

### 4.3.2 The production of embodied gesture

The embodied gestures produced by C as he produces his disclosure (figures 1.3 and 1.4) draw parallels to Heath's (2002) work into demonstrative suffering where the bearer of an experience uses various gestures and body movements to convey embodied feelings. C's subjective and private experience of being touched by the spirit was only encountered by him, therefore, by producing gestures that publicly illustrate his feelings, others are invited to see and be involved in particular next actions as a result of this (vom Lehn, 2006a). In this particular case C has demonstrated that he has noticed something by producing movements away from the home position. He shows that he has noticed something by looking into an empty space to his left (25, 30, 43), indicates that something has occurred to his left arm by removing his hand from the Ouija Board and touching his arm (31, 43), and combines this process of looking towards an empty space and attending to his arm to suggest a relationship between the two.

Extract 1.4
Alley Cat

```
25          (B returns to face forward and as C looks towards the
26          door B peers over to look towards the door area also.
27          As the planchette starts to move C looks back towards
28          Ouija Board. B looks back towards the board as the
29          planchette reaches Yes again. Just before planchette
30          stops C looks towards the door area again and lifts
31          his hand off the planchette and grabs his left arm.)
32   E      Lets hope she's nice
33   A      yeh
34   E      [huh[ hh hhh[ I'm joking I'm joking[ h hhh
35   B         [huh                                [mm
36   A              [(I'll grab) the torch so I can see-
37                     [(A grabs torch and shines on the left-hand
38           side of E)
39          [(continues to rub left arms and look around the group
40   A      [excuse me can't see
41          [(B looks towards door)
42   E      [(I think there turning it up) the problem with cats are-
43          [(C looks to left again towards the door and grabs left
44          arm. D Looks towards the area that B and C are looking
45          in)
46   C      [Uh I just got-[ felt like I got touched in the arm
47          [(C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B)
48                  [(D looks towards C)
```

In both cases we can assume by the way that C reacts, looking to the left followed by a fairly gradual movement of his right hand to start rubbing his left arm, that this gesture is made after the experience has occurred. If the movement was in direct response to the touching then it would be more feasible that C would have grabbed his left arm immediately after feeling the 'poke'. Thus, the actions of C demonstrate a gesture that is not necessarily solely in response to the experience but made visible in preparation for a disclosure to the group. The sequence of noticing and then a gesture that 'performs experiencing' therefore initiates a course of interaction that either sets up the disclosure of an experience (as in this case) or may invite others to solicit an explanation. However, as we have explored in this case, Cs first attempts to do this are hindered by his failure to gain recipient gaze. When C finally discloses his experience he repeats this earlier gesture both prior to and during his utterance. Similar to the interaction between patients and doctors as patients disclose their embodied feelings (Heath, 2002), performing these actions (noticing – embodied gesture – attempt to obtain recipient gaze) acts not only as a means of setting up the scene for disclosure, it also provides a platform to demonstrate and make visible embodied experience. In doing so, C's private experience is 'seen' by others and therefore made accessible and relevant to the group's activity.

*4.3.3 Making sense of potentially paranormal events*

Discussion about the performance and disclosure of C's extraordinary experience has shed some light on the sequences of interaction that take place prior to and during the announcement of an experience. However, as one would expect the disclosure of an experience is not a static utterance and is produced in expectation of a relevant response. The following analysis will examine the sequences of interaction that follow C's disclosure and explore how groups use the verbal responses of participants to develop further collaborative activity and assess the paranormal potential of an event.

```
Extract 1.5
Alley Cat

46   C      [Uh I just got-[ felt like I got touched in the arm
47          [(C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B)
48                        [(D looks towards C)
49   D      did you?
50   B      really
51   C      literally poked yeah like
52   D      [oo[ooo
53   B         [okay that's strang[e
54   D                            [excellent
55          [(D crosses both of his arms over his body in a
56          'shivering' gesture and rubs both his arms)
57   A      [Gurt did you just poke Al in the back
58          [(All group come back to orientate to centre of the
59          board with fingers on planchette)
60          (Planchette starts to move again)
```

D is first to respond to the disclosure made by C in line 46 and asks the question "did you?". This question is directed to C and indicates that a second turn is expected from him (Schegloff, 2007). In addition the question positions D in an 'unknowing' stance the intonation of which suggests an interest in finding out more. However, before C responds, B utters "really" (50) which appears to question the validity of C's claim. In response, C then upgrades his disclosure stating that he was "literally poked yeah like" (51). Following this B and D produce two different assessments of the experience that have the potential to take the interaction in alternative trajectories. Although both participants respond at the same time, D produces his response slightly before B, an "ooooo" (52) that appears to express an element of surprise and excitement, and this is followed by B's "okay that's strange" (53). This statement is two-parted, with the "okay" indicating an acceptance of the experience reported by C and the "that's strange", providing an assessment of it (the experience that C had was not expected within the current interaction). Considering that the group are currently trying to interact with spirit the nature of C's experience does not

seem radically out of context, particularly since the action supposedly performed by the spirit – poking – could be seen as a relatively normal way of getting someone's attention. This assessment is perhaps intended then to refer to the group business in that it is strange that the spirit poked C rather than the cats. Whilst producing this response B also returns to the home position maintaining contact throughout with the Ouija Board. This sequence of actions performed by B from her initial "really" (50) to the later assessment "okay that's strange" (53) and reorientation to the board suggests that whilst her responses are directed towards C, her focus remains on the group activity. On the other hand, D follows B's utterance at the end of "strange" with his own assessment of the experience "excellent" (54). The next utterance to follow D's assessment is a question posed to the spirit by A and this is accompanied by all of the group re-orientating to the home position. D's "excellent" has then acted as a concluding assessment of the experience, warranting the group returning to the home position and terminating the discussion of C's experience.

The different trajectories presented by both B and D seem to be important to the subsequent course of the group activity. The final response is offered by A who does not directly acknowledge C's experience but instead addresses the spirit. The heavy intonation used by A to pronounce the spirits' name "Gurt" (57) leads to the return of the entire group back to the home position. He then proceeds to question the spirit about the experience. By doing this and engaging the group back to the home position he has opened up the opportunity for a collaborative experience to occur once again, shifting the focus from the subjective experience described by C to the group activity of using the Ouija Board (figure 1.5). As we see in line 60 his attempt to encourage a collaborative experience is successful and the planchette starts to move.

**Figure 1.5**
**Alley Cat: Return to home position**

These divergent methods of handling a subjective experience demonstrate that those situations that may be considered a paranormal experience and what happens as a consequence are mediated through interactional practices. In line 54, D concludes the discussion of C's embodied experience and does not offer any further avenues of enquiry. B's turn on the other hand "okay that's strange" (53) invites potential further investigation into the strange qualities he refers to. As such, it would be interesting to see the route that the interaction would have taken if D's turn had been the only response – would the group have integrated this experience into the collective activity as they do in line 57? In a similar respect without D's response would B's assessment on its own have led to the group moving away from the individual focus on C to one that is collaborative (line 53)? Although these two assessments at first seem divergent they may indeed work strategically together with one concluding the focus on C, whilst the other maintains a line of enquiry into the experience. The turn taken by A proceeding these assessments marks both the end of one interactional sequence (the individual experience of C), and the reorientation of the group back to the home position. The subjective experience of C now becomes a predominant feature of the group activity – forming the basis of the next question which re-orientates the group back to the home position and the group business at hand.

By integrating C's experience into the collaborative activity the group have managed to incorporate this experience into the group's business-at-hand and the interaction (communicating with the spirit) can progress.  In line 60 the planchette has started to move once again and all members of the group are engaged in this activity. However, this is disrupted when D, referring back to C's experience, makes the suggestion that perhaps the spirit was implying that C was a cat by poking him rather than the cats in the room (61).

Extract 1.6
Alley Cat

```
60        (Planchette starts to move again)
61  D     calling Al a cat
62        (B and D starts smiling)
63  D      [hhh hhh hhhh HHH hhh hh hh h[ Al the cat
64  B      [hh hh hhh look how you react
65  C                                [hh hhh hhh hhhhh hh
66        (Planchette reaches Yes and is then returned to centre)
67  D      Alley cat [hh hhhh hhhh hhhh hh hh hh [hh
68  A                [hh
69              [(A points at D)
70                                              [(C shakes head)
71  B     she probably finds [that quite [funny
72  C                         [hh hhh
73  D                                    [hh. Hhh hhh
```

As D produces this turn he looks around the other group members. On making eye contact with B, who has at this point begun to laugh, D diverges from the collaborative activity and joins B in treating his previous utterance as a humorous one by laughing too. Establishing recipient gaze with another member of the group in this instance has encouraged D to pursue a particular course of interaction. D re-emphasises his point as the laughter escalates by producing the turn, "Al the Cat" (63) and C (who the joke is aimed at) also joins in with the laughter (figure 1.6). Although the planchette is still moving at this point both B and D are disengaged with the group business. Instead they are engaged with the current humorous characterisation of C's experience, looking towards each other rather than the movement of the planchette which has now arrived at "Yes" (66) – implying that the spirit did indeed poke C in the arm. The planchette is then returned to its home position in the centre of the board. It is here that D also makes a final comment about the experience using the participant's name and the cats to produce the pun "Alley Cat" (67). It is after this final utterance by D that A makes a pointing gesture towards him (figure 1.4), and it is A's removal of his finger from the planchette to produce this gesture that leads to a progressive disengagement by the rest of the group (69). The humorous comment produced by D has resulted in one member's disengagement with the group business leading to the gradual disengagement of all participants. In this particular case the disengagement is started when D seeks recipient gaze with another participant and receives it from B who responds to his comment by returning his gaze and laughing. When C also joins in, in line 65, the majority of the group are now orientating to D's comment rather than the group business at hand (the movement of the Ouija Board). Although at this point the group still remain 'doing' the action of the group business as soon as the planchette stops and is moved to the home position A's gesture results in a full disengagement by the group (69). This gesture by A may also mark a move towards a complete focus on D's comment and therefore as with C's experience earlier a move away from the home position is acceptable as they are no longer in the process of 'doing' group business.

**Figure 1.6**
**Alley cat: Group laughing**



Following on from this humorous exchange is a discussion about the utterance produced by D. The group begin building D's turn into the ongoing experience and this comment which is initially treated as comical, becomes relevant to the overall groups activity. B suggests perhaps the spirit finds it funny that she has diverged from the request made by A, and implied in doing so that she is calling C a cat (71). A also makes reference to the fact that there is a cat behind C that may have had something to do with the mistaken 'poking' (74).

```
Extract 1.7.
Alley Cat

71    B       she probably finds [that quite [funny
72    C                          [hh hhh
73    D                                       [hh. Hhh hhh
74    A       well there is a [cat right behind you
75                            [(C, B and D all look to C's left in
76            the direction of the cat)
77    C       [No like it was right-[it was up on my arm right[ there
78    D                                                       [hh
79            [(C looks towards A and touches behind his left
80            shoulder)
81                                 [(B looks at C)
82                                                            [(D
83            looks towards E)
```

It is not clear whether A's turn is aimed at questioning the validity of C's claim (it may have been the cat that he felt instead of the spirit) or is a way of accounting for the mispoke by the spirit. However, C treats it as the former and defends the validity of his claim by demonstrating the area on his arm where he encountered the 'poke' (79) – an area in an empty space away from the cats. As C verbally refers to this area on his arm he also

produces a repair half way through his sentence, starting with "No like it was right" and replacing it with "It was up on my arm right there" (77). In contrast with the earlier repair where the utterance was epistemologically downgraded, in this case C upgrades his response. This shift from a weak to a strong epistemic stance, and combining this with a further demonstration of the experience in line 79, shows a shift by C to portray a certainty about his experience when its validity is potentially questioned. As such, how the disclosure of an experience is managed and seen by others, as demonstrated here and previously in line 47, may be important to the collective understanding and categorisation of it (i.e. as potentially paranormal/ normal) . In addition, this exchange between the group members manages to redirect the interaction from the light-hearted jovial course it had started to take (initiated by D's joking remark) and once again integrated it into the overall group business. It has been converted from a joke about C, to a group concern about their interaction with the spirit.

Extract 1.8.
Alley Cat

```
77  C     [No like it was right-[it was up on my arm right[ there
78  D                                                      [hh
79        [(C looks towards A and touches behind his left
80        shoulder)
81                          [(B looks at C)
82                                              [(D
83        looks towards E)
84  D     hhh hhh
85        (C looks over his right shoulder)
86  B      okay
87  A     (It should the cat (       ) [up)
88                                      [(B looks where C is
89        looking)
90  C     (unknown)
91  A     Great hh. [Ummm okay would you be- [would you be-
92                  [(A, B, C, and D look towards centre and
93        put fingers on planchette)
94                                          [(E places
95        finger on planchette)
96  A     able to to touch me Gurt
```

In lines 86 and 91 B and A offer an assessment of the situation "okay" and "great". As in line 54, these assessments seem to play an important role in bringing the current sequence of interaction to a close. After A has given his assessment he then proceeds to produce an audible exhale and moves in towards the board with his body and arm (the full extent of this is difficult to see due to the camera angle) (91). As he does this the rest of the group also follow the actions of A returning to the home position and re-engaging with the Ouija Board. Before proceeding with his next question for the spirit, A produces an "ummm

okay" (91). During this utterance the group move into the home position ready for the collaborative activity to occur and as A reaches the end of 'okay' all the group members except E have their fingers on the board (92) (Figure 1.7a).

**Figure 1.7**
**Alley Cat: E places finger on Ouija Board**



94: E places finger on planchette

*Figure 1.7(a)* *Figure 1.7(b)*

A proceeds to ask his next question, however, as he reaches the word "able" he produces a phrasal break at which point E moves to place her finger on the board also (Figure 1.7b). The question is then repeated. This action by A performs a similar function to the phrasal break produced earlier by C as a means of securing the gaze and participation of all members of the group (Goodwin, 1979, 1981). Even though the speaker does not require the hearer to look towards them in this particular situation they do require an engagement with the group business, and this is only fully demonstrated when all participants return to the home position.

It is evident from this section of the analysis that participants pursue the investigation and categorisation of potentially paranormal events through questioning and assessing the claims of others. In this particular instance, the questions and assessments produced lead to further trajectories of interaction as the group seek to determine the qualities of the event, and to progress the group activity. Furthermore, the categorisation of an event as paranormal is accomplished through the production of gesture and talk that identify the features of an event and position the event in an 'empty' space void of natural

explanations. In doing so, the event becomes seen as potentially paranormal.

### 4.3.4 Collective departures from group activity

Following the group's realignment back towards the home position the planchette starts to move (71). However, only 7 seconds in the collaborative activity is disrupted as E offers up a verbal response "its cat" (101), to C's current gaze which is orientated towards the floor on his left (99). As E asks for a light to see if she can see the cat, she removes her hand from the planchette (106), and the group once again disengage with the Ouija Board.

```
Extract 1.9
Alley Cat

91  A      Great hh. [Ummm okay would you be able- [would you be-
92                  [(A, B, C, and D look towards centre and
93         put fingers on planchette)
94                                                  [(E place
95         finger on planchette)
96  A      able to to touch me Gurt- i'm not afraid
97         (Planchette starts to move)
98         (7 seconds)
99         (C shifts gaze to his left)
100 A      I'm not afraid
101 E      it's cat
102        (C shifts gaze to E, then back to board)
103 A      I'm not afraid
104        (E removes hand from planchette)
105 E      is there a cat can I have a light[ to see if there's a cat
106                                          [(A removes hand from
107        planchette and passes light to E)
108                                          [C removes hand from
109        planchette, planchette stops moving)
110 E      walked past me
```

It is curious that the group's interactional activities generate these collective departures from ostensibly defining or self-evidently significant goals. In this single case, the group have diverged from the group business of communicating with spirit on three occasions; to pursue an individual experience, to joke about C's experience, and to look for the cats in the room. On each occasion this divergence is marked not only by the verbal accounts of what is going on but also each individuals repositioning away from the home position. Likewise the reorientation of each individual to the group business at hand is achieved through verbal assessments and a re-engagement with the home position. Furthermore, a quite striking observation from this data is the omission of the turn being produced by the spirit (through the movement of the planchette). This turn which would seem to be significant to the group activity is not acknowledged on several occasions within this sequence of interaction. For instance, when the planchette has landed on "Yes" after A's

question in line 57 ("did you poke Al in back") the group do not openly acknowledge this response even though the answer would suggest that the spirit is claiming responsibility for C's experience. This should be significant to the group as they have just received confirmation that indeed it was the spirit that interacted with one of the group members. However, despite the significance of this information A (who asked the question), does not acknowledge the response, C who had the experience has not used this as a means to qualify his claim, and the remainder of the group appear equally unresponsive. The lack of acknowledgement of the spirits turn seems unusual given its relevance to the interaction taking place and the overall objectives of the group. In essence in this particular scenario, if we are to put scepticism aside, there is substantial evidence to suggest that the group are in contact with a spirit. A spirit that is actively communicating with them. The production of actions by the group that deviate from the business of spirit communication and instead pursue divergent matters (such as jokes) is an interesting phenomena. However, as discussed it is evident from this case that there are occasions when seemingly divergent activities are integrated into the continuing interaction and activity of the group.

## 4.4 Conclusion

This initial analysis has highlighted a number of analytical issues that require further examination, in particular the ways that extraordinary experiences are managed by the group in a manner that enables multiple parties to participate in a collective experience. The group demonstrate various devices within face-to-face interaction, to disclose and manage paranormal experiences. In this particular case, an experience that is private to one individual is made public and shared with a group, and in doing so becomes part of the wider group activity. It is evident through this analysis that paranormal experience whilst out-of-the-ordinary is subjected to some very ordinary rules of conversational organisation. Individuals participate in turn-taking sequences, initiate repairs and restarts to gain co-participation in collective activities, and produce sequences of multimodal actions to establish reciprocal gaze and reference features of their experience and the environment. As such, this initial analysis reveals that the experience of paranormal events is socially and interactively organised. Whilst an exploration of all of these features is beyond the scope of this research, the remaining analytical chapters of this thesis will focus on three analytical themes. These themes have emerged from observations and questions initiated from this single case analysis, and subsequent interest in the social organisation of paranormal events. Although these will be appreciated in their own analytical chapters it is

important to emphasise that these interactional components are intertwined and connected in a broader interactional framework as group's navigate and discover these events within a normal/ paranormal paradigm. Furthermore, whilst these themes provide an analytical description of forms of interaction that occur during these events they cannot account for all factors that may affect a group experience (be that environmental, psychological or supernatural). It is intended, therefore, that these themes will provide a perspective on extraordinary experience that explores the social and organised components of interaction that help to guide the course of an experience. These themes will be summarised below.

*Theme.1. Socially organised practices for disclosing experiences*

In this particular case a participant discloses a private embodied experience to the group through a series of multimodal actions. In doing so, the participant is able to highlight and make visible his experience to others. As discussed in this case, the disclosure of an experience does not, as one would assume, immediately follow its occurrence but appears to be socially organised, and sensitive to the current interactional accomplishments of the group. Thus, how and when participants refer to an event will form the basis of the first analytical chapter.

*Theme.2. Establishing the extraordinary character of individual and group experience*

Beyond highlighting that an event has occurred, in this case it is also evident that participants establish an understanding for their experience as potentially paranormal. C expressed this through denial that it was the 'cats' that caused his experience, and the production of a gesture that reinforced the location of his experience (in an empty space away from the cats). Through this he was able to establish a certain way of seeing the experience (as paranormal rather than normal). Therefore, the second analytical chapter will explore further how groups collectively arrive at a paranormal, rather than normal explanation for an event, and the role that the positioning of an event and its relevant features plays in determining this.

*Theme.3. Making visible embodied experiences*

The experience that C encounters in this case is private and embodied, and as such he is the only one able to participate in the 'poke'. However, through verbal and embodied gesture,

he is able to share and make visible the features of his experience, and these lead to specific trajectories of interaction. As such, the final analytical chapter will investigate the production of embodied talk and action, and the role this has in sharing and discovering paranormal events.

## Chapter Five

## Discovering 'That': Forms of Noticing and Establishing Co-participation in Paranormal Experiences

Through the findings of this analysis the researcher intends to provide an insight into the interactional features present during a collective group experience, from when it is first noticed to the point that it becomes understood as potentially paranormal. It seems logical, therefore, to commence this analysis at what could be considered the 'beginning' of a paranormal event. In this study the start of the event is considered to be the point that a first noticing is produced, be that verbal or non-verbal. Thus, this chapter will start with an extract from the data in which a first noticing is observed.

```
        Extract 2.1
        Spooksfest

272         [(Scraping sound)
273         [(B and F look suddenly over the right of the room.
274         F jumps)
275 F       [what[ the- .hhhh                        sorry
276 B            [what the hell was that .hhh
277         [(B and F look at each other, F jumps backwards with
278         hands up at face. B looks round to D)
```

Extract 2.1 presents a typical example of the type of opening sequence that occurs prior to the discussion and acknowledgement (or indeed dismissal) of a paranormal experience. In this example, the group are taking part in an Ouija board session when a scraping sound occurs close to where the group are sitting. B and F both hear the sound and look towards an area to the right-hand side of the room. They then both look towards each other, F starts to produce a turn, and then B interrupts this turn by exclaiming "what the hell was that". What precedes this sequence of exchanges between F and B is a discussion between the group regarding what 'that' could have been.

In this short extract we are provided with an initial insight into the moment that a group experience starts. Prior research into group experience is limited with the majority of studies situated within a psychological and individual paradigm concentrating on explanations such as suggestion, hypnosis and environmental factors as explanations for alleged haunting experiences (such as Braithwaite, 2004; Lange & Houran, 1997; McClenon, 2006; Wiseman et al, 2002). Whilst these studies may be helpful in understanding some aspects of the individual experience and how this translates to the

group they ignore the inherent social aspects of these events. In this extract, members of the group react to an audible noise in their immediate environment and in doing so they produce actions such as body and gaze shifts before, during and after their initial exclamation. By doing this they highlight the location of the event and establish other co-participants in it. In addition, and the main focus of this particular analysis, B uses the word 'that' to refer to the event. The use of the word 'that' in this context is interesting from two perspectives (i) the lack of any description of what 'that' is referring to (i.e. a sound, sight, feeling) either assumes that this knowledge is shared or leaves the interpretation of it open, and (ii) invites discussion about what "that" could be and in doing so encourages others to participate in the event. We do not know from this data extract whether or not the scraping sound that is heard is indeed paranormal, however, what is interesting here is not the ontological reality of the event but the social mechanisms that enable it to become part of the wider group's collective experience. This analysis will explore how group experiences are initiated with a focus on the referent 'that' as a mechanism for disclosing and encouraging co-participation in an experience. As such, this chapter expands upon the analytical issues raised in theme 1 of the single case analysis exploring socially organised practices for disclosing paranormal experiences.

## 5.1 "That" as a demonstrative reference

There is little previous research into the use of the word 'that' in conversation. In particular, whilst some CA literature has focused on the use of particular words or sounds (such as "uh(m)'s" (Schegloff, 2010), "uh" (Jefferson, 1974) and "well" (Schegloff, 2009)) the use of the word 'that' in conversation has been largely overlooked. Those studies that do exist are predominately within linguistics where words such as 'that' and 'it' are discussed as a form of demonstrative referencing (i.e. "look at that"). The use of 'that' as a demonstrative reference has been explored further by several linguistic researchers (Scott, 2008; Strauss, 2002; Potts & Schwarz, 2009) who discuss its use vis-à-vis 'this'. Early studies have considered the different uses of these words and their relationship to each other from their ability to physically demonstrate an object, to refer to something in both the current and past, and their ability to create a sense of closeness or emotion (Lakoff, 1974; Fillmore, 1997).

Scott (2008) provides a more refined analysis of this relationship outlining the

importance of proximity in referencing objects with 'this' referring to those objects close to the speaker, and 'that' to those which are further way. In this sense 'this' is treated as a proximal reference (i.e. "we are going on holiday this week" refers to the current week) and 'that' is treated as distal (i.e. "we are going on holiday that week" could refer to a number of future weeks) (Scott; 2008: 170). Whilst the use of 'this' restrains the number of potentials to the proximal area, 'that' has the potential to refer to any number of referents. Therefore, according to researchers such as Fillmore (1997), Ariel (1990), Grudel, Hedburg and Zacharski (1993), and Scott (2008), 'that' is used as a demonstrative reference when the referent is in someway familiar to the speaker/ hearer. This may be determined by the object's distinctive qualities (Scott, 2008; Strauss, 2002) (i.e. "that flower is beautiful") or by the accompanying gestures used by the speaker such as a body shift, head tilt, gaze or point. For example, "please may I have a slice of that cake" may be accompanied by the speaker pointing or looking towards a particular cake.

In the context of these linguistic studies, the word 'that' is used by speakers to direct hearers towards and make visible particular referents. In contrast to 'this', the word 'that' has the potential to be referring to a broad range of subjects and as a result of this we are introduced to the notion that gestures (whilst not essential) often accompany a 'that' referral. In those cases where a gesture is not used the referent is likely to have a distinctive quality. These linguistics studies provide a valuable insight into what 'that' can accomplish and why it may be used within conversation. However, this research does not attempt to examine the interaction between speaker and hearer beyond the intended use of 'that'. Whilst we understand that speakers use 'that' to accomplish referencing we do not understand from these studies how this fits within the speaker-hearer relationship. For example, as a result of this referencing does the hearer indicate that they understand the reference, and how do they achieve this? We understand that gestures, gaze and body shifts play an important role in producing a 'that' reference but how are these produced and when in the sequence of interaction? What happens when a reference is misunderstood, and how is this resolved? Linguistic studies alone provide a limited perspective on these types of demonstrative reference, highlighting a small part of a larger interactive framework between speaker, hearer, object and environment that is alluded to in the conversation fragments included in these studies. By using conversation analysis we can start to unpack the various interactions in which demonstrative referencing is embedded. Whilst helping to answer questions such as

those previously posed this will also help to establish a greater understanding of the role that multimodal actions have alongside and during demonstrative referencing – the importance of which has been contested across linguistic studies. In addition, it positions demonstrative referencing within the broader context of conversation and will help to identify where it is situated in the on-going interaction and how hearer(s) respond to a speakers request to notice a reference.

This chapter will specifically focus on the reference 'that' in the context of paranormal experiences. In these settings, unlike the physical objects that are often referred to in linguistic studies, when individuals are referring to paranormal experiences the object of attention is often non-physical (such as a noise or feeling). These settings are also dealing with small groups of individuals rather than just a singular speaker-hearer set up and therefore the proximal issues discussed previously through linguistic research are brought somewhat into contest. 'That' in this setting is used to achieve something different which goes beyond merely referencing an object and attempts to establish co-presence and co-participation in an experience. Furthermore, the non-physical quality of 'that' leaves its identity open to interpretation and whilst its distinctive qualities may play a part in establishing the identity of it (i.e. a large bang), it is also often the first stage in a series of negotiations between speaker(s) and hearer(s) to establish what 'that' could be.

This analysis explores the different types of 'that' reference used by speakers and the subsequent turn negotiations that occur as a result of this. The following 'that' references will be analysed:

1)      what is that/ what was that/ what's that
2)      did you hear that/ did you not hear that
3)      was that you/ was that your

For clarity of reading the first 'that' reference will be named 'what that' and the second named 'did you that'. The variations of each of these turns will be discussed through the analysis. Alongside this verbal analysis, we will also examine how gesture and gaze fit into the referencing sequence and discuss how multimodal interaction aids in establishing a collaborative experience.

### 5.1.1 what that

Extract 2.1
Spooksfest

```
272          [(Scraping sound)
273          [(B and F look suddenly over the right of the room. F
274          jumps)
275 F        [what[ the- .hhhh                    sorry
276 B            [what the hell was that .hhh                        <--
277          [(B and F look at each other, F jumps backwards
278          with hands up at face. B looks round to D)
```

'What that' is perhaps one of the most open forms of 'that' used in this setting. Whilst it acts to identify something that is occurring, on its own, it provides no description or direction towards the event being referred too. Unlike (2) and (3) it is also not directed towards a particular hearer, nor actually requires a response from any other members of the group. 'What that' could in fact act as an invitation for others to participate in the exploration of what 'that' is alongside the speaker without actually conversing (i.e. by listening, seeing, feeling). So what function does a 'what that' turn have in the noticing of paranormal experiences?

Firstly, 'what that' is used by speakers both after an event ('what was that') and as it is occurring ('what 's/is that'). In the former, the actions of the speaker towards the hearers imply that they have assumed prior to their reference that the event being referred to is shared even if the exact qualities of it are not (i.e. a noise has been heard but the cause of it is not identifiable). In these cases the gaze of the speaker shifts (often quite dramatically) towards the group members prior to the 'what was that' reference. No verbal description or gesture is made that may suggest the nature of the event (i.e. sound, visual) - in essence it is assumed to be identified by its distinctive or 'out of place' qualities (Scott, 2008; Strauss, 2002). This analysis will first discuss the 'what was that' reference.

In extract 2.2 below, it is the large bang in line 8 that becomes the referent of this event. Directly after the event A looks up towards D and then produces the utterance "now what was that" (10). Whilst we cannot see the reaction of D as he is located behind the camera we can assume based on the direction of the camera which is pointed towards A, that D is also looking in this direction. As A turns to face B and produce the 'that' turn, D also starts to pan the camera towards B (9), suggesting an awareness and attention to A's shift in gaze. Following A's 'that' turn B produces a hand gesture (11) (as if to imply

"it wasn't me") as A turns to face him (9). We can assume based on the action of B in response to A's questions, along with the fact that we too can hear the bang, that the experience is shared between the group even if the exact qualities of it (i.e. where it came from) are not.

Extract 2.2
Tolbooth Bang

```
1        (D turns the camera to face A who is looking down
2        towards the thermometer he is holding. D pans the camera
3        over to the left and then back around across A who is
4        now looking up, and off to the right where the doorway
5        and B are located. The camera comes to a rest back on A)
6        (28 secs - Small tap)
7        (A looks over to the left)
8        (31 secs - Large bang from the next room)
9        (A turns to face D and then B)
10   A   now what was that?                                    <--
11       (D pans the camera to B who holds his hands up)
12   A    where did that come from?
13       (B points out the doorway)
```

Likewise by returning to extract 2.1 it is evident that the utterance "what the hell was that" (276) occurs after the event and is accompanied by B and F looking towards each other (277), and F producing a body movement away from the group holding her hands to her face (277-278). The joint reaction of the group towards the event, along with the audible noise that is heard within this footage, again implies that the focus of 'that' is shared amongst the group even though the nature of what 'that' is remains unknown.

Extract 2.1
Spooksfest

```
272        [(Scraping sound)
273        [(B and F look suddenly over the right of the room. F
274        jumps)
275 F      [what[ the- .hhhh                    sorry
276 B          [what the hell was that .hhh                  <--
277        [(B and F look at each other, F jumps backwards
278        with hands up at face. B looks round to D)
```

In these examples, the 'what was that' turn is produced when (i) there is the potential (even assumption) for the event to be shared with others, (ii) implies an epistemic uncertainty about what 'that' was, and (iii) takes place after the event has occurred. In each instance the 'what was that' turn is preceded by a shift in gaze by the speaker towards another member of the group, and in extract 2.2 a shift in gaze towards a space (273) prior to this.

The 'what was that' turn results in a sequence of actions as outlined below:

1)    Referent (i.e. noise)

2)    Speaker shifts gaze to referent and/or hearer

3)    Hearer gazes at speaker

4)    'What was that'

Unlike the 'what was that' turn, a 'what's/ what is that' turn is produced as an event is occurring. In the 'what was that' examples we have examined, the time between the event and reference is relatively short, however, when a 'what's/ what is that' turn is produced there is a lengthier period of time between the initial noticing of the event through to its referral. For example, in extract 2.3 the first noticing of the popping sound occurs 8 seconds into a 27 second period of silence. Within this 27 second break in talk A, C and E perform a series of glances towards each other (35-38). In particular, C who is the 'what's that' speaker is the first to look up towards A (36), an action she repeats twice. However, it is not until A returns her gaze (40) and begins to indicate that she is feeling dizzy (39) that C produces the 'what's that' turn (43).

Extract 2.3
Popping Sound

```
34  C      just try and move that in a cir::cle
35         (27 secs – popping noise can be heard in background.
36         8 secs in C glances up at A and then back to board.
37         21 secs in C looks up again, E looks towards C. 25
38         secs in C looks over to A)
39  A      [I'm feeling really dizzy like you did
40         [(A looks at C. B looks around towards A)
41  A      we got that before didn't we
42         (B looks back towards board)
43  C      °what's that°                                    <--
44  A      what
45  C      like popping so[und
46  E                     [(unknown) behind you
47                        [(B looks towards C. E looks at C)
```

Likewise, in extract 2.4 there is a period of 6 seconds between A's (the speaker) initial noticing (18) - indicated by her shift in gaze away from the business of waiting for a response - and her reference in line 22. The 'what is that' turn is produced only after two other members of the group G (19) and C (21) shift their gaze towards the point of reference that A has noticed (21). Again, whilst it is difficult to establish exactly where C is gazing before her shift in gaze towards the point of interest (due to the camera being positioned behind her), she is facing A at this time and as such is able to observe

A's actions. A's gaze shift towards C just before the reference (21) suggests a noticing on the part of A, that C is engaging with the event that she too has noticed (i.e. she is looking in the same direction).

Extract 2.4
Grandfather Clock

```
17  G      Are you scared (0.5)[ of us?
18                            [(A lifts her gaze off the board and
19         looks to top left of camera, G follows A's gaze)
20         (Unknown tap and quiet "ooooo" (moaning) sound can
21         be heard. C looks towards the sound. A looks at C)
22  A      [What the fuck is that?                          <--
23  A      [(A winces whilst speaking. C and G look at A)
24         (Gauss meter can be heard increasing in background)
25  C      [Ehh-
26         [(C shakes her head whilst looking at A)
27  A      That's another clock it's somewhere [else 'in it
28  G                                           [It sounds like a
29  G      proper clock
```

In both of these examples, the 'what's that/ what is that' turn, is preceded by gaze shifts produced by the speaker before the 'that' turn takes place. In extract 2.3, this takes the form of a series of attempts by C to establish A's gaze (36-38), and in extract 2.4 this takes the form of a gaze shift and head tilt by A towards a 'point of interest' (18). These actions are proceeded by a subsequent gaze shift by another member of the group, towards the speaker or referent, before the 'that' turn. Indeed, the production of gaze shifts prior to the 'that' reference in both the 'what was that' and 'what's that/ what is that' turn are evident. Robinson (1998) discusses that gaze shifts can be an important tool in developing engagement frameworks. Gaze can not only act to identify the intended recipient of a gazer's talk and action (Goodwin, 1981), but can also communicate attention, availability and participation in action (Goodwin, 1981; Kendon, 1990; Robinson, 1998). In the 'what was that' turn, we observe that the speaker produces the 'that' turn  after they produce a gaze shift away from the business at hand towards another member of the group. In each case reciprocal gaze with a hearer is established shortly before the 'that' turn takes place, however, the time between the event and reference is relatively short. It is worth noting at this point that the events in extract 2.1 and 2.2 are both audible on camera and as such it can be assumed that whilst the nature of the experience is unknown at this stage, the event itself is shared. However, in the 'what's that/ what is that' extracts examined the time between the first noticing of the event by the speaker and the 'that' turn is delayed. In each case the turn is preceded by the speaker producing a gaze shift away from the business at hand, and this

is later followed by other members of the group looking towards the speaker (extract 2.3) and in the case of extract 2.4, the referent. Given that in each of these examples the hearer indicates after the 'what's that/ what is that' turn that they are aware of the referent even if (as in the 'what was that' turn) they are unaware of what 'that' is, it is possible that the negotiation of gaze prior to the reference in this particular turn acts as a way for the speaker to establish a sense of shared experiencing prior to producing the 'that' reference. Unlike the 'what was that' turn, the event itself is subtler (i.e. a popping sound, or sound of a clock, rather than a loud bang), and as such it could be suggested that these events may seem less 'out of place' than those in the 'what was that' turns. The event is also ongoing, and as such has the potential to still be noticed and engaged with by others. Thus, gaze shifts following the speakers noticing demonstrates that not only has someone else within the group noticed 'something' but that they are noticing this in the context of the speakers' experience by directing their gaze towards them and the referent. They are, as such, demonstrating through mutual gaze that they are co-participants (or potentially co-experiencers) in the event.

The 'what's that/ what is that' turn results in a sequence of actions as outlined below:

1)      Experience (i.e. ongoing noise)
2)      Speaker shifts gaze to referent
3)      Speaker shifts gaze to hearer
4)      Hearer shifts gaze towards speaker/ referent
5)      'What's that/ what is that'

The 'what's that/ what is that' referral is produced (i) whilst an event is ongoing, (ii) and is not immediately disclosed but (iii) follows a period of gaze negotiation between speaker and hearer. Additionally, (iv) it also implies epistemic uncertainty about what 'that' is.

 In summary, the 'what that' has two functions at the onset of an experience. Firstly, to refer to an experience and to display awareness of it after it has happened, and secondly to identify and display awareness an on-going experience. In both cases it would seem that establishing potential co-participation in the experience before referencing the event is important and speakers carefully negotiate (particularly when identifying an ongoing experience) this through a series of gaze shifts prior to the 'that' reference. In both

instances the speaker implies an epistemic uncertainty about the event. It is relatively common in the context of paranormal groups for a request to be made to the spirit for the production of a particular event, however, in these cases the event either does not align with the request or a request has not been made. For instance, in extract 2.4 the group are participating in a Ouija Board session when the sound of the clock is identified. As such, event's are identified by their unusual or 'out of place' qualities given the current group activity. The speaker displays their epistemic stance of the event as weaker (i.e. they do not know what 'that' is) through the design of wh- question format which typically encourages an open-ended response (Perakyla & Vehvilainen, 2003). Additionally, the use of the term 'that' to refer to an experience engenders a transgressive quality to the reference (Hayward, Wooffitt & Wood, 2015). Thus, a 'what that' reference is produced when the speakers epistemic stance of the event is weak (i.e. there could be a range of possibilities), however, the potential for the event to be shared is evident (i.e. it is particularly obvious such as a loud bang, or engagement with the event is displayed through gaze shifts by other participants). By presenting the reference in this form the speaker is able to identify an event, whilst leaving the epistemic qualities of it open to negotiation by the group.

### 5.1.2 did you that

During a 'did you that' reference the speaker produces a direct turn towards a particular speaker(s) whilst referencing a particular event that has been predefined. It occurs in two forms, its simplest form as stated, and its negative form 'did you not that'. Extract 2.5 will be used to demonstrate the different functions that each of these turns has in the ongoing sequence of interaction.

```
        Extract 2.5
        Whistle

17  C      did you just whistle Jess?
18  A      [nope I clicked something on my camera
19         [B looks up towards A. A looks over to her right, not
20         towards the group)
21  C      no did you not hear that[ it's a it's like a doo(   )
22                                 [(A looks back to centre. B
23         shakes her head)
24         (4 secs)
25  B      can you make a noise with your voice (2 secs)oo:: oo
26         (4.5 secs – 3 secs in A and B quickly look up a
27         each other at the same time)
```

```
28  B     did you hear that?
29  A     yes I heard [that
30                   [(A looks off towards her left)
31  C     I didn't
32  B     did you not hear that whistle?                    <--
33  A     ehh[  (unknown whisper)
34           [(A looks off to her right and then back towards
35     the centre looking towards the ground)
36  B     can you do that again
37        ((unknown whisper))
38  B     can you make a noise with you voice ooo oooooo::
39        (8 secs)
40  B     [it was as if someone ooo-
41        [(B looks towards A. A looks up towards B)
42  A     yeh
```

The sequence in extract 2.5 starts with C asking A if she whistled (17) to which A's response is that she did not (18). As C asks A whether she whistled she continues to look towards the camera in her hands, and only looks up towards C as she produces her response (18). In line 21 C then produces the first "did you not hear that" turn followed by a description of the sound he was referring too. After he produces his turn (21), B shakes her head and A remains silent reorienting her gaze back towards the camera. It is evident in this particular example that neither of the other participants look towards C prior to or during his reference, and both deny being co-participants in the hearing of the event. However, in line 26-27 following B's request for the spirit to copy her voice (25) both A and B produce a quick head movement, and gaze towards each other. In line 28, B produces her "did you hear that" and A confirms that she also noticed the event (29), establishing co-participation in this particular noticing. It is interesting to note, that by B's 'that' referral, the nature of the event that the group are looking for has been determined – B has asked for the whistling sound that C heard to be repeated. In addition, B and A establish a mutual gaze directly before the 'that' reference (26). However, whilst A and B establish co-participation in the event, in line 31 C is now the one to state that he did not share in the experience and this turn is directly proceeded by a further "did you not hear that" turn by B and a description of the event as a "whistle" (32).

In this extract a sequence of "did you hear that" and "did you not hear that" questions are evident. In each case an answer is given by a hearer as to whether or not they heard the whistling sound being referred to. To establish the function of a 'did you that' question, let us return to the beginning of this extract.

Extract 2.5(a)
Whistle

```
17  C      did you just whistle jess?
18  A      [nope I clicked something on my camera
19         [B looks up towards A. A looks over to her right, in the
20         direction of C)
21  C      no did you not hear that[ it's a it's like a doo(   )   <--
22                                 [(A looks back to centre. B
23         shakes her head)
```

In extract 2.5 (a), C opens with the question "did you just whistle Jess?" (17). Questions are typically first pair parts of an adjacency pair (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), and through their production of a first pair part make relevant a particular type of response; an answer. Additionally, questions will not only make relevant types of response, but be formulated in such a way to align the response with the first pair part (Schegloff, 2007). Those responses that align with a first pair part are considered in the CA literature to be 'preferred', whereas those that deviate from this alignment are considered 'disprefered' (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987). The question presented here is a typical polar question, which as discussed by Lee (2015) and Raymond (2003) confines the expected response to a 'yes' or 'no' answer (Lee, 2015) – i.e. either A did or did not whistle. Raymond (2003) further discusses that questions formatted in this manner that receive the expected response (yes or no) are 'type conforming'. Those that depart from this are considered to be 'nonconforming' and are often treated as displaying trouble or resistance towards the question (Heritage, 1998; Lee, 2015; Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). Whilst in line 18, A offers a typical conforming response to C's question "nope", the talk that follows her initial response is somewhat of a deviation from the question asked. C has asked if A whistled, and A responds by "nope I clicked something on her camera" (18). It is possible that this response could be seen as troublesome – C did not ask whether A clicked something on her camera, however, A provides this alongside her "nope" response. Ordinarily a whistling sound is likely to differ somewhat from the sound of clicking something on a camera, and as such this could indicate a lack of understanding regarding the question produced by C. In line 21, C states "no did you not hear that it's a it's like a doo (   )" (21). The "no" preface of this response suggests a disagreement with A's response and this is followed by a negative interrogative (Heritage, 2002). In this instance the negative interrogative follows potential trouble in the question-answer format between speaker and hearer, and provides two functions. Firstly, the question is structured in a manner that display a 'knowing stance' and therefore whilst the question is still framed to warrant a 'yes'/ 'no' answer, the negative

formatting of the question indicates an expected 'no' response (i.e. the structure of this question makes it difficult for respondents to state 'yes') (Heritage, 2002). Secondly, the speaker not only structures the question to prefer a 'no' response, but also upgrades their epistemic status on the event, by adding a description of the features. In doing this, the speaker frames their third part response in such a way that regardless of the response of other participants, they have epistemic authority on the event that took place (i.e. they heard the whistle).

To explore these analytical claims further we will first explore the "did you hear that" in more detail. It is evident through the data that this question is often answered with a "no" response. It is therefore interesting to explore what role the "did you hear that" question has in on-going interaction when so regularly faced with a potentially undesirable response (a 'no' indicating a lack of co-participation in the event). In the two extracts below the 'that' question receives a "no" answer in either a verbal or visual form from the hearer(s).

Extract 2.5(b)
Whistle

```
50  C       oooo ooooo:
51          (8 secs)
52  C       did you hear that?[ It's kinda like it sound like ooo::-  <--
53                            [(A looks at C and shakes her head. B
54          also shakes her head. A then looks off to her right
55          again)
```

Extract 2.5(c)
Whistle

```
                                                                      <--
68  A       did you hear that voice then?
69  B       [no
70          [(B looks at A and shakes head)
71  A       like ooo-
```

In extract 2.5(b), after the "did you hear that" question (52), A looks towards C and shakes her head (53), and B also shakes her head (54) to indicate a "no" response to the question. This is followed by C producing a mimic of the sound that she heard (52). Likewise, in extract 2.5(c) A produces the question "did you hear that voice then" (68), and this is followed by B verbally responding "no"(69) whilst visibly shaking her head (70). A then produces another mimic of the sound (71). In both examples, similar to extract 2.5, the 'no' response is followed by a description of the event by the speaker. In each of these cases although the language used would suggest a epistemic downgrade of the description (*like* being a prominent feature), at the same time the speaker reinforces

their epistemic stance on the event by demonstrating their knowledge of it. Indeed, their ability to mimic the sound suggests a fairly advanced knowledge of the event in that they have not only heard something, but can repeat it back to the hearer(s).

In extract 2.6 below, the "did you hear that" turn is extended to "did anyone hear that".

Extract 2.6
Dungeon Moan

```
15  G      are you growling if you are then that means that we-
16  G      can hear your voice- so can you copy me – can you go-
17  G      mmmmmm
18  I      [coh::
19         [(F looks up towards I and shakes head)
20  I      [(yes)
21         [(A looks up straight over F's shoulder, toward
22         the camera, then towards F. Rest of group look at I)
23  I      did anyone hear that                                <--
24  F      [no
25  G      [hmm noo
26  A      [I did
27          [(A looks towards I)
28  I      (unknown)[ coming from[ over there
29  A              [mmm         [down there
30                              [(A points with head towards
31         camera. D turns to look towards camera.)
32                                  [(I points with head towards
33         camera)
```

This case provides a somewhat deviant example compared to the previous data extracts. In this instance the "did anyone hear that" (23) turn is followed by a negative response by both F (24) and G (25). However, A produces a positive response, "I did"(26), claiming co-participation in 'hearing' the sound. It is worth noting that A's positive response follows a shift in gaze prior to I's turn towards the space that we later understand to be the point of interest that I is referring to (28). The rest of the group do not orient to this space, but look towards I as she produces her "yes" (20) exclamation. Following the negative and positive answers to her "did anyone hear that" question, I then goes on to describe the sound as "coming from over there" (28). A also produces an overlapping turn supporting I's description stating the sound was from "down there" (29). At the same time they also both produce visible head points towards the space. In doing so, I and A both confirm and provide further evidence of their epistemic authority on the event (i.e. they not only heard the sound, but both heard it coming from the same place).

By returning to extract 2.5 we can see that the positive response in the example above is

not an isolated case. In extract 2.5(d) below B's "did you hear that" (28) question occurs after a shift in gaze by both A and B towards each other following a request by B in line 25, for the spirit to make a noise with its voice. In response to the "did you hear that" question, A responds with "yes I heard that" (29).

Extract 2.5(d)
Whistle

```
25  B      can you make a noise with your voice (2 secs) oooo:: ooo
26         (4.5 secs – 3 secs in A and B quickly look up at each
27         other at the same time)
28  B      did you hear that?                                    <--
29  A      yes I heard [that
30                     [(A looks off towards her left)
31  C      I didn't
```

Extract 2.7 also presents a similar account in which a request is made to the spirit (61) by C to produce a tapping sound. B glances up as a tap occurs (63) and says "kay" (64), potentially acknowledging the sound. C then produces a "did you hear that" (65) turn, to which B responds with "yeh I heard that" (67).

Extract 2.7
Scratching

```
58  C       that was[ brilliant thank you so much okay let's try
59  B              [what the
60  A              [thank you
61  C      again see if you can copy me again
62         (C taps the table once)
63         (Unknown tap can be heard, B glances up as tap occurs)
64  B       kay (unknown)
65  C      [it went did you hear that                           <--
66         [(C points to board and looks at B. A also looks at B)
67  B       yeh I heard that
```

In each of these cases a positive response to a "did you hear that" question follows a shift in gaze by other participants either towards a potential referent (as in extract 2.6 and 2.7) or towards the speaker (as in extract 2.5(d)). This shift in gaze as with the 'what that' turns, presents a movement away from the business at hand, and as such have the potential to indicate engagement or co-participation in 'experiencing' the event.

A 'did you that' question, as discussed, is therefore open to the potential for either a yes or no response from the hearer (s). A 'yes' response appears to follow a shift in gaze by the respondent prior to the 'that' question, indicating a potential noticing of the event before the turn. However, a 'no' response is also possible, and as examined earlier, is

quite frequent. Given the objective of the activity that the group are participating in – to collectively experience an event as a group – and the validity that co-participation provides the speaker, a 'no' response is potentially problematic. It has the potential to question the integrity of the speaker's claim. However, as we have seen in extracts 2.5 and 2.6 when faced with a 'no' response the speaker regularly upgrades their epistemic claim of the event by producing a further description of it. In doing so, they position themselves with a 'knowing' status, regardless of the response by other participants. This is likely aided by the nature of the event being predefined in an earlier turn directed to the spirit (i.e. "can you go mmm" (extract 2.6)). As such, unlike the 'what that' turn that references an 'unknown' that, in a 'did you that' turn, the nature of what 'that' might be is established earlier in the interaction. The referent in this format, therefore, may engender a certain familiarity to the participants. Indeed the very structure of the 'did you that' question is designed in such a way to mitigate a positive or negative response by positioning the speaker in (i) a status of knowing that an event took place and (ii) in most cases what 'that' event is, even if the speaker is not certain whether the event is shared with others. Whilst a 'yes' response is preferred, a 'no' response is manageable for the speaker by evidencing their own knowledge of the event. This is in contrast to the 'what that' response that relies on other members displaying co-participation in the experience prior to the 'that' turn.

In addition, to providing further description of the event following a 'no' response, there are also occasions in the data where a 'did you *not* that' turn is produced following a response from a participant that indicates that they did not experience the event. As can be seen in the extracts below, these negative interrogatives are proceeded by a negative response. For example, as previously examined, in extract 2.5 (see extract 2.5(e) below) when B produces the "did you just whistle Jess" (17) question, A responds that she did not. C then produces a "did you not hear that it's a it's like a doo" (21). A does not respond to the question looking back towards the centre, and B answers by shaking her head (22).

Extract 2.5(e)
Whistle

```
17  C      did you just whistle Jess?
18  A      [nope I clicked something on my camera
19         [B looks up towards A. A looks over to her right, in the
20         direction of C)
21  C      no did you not hear that[ it's a it's like a doo(   ) <--
22                                  [(A looks back to centre. B
```

```
23          shakes her head)
```

In extract 2.8 after C asks why B's eyes are watering (122), B states "it was really strong (2.0) did you not feel that? It was like (  )" (124). C responds with "(Not really no) I didn't" (128).

Extract 2.8
Munthob Experience

```
120 B    [Oh my god
121      [(B Removes hand from face and looks at OB)
122 C    [Why are your eyes watering?
123      [(A looks at B. B starts wiping eyes again)
124 B    It was really strong [(2.0) did you not feel that? it-    <--
125                          [(A looks at OB. B continues wiping
126      eyes)
127 B    was like (  )
128 C    [(Not really no) I didn't, I was too busy, to hh-
129      [(C looks at A)
```

In each case, the speaker is aware from the prior turn that the hearer did not experience the event before producing the 'did you not that' question. As such, the question is designed with the assumption that a negative response will be received from the hearer(s). In each case the negative interrogative is also accompanied by a further description of the event, enabling the speaker to upgrade their epistemic status. Furthermore, a 'did you not that' question appears to follow sequences where it is evident that there is some trouble in the conversation about the event. As discussed, in extract 2.5(e) this takes the form of A responding "no" but also stating that she "clicked something on the camera" (18), which does not fully align with C's question. In extract 2.8, B responds to C's question about why her eyes are watering by saying that "it was really strong" (124). This follows a sequence of verbal and visual actions by B prior to C's question in which she displays an embodied experience that leads to her eyes watering. However, it is not immediately clear from her response that B answers C's question ("it was really strong" is a vague statement), and after two seconds of silence, B expands her response with a "did you not feel that" question, and starts to elaborate on the event, "it was like" (124, 127). Finally, in extract 2.9 below, B asks "did someone go .hhhh". C responds with "no" (78), however, by keeping this response in its minimal form C implies that nobody produced the sound contradicting B's experience. Following this B directs a question to C "did you not breath out like .hh"(79), further describing the event. At this point A also directs a turn towards C further elaborating on the event "yeah through your nose Kieran" (80-81).

Extract 2.9
Liliath's Breath

```
69  B     okay if there's somebody here with us-
70        (2 secs)
71  B     [maybe your not dame liliath drummond maybe your someone-
72        [(C zooms the camera in towards cabinet)
73  B     else
74        (3 secs)
77  B     did someone go .hhhh                              <--
78  C     no
79  B     did you not breath out like .h[h
80  A                                   [yeah through your nose-
81  A     kieran
82        (C zooms camera out again)
83  C     no
```

Whilst in each of these cases the first part question is formatted differently, a negative interrogative proceeds this and follows a response that indicates non-participation in the event. Furthermore, even though the negative interrogative is formatted to engender a negative response, it may do more than this by enabling the speaker to present a reference to an event for a second time, when a misunderstanding of it is assumed based on the response by the hearer.

From this analysis it is therefore suggested that a 'did you that' question is produced when (i) an event has been predefined and as such the speakers epistemic status of what 'that' may be is stronger, and (ii) when shared understanding of the event is not necessarily assumed by the speaker. As such, whilst a 'yes' response may be desirable, thus indicating a co-participation in the event, a 'no' response is manageable. Given the speakers uncertainty regarding whether the event is shared or not, a 'did you that' turn enables the speaker to reference an event, whilst still being able to mitigate potential conflict that may occur between the speaker's and hearer's participation in it. Furthermore, on occasions where there is potential trouble in the communication of an event, the production of a negative interrogative presents the opportunity for the event to be referred to for a second time. At the same time it also enables the speaker to design a turn that expects and as such mitigates a negative response, whilst displaying their own epistemic stance on the event. Therefore, in these extracts speakers delicately manage the referral of an event that may or may not be shared with a group by designing a question and third part response that display an upgraded epistemic stance of the event. As such, the speaker positions themselves in a stance of a 'knowing' participant in the experience, regardless of the subsequent response by others.

### 5.1.3 was that you/ was that your

Compared to the types of 'that' disclosures looked at so far the 'was that you/ was that your' is the most direct reference and is aimed towards a particular member of the group. This type of turn makes reference to a potential event by initially providing a non-extraordinary explanation as being caused by the voluntary or involuntary actions of one of the group (i.e. the source came from or was caused by one of the group).

```
Extract 2.10
Under the Bed

10          (5 seconds after a gurgling sounds can be heard, the
11          camera shifts to face A as A raises her head to look at
12          C and the camera)
13  A       was that your belly                              <--
14  C       the rai-
15  A       [wha
16          [(A looks directly at C)
17  C       I think it might have been [the radiator behind you
18                                     [(C moves camera and body
19          towards A)
20  A       [no that came from you
21          [(A glances over her right shoulder towards the
22          radiator and then turns her eyes towards C)
```

```
Extract 2.11
Liliath's Breath

41          (5 secs – small thump)
42          (2 secs)
43  B       ooo was that you?                                <--
44  A       [nope °no where near it°
45          [(B looking at A, A looks down)
46  B       was that you?
47  A       [wha-
48          [(A looks up towards B who is looking at her)
49  B       like a .hhhhhhhhhhh
50  A       nope
```

In both of these examples the sound that is being referred to is audible on camera, it is likely then that these sounds have been experienced by the group. This is confirmed in each example by the hearer producing a turn in context with the sound referred to by the speaker (extract 2.10, line 17). The speaker also looks directly at the hearer as she produces the turn, and in each instance the hearer denies that the sound was coming from them.

In both extract 2.10 and 2.11, the sound appears to come from a space close to the hearer who the speaker directs their turn towards. In extract 2.10, the speaker states that

the sound came from the area C is located in (20), and in extract 2.11 the response "nowhere near it" (44) implies that the sound came from the display case near to where A is standing. Unlike a 'did you that' question, this type of reference does not follow a predefined event (i.e. the group do not specifically request a 'bang' or a 'gurgling sound'). Neither does it provoke the same level of surprise as demonstrated in the 'what that' reference, suggesting that the ambiguity of what 'that' is, is somewhat mitigated. However, whilst initially it would seem that this is simply a way to refer to a non-extraordinary experience and one that is caused by a group member, in both cases the hearer denies that the event was caused by them. By referencing the experience in this way the speaker has then been able to produce a turn that identifies an event whilst accounting for the possibility that it could have been caused by a hearer (and not the spirit). The proximity of the event to a hearer, the lack of surprise response from the other group members and finally the 'out of place' nature of the experience (it was not requested) may lead to this form of referral. The speaker displays through the production of this turn an uncertainty about whether the event has a natural explanation, and as such its paranormal status is questionable. Similar to the 'what that' turn, the speaker presupposes that the event is shared and whilst the turn is formulated to display a certainty about this, by displaying an epistemically weak status regarding the nature of the event the speaker is able to mitigate their own status as a 'knowing' participant. Thus, if the event was caused by another participant the speaker presents themselves as 'knowing' this, whilst at the same time if the event is not caused by the respondent the speaker is able to display their noticing and attention to a potentially paranormal event. Therefore, this type of reference has two functions (i) to highlight an event which is shared by the group and (ii) to protect the speaker from the possibility that the sound was caused by the hearer and not the spirit.

In summary, the different types of 'that' references examined here perform different functions within the on-going interaction. The 'what that' turn is used to refer to an event both after it has occurred and as it is happening. In both cases it assumes that the event is shared by one or more members of the group prior to the turn, and this is established through the careful negotiation of gaze and gesture (particularly when identifying an ongoing experience). In this particular form of reference the speaker displays a weak epistemic status regarding what 'that' may be and as a result not only highlights an event, but encourages co-participation in the discovery of it. A 'did you that' occurs after the group have predefined a particular event (i.e. a noise, feeling). In its simplest form a

'did you that' reference highlights an event whilst accounting for its potential to be shared or not shared by the group. Whilst a shared experience is preferred, a negative response is mitigated through the production of a third part response that upgrades the epistemic status of the speaker. Additionally, negative interrogatives in the form of 'did you not that' enable this type of question to be presented for a second time when trouble in conversation occurs. In the examples discussed the negative interrogatives were also combined with a further description of the event, again upgrading the epistemic status of the speaker. Finally, a 'was that you/ was that your' reference is directed towards a particular hearer and assumes that the experience is shared. Whilst like the previous two forms of disclosure identified it acts to highlight a particular experience, it also handles experiences that have the potential to be caused by the hearer and not the spirit. By disclosing the experience in a way that questions the hearer, the speaker is able to identify it but at the same time protect themselves from what could be a potentially embarrassing situation (identifying a noise as being from the spirit when it was actually caused by the hearer). In each form of 'that' reference the speaker produces a turn that highlights a particular event but is sensitive to the shared potential of it, and the speakers own epistemic stance towards 'that'. By using different forms of 'that' reference speakers are then able to bring events to the attention of others, whilst protecting their status as a participant.

## 5.2 Non-minimal Forms of 'That' and 'That' as a Surprise Token

Up until this point we have considered how different types of 'that' are used to make reference to an event. On occasion these references are extended beyond their minimal form that either upgrades the status of the experience or provides further description of what 'that' could be.

### 5.2.1 Surprise tokens

In extract 2.12 and 2.13 below, the basic 'what that' disclosure is upgraded.

Extract 2.12
Spooksfest

```
272        [(Scraping sound)
273        [(B and F look suddenly over the right of the room. F
274        jumps)
```

140

```
275 F      [what[ the- .hhhh                    sorry
276 B           [what the hell was that .hhh                     <--
277        [(B and F look at each other, F jumps backwards with
278        hands up at face. B looks round to D)
```

Extract 2.13
Grandfather Clock

```
17 G      Are you scared (0.5)[ of us?
18                            [(A lifts her gaze off the board and
19        looks to top left of camera, G follows A's gaze)
20        (Unknown tap and then quiet "ooooo" (moaning) sound can be
21        heard. C looks towards the sound. A looks at C)
22 A      [What the fuck is that?                               <--
23 A      [(A winces whilst speaking. C and G look at A)
24        (Gauss meter can be heard increasing in the background)
25 C      [Ehh-
26        [(C shakes her head whilst looking at A)
```

On both occasions the reference is amplified by transgressive words "fuck" (extract 2.13, line 22) and "hell" (extract 2.12, line 275). The use of taboo words, such as these, have been examined in Goffman's (1978) "Response Cries" which identifies lexical items drawn from religion (hell) and taboo domains drawn from bodily functions (fuck) as forms of emotional outburst. Goffman suggested that indeed these response cries that "externalise a presumed inward state" (Goffman, 1978: 794) may actually be interactionally organised to perform a social function. Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2006) develop this suggestion and argue that the performance of surprise is an interactional achievement and is most often produced after talk "analyzably designed to elicit surprise from its recipient" (p. 178). In doing so they suggest that surprise is socially organised and interactionally produced. In the context of the two 'what that' disclosures above, the extension of the minimal form to include taboo words combined with the actions of the group, suggest a degree of surprise from the speaker.

In the case of extract 2.12 and 2.13 above (and indeed 14 below) the first turn surprise token is produced as a gaze in response to external stimuli with the intention of perhaps eliciting a response from the recipients. The turn follows an external event that is out of context with the current interaction of the group and is therefore unexpected. In each case, the surprise turn results in a second turn being produced by the hearer(s) whether this is verbal (as in extract 2.13, line 25) or non-verbal (as in extract 2.14 below, line 11). In these cases the surprise is not set up via the verbal heralding of news (as examined by Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2006) but is shaped by the actions and subsequent surprise talk produced by the group. In addition, the production of reciprocal

gaze shifts also establishes which group members shared the experience as they express their joint surprise or understanding of it. Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2006) discuss that "consensual surprise displays define a normative world, and thereby produce interactants as co-members (or not) of that world and co-category members (or not) within it" (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006: 173). By producing these multimodal surprise tokens the speaker establishes their own category as someone who believes that this event was 'unexpected', and seeks to identify who else shares this category with them. In addition, the production of the surprise token combined with the 'what that' disclosure not only sets up the category of 'unexpected' but also as potentially 'unexplained'. Whilst extract 2.14 below uses a less provocative term ('now' instead of 'fuck' or 'hell') it achieves the same result in categorising the experience as both 'unexpected' and 'unexplained'. Like extract 2.12 and 2.13, surprise is established by the reciprocal gaze (9) that occurs after the large bang and prior to the "now what was that" (10) referral.

Extract 2.14
Tolbooth Bang

```
8         (31 secs – Large bang from the next room)
9         (A turns to face D and then B)
10   A    now what was that?                              <--
11        (D pans the camera to B who holds his hands up)
12   A    where did that come from?
13        (B points out the doorway)
```

### 5.2.2 Mimics, descriptors and aligning experiences

In addition to the use of surprise tokens as an extension to the minimal form of 'that' reference, speakers also use tokens that add to the description of the event whether this helps identify when it occurred (i.e. ooo, then) or what it sounded/ felt/ looked like (i.e. "it was like…").

Extract 2.15
Whistle

```
66        (A looks towards B)
67        (3 secs)
68   A    did you hear that voice then?                   <--
69   B    [no
70        [(B looks at A and shakes head)
71   A    like ooo-
72        (A looks to her left)
73   B    again
74        (B looks where A is looking)
75   A    [very very short
```

```
76          [(A looks towards B and then off to her right)
77          (3 secs)
```

Extract 2.16
Liliath's Breath

```
41          (5 secs – small thump)
42          (2 secs)
43   B      ooo was that you?                                    <--
44   A      [nope °no where near it°
45          [(B looking at A, A looks down)
46   B      was that you?
47   A      [wha-
48             [(A looks up towards B who is looking at her)
49   B      like a .hhhhhhhhhhh
50   A      nope
```

In extract 2.15 and 2.16, the speaker directs her question towards a particular hearer and uses "then" (68) and "ooo" (43) respectively to indicate that the experience took place just before they spoke. In extract 2.15 the "was that you"(46) reference indicates that the experience is shared, however, the "ooo" (43) perhaps clarifies the phenomena being referred to – particularly given that it is a small thump. A general "was that you" as demonstrated in line 46 could have referred to any number of potential noises/ feelings and may need to be followed by a clarification of this (49). In extract 2.15, A names the reference as a 'voice' (68) and again produces a 'then' at the end of this turn as if to specify one in particular. Given the context of this segment, and the fact that different members of the group have each heard a number of different whispers and whistles, this is likely an attempt by the speaker to reference a particular sound that they have heard. This is important as a shared experience of one sound is likely to be treated as more significant than different sounds being heard by separate members of the group. In both cases, where the hearer indicates that they did not hear the sound the speaker goes on to mimic the sound (extract 2.15 line 71, and extract 2.16 line 49). This is followed by the speaker requesting a repetition of the sound that they have just described to the hearer. By doing this the speaker is able to align the awareness of the hearer(s) towards a particular event and in doing so increase the potential of this becoming shared if the experience is to repeat itself (i.e. if B is aware that they are listening for a whistle and is aware of what A has experienced they may be more likely to notice this next time it occurs). We see the result of this in extract 2.14 by looking at an earlier extract of the same data piece. As can be seen below (in extract 2.17) it is C who first hears the whistle and provides a similar "ooo" description in line 52 as that provided by A in line 71. In line 53, A even shakes her head to indicate that she did not hear the whistle yet a short while later she is the group member experiencing this particular phenomenon.

143

Extract 2.17
Whistle

```
50  C      oooo ooooo:
51         (8 secs)
52  C      did you hear that?[  It's kinda like it sound like ooo:: <--
53                           [(A looks at C and shakes her head. B
54         also shakes her head. A then looks off to her right
55         again)
68  A      did you hear that voice then?
69  B      [no
70         [(B looks at A and shakes head)
71  A      like ooo-
72         (A looks to her left)
```

It seems that in both the 'did you that' and 'was that you' references provided here that a negative response from the hearer (i.e. they did not hear/ see / feel the experience) leads to both a mimic of the event, and a request to repeat it so that it can be experienced by the other group members. In contrast, the 'what's that/ what is that' reference which refers to an ongoing experience, when faced with an uncertain response from the hearer, leads to a verbal description of it (i.e. it was a popping sound). As the experience is ongoing and therefore the potential is still there for it to become shared, the group participate in a conversation about what 'that' could be and the paranormal nature of it. For instance, in extract 2.18 C produces the "what's that" reference in line 43 which is followed by an uncertain response from A "what" (44). The next turn by C is to describe the event "like popping sound" (45), and this is followed by a mutual agreement between three other group members that indeed there is a 'popping sound' occurring (48-50).

Extract 2.18
Popping Sound

```
43  C      °what's that°                                          <--
44  A      what
45  C      like popping so[und
46  E                      [(unknown) behind you
47                         [(B looks towards C. E looks at C)
48  A      ye[h
49  C        [yeh
50  D        [yeh
```

In extract 2.19, A produces her "what is that" reference in line 22, this is followed by an exchange of gaze between A and C, and C produces an "Ehh" sound (25). A then goes on to describe the event which is followed by a group discussion regarding the origin of the clock and its potential to be paranormal in nature.

Extract 2.19
Grandfather Clock

```
22  A      [What the fuck is that?                            <--
23  A      [(A winces whilst speaking. C and G look at A)
24         (Gauss meter can be heard increasing in the background)
25  C      [Ehh-
26         [(C shakes her head whilst looking at A)
27  A      That's another clock it's somewhere [else 'in it
28  G                                           [It sounds like a
29  G      proper clock
30                                              [(G and C look at each
31         other)
```

From this analysis, it would seem that the use of non-minimal forms of 'that' disclosure perform different kinds of function. The use of a surprise token establishes not only the speaker's immediate categorisation of the experience as 'unexpected' and 'unexplained' but also elicits a response from the hearer(s) so that membership categories can be established. It also relies on the assumption that there is a cultural knowledge of what is and what is not expected in this social situation. The use of tokens such as "ooo" and "then" help to clarify the event being referred to, particularly if there is potential for the hearer to think that a different experience is being referred to other than that which the speaker wants to highlight. In addition, by mimicking the event the speaker is able to align the awareness of the hearer towards the event of interest and ensure that their next request for the experience to be repeated does not 'go to waste' (i.e. the hearer is more likely to be aware of experience the speaker would like to share with them). In those cases where the experience is on-going there is still potential for the hearer (s) to share the experience and contribute to a discussion about what 'that' could be and therefore a description of the event is produced by the speaker. This leads to a collaborative discussion about the experience being referred to and the paranormal nature of it.


## 5.3 A Note on the Transgressive 'That'

It has been discussed that events with the potential to be deemed paranormal are referenced in several ways by participants. The type of event and form of reference produced to identify it may be framed in different ways depending on whether it is unexpected or expected, seemingly inexplicable or potentially explainable, within the on-going interaction. By referencing events speakers are able to engage others as co-participants in both the noticing, and subsequent discovery of what 'that' may be.

However, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter participants in this particular context are not just referencing objects in the environment, they are often referencing invisible, and essentially uncanny events. It appears that a *that* reference, therefore, does more than simply invite others to participate in the noticing of an event, but inferentially constitutes the event as having unusual or transgressive properties. Through a *transgressive that* turn the event is then framed to be noticed in a particular way – as potentially paranormal.

On reflection of the 'that' turns examined it is possible to infer that in its minimal form the *transgressive that* turn is disjunctive to the ongoing interaction, and displays often through a change in body or gaze orientation that something has been noticed in the physical, audible or occasionally embodied environment. Through the *transgressive that* turn the speaker invites others to participate in the search for the source of an event, and as such displays similar features to response cries (Goffman, 1978). Additionally, the *transgressive that* is not immediately categorised and as such carries with it an ambiguous quality. The sense of urgency established through the turns disjunctive properties, disengagement with the business at hand and the lack categorisation of the event, at least imply that it engenders unusual properties (Hayward, Wooffitt & Wood, 2015). Furthermore, as previously discussed, in instances such as extract 2.12 and 2.13, the *transgressive that* turn is occasionally upgraded with transgressive words such as "fuck" (extract 2.13) and "hell" (extract 2.12). As Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2006) discuss, taboo expressions such as these often indicate surprise, and in the case of the *transgressive that* turn upgrade the uncanny status of the event (Hayward, Wooffitt & Wood, 2015). The speaker expresses through these turns that the event is surprising and indeed unusual given the current interaction.

It is, therefore, argued that whilst a *that* turn acts as a demonstrative for establishing co-participation in the noticing of event, it also proposes that the event may have transgressive properties. In doing so, speakers establish an interpretive landscape in which the event is rendered transgressive or uncanny, and as such not only makes an event noticeable but also predisposes other co-participants to categorise it as such. The trajectory of the interaction that follows is sensitive to this categorisation and as such co-participants are "invited to acquiesce with, assent to or, at very least, confront that claim" (Hayward, Wood & Wooffitt, 2015: 19).

## 5.4 Conclusion

We have looked at three different types of 'that' reference in this analysis. Each reference is context-dependent and created in the external environment (including sounds/ feelings/ sights believed to be produced by the Spirit) and the internal interaction of the group, as well as the context of talk. The 'what that' is produced by speakers to reference an event that has either just occurred, or is on-going, and is 'out-of-place' given the current interaction. As revealed in the data extracts, shifts in gaze towards the reference and/ or speaker occur prior to a 'what that' reference, displaying the potential for co-participation in the event. As such, a prerequisite for this particular referent turn appears to be an assumption that one or more members of the group are co-participants in the experience. This form of a 'what that' turn also displays a weak epistemic status for the speaker (i.e. they do not – at least confidently - know what 'that' is), and through its wh- question formulation invites co-participation in the discovery of what 'that' may be. As such, this form of reference highlights an event in the environment that is assumed to be shared by at least some of the group, whilst encouraging co-participation through the display of the speakers 'not-knowing' status. A 'did you that' reference is produced when the event has been previously defined (i.e. a voice) and therefore it is not 'unexpected' in the sequence of interaction. However, whilst the referent may not be unexpected it is not always evident that the event is shared, therefore, a 'did you that' reference highlights an event whilst accounting for the potential for it to be shared or not shared by the group. The 'did you that' question format is designed to elicit a 'yes/no' response, and whilst a positive response is likely preferred (indicating shared experience), a negative response is mitigated through the production of a third part response that upgrades the epistemic stance of the speaker. Finally, a 'was that you/ was that your' reference is produced to identify an event whilst accounting for the potential that the speaker may have misinterpreted a noise produced by the hearer as a response from the spirit.

In each of these references speakers and hearers carefully negotiate a sequence of gestures and gaze shifts both before and after turns of talk and in doing so establish the shared qualities of an experience and its 'unexpected' or 'out-of-place' nature. As discussed, non-minimal forms of *that* turn are also produced by speakers in which they display surprise and upgrade the transgressive properties of the event through the use of transgressive words. This combined with the disjunctive properties, disengagement with

the business at hand and lack of categorisation of the event imply an uncanny, and potentially paranormal status. As such, a *that* reference does not simply act as a demonstrative, but engenders a paranormal potential through its transgressive properties. Furthermore, non-minimal forms of the turn are used to provide definition to the event, locating its position in interaction and space, and aligning other participant's awareness to encourage noticing of, and co-participation in the event.

The findings of this analysis contribute to an underdeveloped body of work within social interaction that focuses on human experience. Building upon the work of Goffman's (1978) 'response cries' and Wilkinson's and Kitzinger's (2006) 'surprise tokens' it situates turns of talk that initially seem reactive in nature within a framework that extends beyond personal experience and towards one that is socially and interactively organised. In addition, it re-emphasises the important role that gaze and gesture play in the negotiation of interactional sequences (Goodwin, 2000; Heath, 1984a, 1986; Kendon, 1980a, 1990; Lebaron & Streeck, 2000; McNeill, 1985, 1992), and emphasises the important part it has alongside talk in establishing shared understanding. Finally, it both contributes to and questions some of the findings proposed by linguistic studies into the use of 'that'. For example, the assumption that all 'thats' must be physical in order to be referred to, and highlights the complexity of the negotiation that occurs between speaker and hearer prior to determining what 'that' is.

In the context of this research, 'that' references play a significant role in establishing co-participation in a paranormal experience. Whilst it cannot determine the validity of the experience itself it highlights the social nature of these interactions and the ways in which these are produced. In doing so it brings experiences that are often labelled as personal and subjective into the social domain. In essence, this analysis takes paranormal experience away from the psychological category it has sat within, and invites a perspective that treats paranormal experiences (in the collective) as socially and interactively organised.

# Chapter Six

# Discovering Spirits in Empty Spaces

In the previous analytical chapter we discussed how an event is highlighted and made relevant through the production of a *that* reference. As briefly discussed, these references are also often accompanied by visual actions such as gaze and body shifts, or gestures, between participants and towards areas in the local milieu. The following chapter will explore occasions when these visual actions are focused on what appears to be an empty space, or an unoccupied part of the environment. Expanding on the second theme from the single case analysis this chapter will explore the relevance of these spaces as an interactional resource as the group orientate to, discover and understand them in the context of a potentially paranormal event.

```
        Extract 3.1
        Dog Scratching


59          (Scratching noise can be heard)
60          (E looks to space next to D, B looks to same space)
61    F     what was that
62    B     do you[ (unknown)
63    G          [which is unusual because there's this[ theory-
64    U                                                [mmm
65    G     [about  [universal langua [ge
66    B     [that
67    E            [I heard that then[ the dog [scratching
68    U                              [mm
69    U                                        [mmmmmmmmm
70                                    [(E and B look at each other, B
71    scratches arm and points)
72    B      yeh was tha- that was[n't you[  like
73    C                           [just wa[sn't you
74    D                                   [no
75                                    [(B points at D)
76                                        [(B makes scratching
77          gesture)
```

In extract 3.1, the group are participating in a Ouija Board session. They are sat around a table with the Ouija Board situated in the centre of the group. Up until this point there has been very little notable activity (i.e. the Ouija Board has not responded to requests by the participants to move and apart from B stating that she felt cold there has been no other unusual phenomena). Shortly before the start of this extract the group have started to question whether the planchette on the board is moving and they engage in a conversation about 'spirit language' (63,65). In line 59, a scratching noise is heard by the group. Immediately, E and B shift their gaze towards the space next to D, and F

produces the utterance "what was that" (61). The space next to D is to all intents and purposes 'empty'. That is not to say that it is void of objects entirely, in the context of this research the characterisation of an empty space is defined by *its lack of any physical object or normal influence that could, conceivably, be responsible for the event that occurred*. In this instance a scratching noise.

Following on from the initial noticing of this empty space the group continue to discuss the sound and establish through a series of collaborative verbal and visual actions that what they have heard is a dog scratching. They also establish that the sound did not come from D but the space around her, and in doing so charge that particular space and event (the sound) with a certain paranormal potential.

This chapter will explore how these empty spaces become relevant and significant to the groups objective of seeking a paranormal experience. Through extracts similar to the above, I will demonstrate how these spaces become noticeable, and engender an array of sequentially relevant and interconnected activities.

"A feature of the world is progressively discovered by virtue of one person noticing someone else noticing something." (Heath et al, 2002b: 23)

A number of recent studies have explored how the environment is managed in collaborative settings to develop an understanding of particular features of the local milieu. The work of Heath, Hindmarsh and vom Lehn, provides insight into the way objects and the environment are used to demonstrate features relevant to the ongoing activity, and to help recipients see and understand objects in certain ways. In particular, research into workplace studies has shown how 'centres of co-ordination', such as command centres, rely on the sequential organisation of talk and visual conduct to notice and attend to changes in the local milieu. For instance, in Heath et al's (2002a) study 'Configuring Awareness' we see how a police officer brings to the attention of her commander (who is engaged in a different activity) a relevant and important line of text on her screen. By bringing this text into her colleagues awareness, she is able to highlight an important event (a collapsed women), and prompt a series of further relevant actions in relation to this (sending a police unit to investigate). The police officer draws the commander's attention to the screen through a series of visual actions, lifting her eyebrows, looking towards the screen and pointing towards the text. These

visual actions such as pointing, gesturing, head tilts and body shifts, perhaps unsurprisingly, are well documented as providing a way for individuals to highlight something in the environment to others (Hindmarsh et al, 1998; Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999; Heath, Luff & Svensson, 2009; Heath et al, 2002a, 2002b). By producing these deictic gestures individuals are able to reference particular objects and in doing so initiate further collaborative actions relevant to it. Indeed Heath, Luff & Svensson, (2009), discuss how objects can help to mediate interaction, and how the ecology of the environment emerges through these actions. If an environment is created, (such as a virtual setting) that limits the production of deictic gestures, collaborative communication and sense-making is hindered – suggesting that these visual actions are important in facilitating our understanding of the local milieu and its relevant features (as demonstrated in Hindmarsh et al, 1998).

Furthermore, visual actions such as pointing do more than just highlight relevant features of the environment. In conjunction with the context and business at hand, they can also invite others to look and see features in certain ways. In the workplace environment this may constitute individuals developing a professional vision of their practice as discussed in Goodwin's (1994) study of an architectural school, or Hindmarsh's (2010) research in dental practises. In these instances an understanding of the business at hand (i.e. examining teeth during a dental appointment) combined with relevant deictic gestures and talk, help the teacher to 'mould' the professional vision of the student. Likewise, vom Lehn (2006a, 2006b) shows how similar referential actions in museums and galleries can enable visitors to share their 'way of seeing' exhibits (such as finding something funny or interesting) with others. For instance, in  vom Lehn's study of 'Body Worlds' (2006a) by highlighting specific features of real bodies and reacting to these through certain embodied expressions (e.g. surprise or disgust), visitors are able to discuss their feelings towards particular exhibits and relate these to their own embodied experiences with others. Likewise, in Heath's (2000) study of a police control centre he demonstrates how individuals can not only highlight relevant features but also categorise them in certain ways. In one particular case, this occurs as a police officer brings to her colleague's attention a feature that she finds funny by pointing towards the text on the screen and laughing. Whilst she does not verbally describe the feature that she is referring to, her pointing gesture and expression of laughter, invite her colleague to discover and react appropriately (by also laughing) at the feature being highlighted. Thus, through the organisation of visual and verbal actions individuals are then able to

invite others to discover, understand and react to certain features of the local milieu in relevant ways.

> "The sequential organisation of these activities is not only utilised by individuals to encourage another to look at an object with them, but also provides ongoing resources with which to assess when and how an object is seen." (Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999: 1874)

Additionally, these forms of sequential action can not only render objects visible to co-participants, but also to those in the local vicinity (vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001; Heath et al, 2002b). As demonstrated during a study of the 'Deus Oculi'[25] exhibit, objects are made visible to passing visitors in the same space through the bodily conduct, commentary and orientation of participants interacting with the exhibit. It is though the participant's discovery and experience of the installation that others come to not only notice it, but also develop a sense of what it is about. In this case it is a somewhat humorous slant on a traditional Renaissance picture. The Deus Oculi therefore becomes noticeable and intelligible through the way that individuals interact and participate, with each other and the exhibit (Heath et al, 2002b).

In the studies mentioned above, participants are dealing with objects and features that are visible and tangible. They are, therefore, accessible for individuals to orientate towards and interact with. Whilst this chapter will examine occasions where objects are used, in nearly all instances the point of reference is not the object itself but the empty space around it. In some cases the space does not contain any objects at all. However, regardless of this individuals still manage to achieve many of the outcomes we see in the studies mentioned here. For instance, individuals invite others to look towards and notice particular events in the environment, they engender a certain 'feel' about these events (mainly that they are unusual/ strange), and encourage others to collaborate in further actions that establish the transgressive, and potentially paranormal properties of the event. Through these collaborative activities the group not only render a space noticeable, they configure an identity for it as one that is potentially inhabited by a spirit.

---

[25]Deus Oculi is an art installation produced by artist Jason Cleverly, it consists of a large landscape painting in an early Renaissance style, and on either side two painted faux handheld mirrors. In the centre of each faux mirror is a hidden camera. On the painting are two figures with life size faces, when a visitor looks into the mirror their face appears on one of the figurines.

## 6.1 Progressing Beyond "That"

In the previous chapter, we discussed the different ways in which "that" is used to verbally refer to and highlight an event in the local milieu. Additionally we also discussed how a *that* reference may not only act as a demonstrative, but through features such as the absence of categorisation and shifts in gaze away from the business at hand, also imply that the event may have transgressive properties. It is, therefore, suggested that by producing a *that* reference speakers establish an interpretive landscape in which an event is rendered uncanny and others are invited to see it as such. The trajectory of interaction that follows is therefore sensitive to this categorisation and co-participants are encouraged to engage in a further negotiation regarding this claim. To develop this theory, in this section we will explore how the group progress from a *that* reference to a point where they categorise an event as potentially paranormal. As we will discuss, locating the source of an event in an 'empty' space may play an important role in establishing this status. In order to do this, I would first like to explore the verbal and visual actions that occur within data extract 3.1 in more detail *(see appendix A for details on transcript annotations – T, G, P, and E).*

Extract 3.2
Dog Scratching

```
59          (Scratching noise can be heard)
60          (E looks to space next to D, B looks to same space)   <--G
61   F      what was that                                         <--T
62   B      did you hear tha[t
63   G                      [which is unusual because there's this[
64   U                                                             [mmm
65   G      [theory about   [universal language
66   B      [like
67   E                      [I heard that then[ the dog [scratching
68   U                                        [mm
69   U                                                  [mmmmmmmmm
70          [(E and B look at each other, B  scratches table and  <--P
71          points)
```

As described at the start of this chapter, in extract 3.2 up until this point the group have been participating in a Ouija Board session. In line 59, a scratching sound (audible on the camera) can be heard for approximately 5 seconds before E turns her head slightly away from the business of attending to the Ouija Board (hereafter OB) and towards her right.  B also looks up and away from the OB and towards the space between E and D (G in transcript). It is at this point that F produces a "what was that" (61) reference (T in transcript). This is demonstrated in Figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1**
**Dog Scratching: E and B look towards space**

F: what was that



Scratching sound (5s)     E turns head to right     B turns to look left
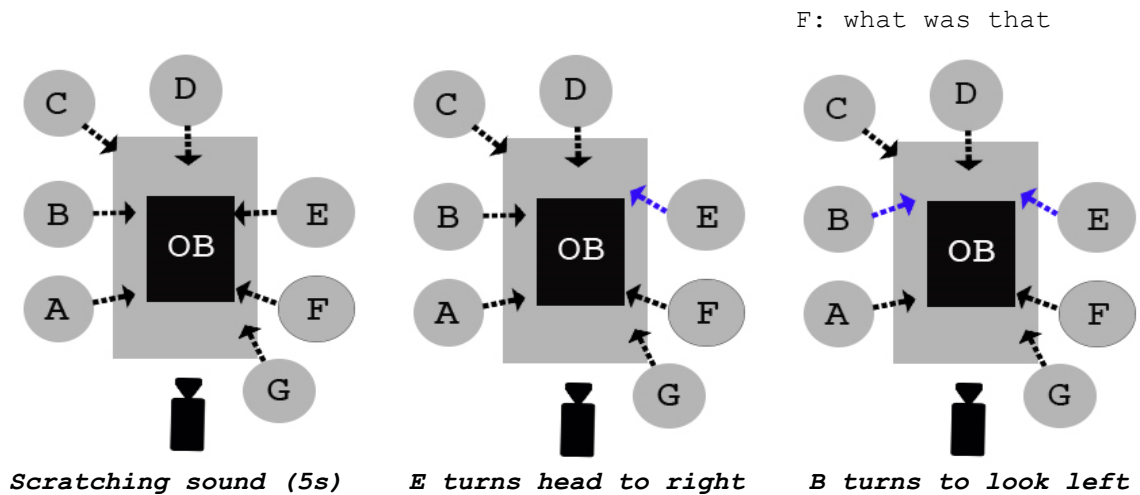
E's initial turn to her right is not at the outset particularly significant, she only appears to move her head slightly and does not appear to be gazing at anything in particular. However, this is followed by the more pronounced gaze shift by B who looks up and over towards the space between D and E. F then produces a *that* reference in line 61, "what was that". Therefore, whilst E's turn is subtle it is followed by a sequence of subsequent actions that render the sound of the scratching noticeable and relevant. As such, the initial shift in gaze away from the business at hand appears to represent a first noticing (Goodwin, 2000). Additionally, and in line with the findings of researchers such as Käntä (2014) and Kidwell (2009) shifting gaze away from the current activity, and (often swiftly) towards a point of interest displays a noticing of something 'newly discovered'. In this instance the noticing is produced in a public setting and is therefore perceivable, and accountable, if noticed by others in the immediate environment. As such, there is the potential for others to perceive this action and see it as a meaningful interactional event (Goodwin, 2000; Käntä, 2014). Whilst it is worth noting at this point that F's head is positioned off camera, and it is therefore not possible to establish whether she too orientates to the sound. The *that* reference she produces in line 61, follows a gaze shift by both E and B, and as such may be seen as a response to these noticing's.

Following on from the initial noticing of the event B also produces a *that* reference and looks up towards E. Her turn "did you _hear_ that" (62) not only provides a second reference to the event, but also upgrades the speakers' epistemic status by presenting knowledge of the its properties (i.e. she *heard* a *sound*). As discussed in the previous

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chapter, a "did you" framed question invites a "yes/ no" type response, and in this instance provides two forms of epistemic upgrade. The first is in presenting her knowledge of the properties of the event as a sound (62). The second in producing an iconic gesture (McNeill, 1992) in the form of a scratching motion on the table as she states "like" (66), further illustrating her understanding of the sound that she heard. This gesture is produced after she has established reciprocal gaze with participant E. As E responds to B, and describes the sound as a dog scratching (67) (expressing a preferred response to the "did you" question (Heritage, 2002)), B transfers her scratching gesture from the table and transforms it into an upside down relaxed hand point towards the space originally orientated towards (60) (P in transcript). This is demonstrated below in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2**
**Dog Scratching: B produces scratching gesture**



```
B: like            E: I heard that then a dog scratching    B: yeh
```

```
70: B scratches        71: B 'open' point        71: B upside down
```
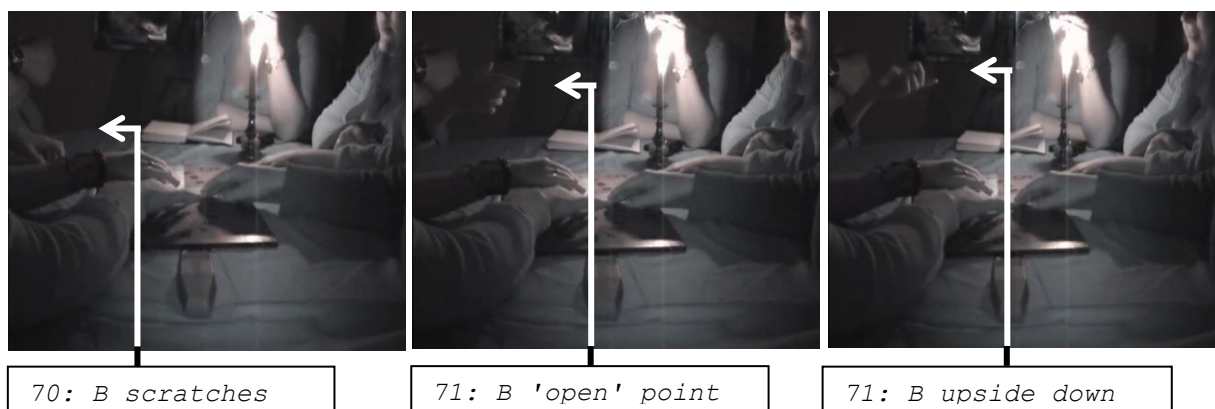
By line 72, both B and E have established that they have experienced the same sound - described as a dog scratching. Two other unknown participants (68,69) have also produced agreeable utterances to confirm this. However, although there is not a dog in the room with the group and, therefore, this would be constituted as strange enough in its own right the group continue to question the event. The conversation progresses from a discussion about *what* it is that they heard to *where* the sound originated.

Extract 3.3
Dog Scratching

```
72  B      yeh was tha- that was[n't you[  like
73  C                            [just wa[sn't you
74  D                                     [no
75                                  [(B points to left of D)
76                                       [(B makes
```

```
77              scratching gesture)
78  F      I heard that[ tha[t aswe::ll
79  B                   [dat
80  E                        [yeh yeh like a [dog grooming chu [chu
81  F                                                            [yeh
82                                    [(E makes dog
83          grooming movements with left arm)
84  G       is it the board again?
85  B       no: it was like-[ it was like you hh hhh[h
86  E                                                [hh
87  D                                                [hh
88                      [(B points towards the area around D
89          (B points to space at left of D)
90  E      I thought it was you[ scratching
91  C                           [yeh I'm sure it was [you scratchin
92                              [(E makes scratching motion on
93          herself)
94                                          [(C points at D)
95  C      yourself
96  D      n[o
97           [(D puts hands down - B,C and E have returned to
98          previous positions)
```

Earlier in this extract we see both B and E orientating towards a space located to the left of participant D. This space now becomes relevant to the next sequence of verbal actions between the group as the attempt to establish where the sound occurred, or in this case, where it did *not* occur. This is initiated in line 72 when B produces a turn directed towards D. After starting her turn "yeh was tha-", B repairs her turn and changes it to a negative interrogative "that wasn't you" (72). Likewise, C produces a similar turn "just wasn't you" (73) following B's repair. After her turn B also demonstrates the noise that she heard by pointing towards the left of D and again producing an iconic scratching gesture (76). D responds to this by stating "no" (74). The repair and subsequent negative interrogative produced by B, restructures the format of the question from potentially "was that you" to "that wasn't you", and may indicate an assumption on the part of B that the likely answer to this question would be "no". Given that B has already engaged in a conversation with E about the potential identity of the event (a dog scratching), this repair may act to mitigate expected disagreement, but may also be conducive of an expected 'no' response (Heritage, 2002).

Following on from this, F (who produced the first reference, line 61 in extract 3.1) states that she also *heard* the sound and E reiterates her understanding of the event by describing features of the sound (a dog grooming), and accompanying this with a further iconic scratching gesture (80, 82). F further responds to this with an agreeable "yeh" (81). G then asks if the source of the noise is actually from the Ouija Board (84) - moving the focus of the event from the space around D to the OB itself. B responds to

this by refocusing the activity of source-finding on D (85), disagreeing with G and producing the turn "no: it was like- it was like you hh hhh" (85). Her turn, which is directed at D, not only dismisses the possibility of it being the board, it focuses the attention back towards the original 'space', and in particular on D herself. However, at the same time as producing this turn B makes a pointing gesture towards the space to the left of D, rather than towards her (88). Unusually, whilst her turn suggests, if somewhat cautiously (noting the insertion of "like" and a mid-turn restart), that the sound came from D, her deictic gesture references the original source – an empty space. Therefore, whilst her turn presents clear disagreement with G, the structure of her turn and deictic gesture imply a degree of uncertainty regarding her statement that the source could be from D. Furthermore, the laughter tokens at the end of her turn imply that her statement should not be taken seriously (Jefferson, 1979; Woods & Wooffitt, 2014) and may act to mitigate potential conflict (Norrick & Spitz, 2008) that could result from implying D is the source of the sound.  However, leading on from this the proceeding turns by both E and C appear to upgrade their epistemic stance and directly implicate D as the source of the sound. As E produces her turn she scratches her own arm (92), and C points directly towards D as she states "it was you scratching yourself" (91). D responds by lifting her hands in the air and once again stating "no" (96). Several members of the group then proceed to further question D, until she responds to C's request to scratch the material she has on as a means of proving her 'innocence'. As soon as she does this B and E (the first to question D), simultaneously agree that the scratching sound is not the same as the event in question (110, 111). E follows this with a scratching gesture in the air (112)(extract 3.4).

Extract 3.4
Dog Scratching

```
110 B      n[o it wasn't that it was like a dog
111 E       [no it wasn't that it was a [high pitched
112                                      [(E makes scratching gesture
113        in the air)
```

In this case, the initial noticing produced by B leads to a sequence of actions that not only render a space noticeable and relevant to the interaction, but also lead to a sequence of further actions that determine the intelligibility of a particular 'unseen' event. Through these actions individuals become co-participants in 'discovering' the event, and do so through a series of multimodal interactions between each other and the local milieu. In the extracts examined, participants can be seen producing noticings away from the business at hand, deictic gestures that reference the source of the event,

and iconic gestures to illustrate and demonstrate features of the event. Furthermore, the activity of discovering the nature of an 'unseen event' takes place between particular spaces, which are referenced, negotiated and re-negotiated through these actions (in extract 3.1 between empty space and inhabited space). In doing so, they formulate a collective understanding of the events features and source, and as such the meaning this infers. By establishing that the event occurred in an 'empty space' rather than one that is inhabited it gains the potential to be categorised as paranormal.

## 6.2 Rendering Empty Spaces Noticeable

In extract 3.1, the empty space that becomes associated with the event, and leads to its paranormal status, is first orientated towards in line 60. At this point E looks away from the business of attending to the Ouija Board and towards space X, signifying a noticing.[26] Up until this moment, this space has no obvious relevance to the interaction other than being part of the area that the group are inhabiting for this activity. It is an empty space with no person or object inhabiting it that could knowingly produce the event that the group encounter. However, E's initial noticing towards space X (which may be a reaction to the sound she has heard) signifies the first sequence in a series of actions that leads to the conclusion that this event is potentially paranormal. Space X shifts from a category of 'empty' to 'occupied' by a paranormal potentiality. I would, therefore, like to explore this initial sequence in more detail.

In the following extracts, a noticing towards an empty space (hereafter referred to as, space X) occurs just before the *that* reference. Like extract 3.1, these spaces following a sequence of interactions initiated by this noticing become charged with the potential of containing a paranormal event.

Extract 3.5
Grandfather Clock

```
17  G     Are you scared (0.5)[ of us?
18                          [(A lifts her gaze off the board and
19          looks to top left of camera, G follows A's gaze)        <--G
20          (Unknown tap and then quiet "ooooo" (moaning) sound can be
21               heard. C looks towards the sound. A looks at C)
22  A     [What the fuck is that?                                   <--T
23  A     [(A winces whilst speaking. C and G look at A)
```

---

[26] The term 'space X' has been used to represent the 'empty space' that participants orientate to.

In extract 3.5, the group are participating in the Ouija Board session. During line 17, A shifts her gaze as G asks if the spirit is scared of the group. Her gaze which has been focused on the business of the Ouija Board moves up and away from this activity and towards space X near the camera (19,20). G and then C also follows A's shift in gaze, and look towards the same space (21). This is proceeded by the *that* reference (22).

Extract 3.6
Dungeons Moan

```
16  G     can hear your voice- so can you copy me – can you go-
17  G     mmmmmm
          (13.5s)
18  I     [coh::
19        [(F looks up towards I and shakes head)
20  I     [°yesss°
          (0.5s)
21        [(A looks up straight over F's shoulder, towards the   <--G
22        camera, then towards F. Rest of group look at I)
23  I     did you not hear that                                  <--T
```

In extract 3.6, the group are sitting in a circle preforming a séance and are listening out for a repeat of the sound that G has requested to be mimicked by the spirit (16,17). Following a "°yesss°" from I (20), most of the group look towards her, however, A instead looks straight up and over F's shoulder towards the camera into space X (21). I's next turn references the event (23).

Extract 3.7
Alley Cat

```
43        [(C looks to left again towards the door
44        and grabs  left arm. D Looks towards the area          <--G
45        that B and C are looking in)
46  C     [Uh I just got-[felt like I got touched in the arm    <--E
47        [(C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B)
48                    [(D looks towards C)
```

Finally in extract 3.7, the group are attempting to communicate with the spirit of a young girl through a Ouija Board when C who is looking towards the board shifts both his gaze and upper half of his body towards space X and grabs his left arm (43,44). D and B also look in this direction (44), and C whilst rubbing his arm declares that he has experienced an event (46).

In these cases, a shift away from the activity that the group are involved in – the business at hand – and towards space X is followed by a *that* reference (or an embodied reference (E in transcript) – see chapter 3 for further analysis on embodied referencing) . This turn is not always produced by the individual that looked towards

space X, and in some cases is delivered by a participant who notices another's shift in gaze. For example, in extract 3.1 and 3.6 the reference is made by individuals who do not look towards space X, but who 'see' another do so. In those cases where the individual who looked at space X is the one to make the reference, they seek mutual gaze prior to their *that* reference. In both of these cases then, the *that* reference occurs after more than one participant becomes involved in the activity of noticing.

As a *that* reference occurs after an initial noticing it seems that the action of looking towards empty space, rather than attending to the business at hand, is relevant to the referral of an uncanny event. As discussed sudden gaze shifts such as these that interrupt the current activity may indicate that something 'new' has been identified in the environment (Käntä, 2014; Kidwell, 2009). In each of these extracts, the gaze shift is noticed by others who also gaze in the same direction, indicating that an initial noticing is seen by others as potentially meaningful to the interaction (Goodwin, 2000; Käntä, 2014). Furthermore, the gazing at empty space is in itself meaningful, displaying the discovery of an event in a location where the source of both the noticing itself, and the event are undefined. Thus, others are invited to search for the source of the noticing, in a space where the source is not immediately apparent. This is in contrast to Kidwell's (2009) study in which she demonstrates that toddlers will orientate to another's noticing gaze until they find the relevant source after which they continue their activity. In these instances, the source through its ambiguous properties will likely require further action to discover what it is. Therefore, by producing a noticing towards an empty space participants demonstrate that something new has been discovered, and that this may be relevant and meaningful to the ongoing activity. Regardless of whether others actually notice the event, seeing a noticing is enough to engender further interaction which, as demonstrated, is initially produced in the form of a verbal *that* reference. Furthermore, beyond encouraging others to participate in noticing, orientation to an empty space invites co-participants to discover and understand an event in relevant ways (Heath, 2000, 2002; Heath et al, 2002b; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b). By positioning a noticing in an empty space, it is implied that the event *does not* have a material source, and as such possesses transgressive properties and should be seen and understood as such.

The initial noticing of the event in empty space remains a significant point of reference for the continued interaction of the group. As we will explore next, the progression of the conversation from what the event was/ is, to where it occurred is important to

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negotiating its transgressive properties, and thus paranormal status. Space X (the first empty space noticed) acts as a 'marker' to initiate, negotiate and establish the status of the event.


## 6.3 From 'That' to 'There'

As discussed, a gaze shift and subsequent "that" turn highlight to the group that something unusual or uncanny has been noticed, and as such should be attended to. Through an initial gaze shift towards empty space the potential source of the event is implied. However, as we will see in the subsequent analysis, what occurs after this is a series of collaborative actions to establish the exact locality of the event in the immediate environment.

In extract 3.8 below, the group are participating in a séance session. After establishing that an event has been shared by at least two of the group members (I and A) they both produce a turn that locates the event in a particular area. This is the same area that A looks up and towards before the *that* reference in line 21 (seen in extract 3.6). Their turn "over there" (28) and "down there" (29) is accompanied by a head point by both A (30) and I (32) towards this space. D also turns around to look towards space X.

```
       Extract 3.8
       Dungeons Moan

       23  I    did you not hear that                                  <--T
       24  F    [no
       25  G    [hmm noo
       26  A    [I did
       27          [(A looks towards I)
       28  I    (unknown)[ coming from[ over there
       29  A             [mmm         [ down there
       30                             [(A points with head towards      <--P
       31       camera. D turns to look towards camera.)
       32                                  [(I points with head towards <--P
       33       camera)
       34  I    [that was it copying you
       35  A    [something just went mmmmmmm
       36       [(G looks towards I. G, F and E look towards camera)
       37  G    well hopefully we'll catch it on [camera
       38  F                                     [its co:::ld-
       39  F    [down there
       40       [(G looks back down towards the centre of the circle)
       41  G    [okay cool umm:: hh let's do it again can you copy me-
       42       [(All of the group except F look towards the centre of
       43       the circle)
```

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Following on from this I describes the sound as copying G's earlier request for the spirit to mimic her voice (34), A also supports this in line 35. G, F and E then all look towards space X, which becomes a resource for the group to spatially orientate and discuss the paranormal potential of the event (i.e. if indeed it did occur in this empty space, where there is no natural explanation for the sound heard by A and I, then this could suggest a paranormal origin). Whilst a potential paranormal explanation for the event in this case is not openly acknowledged there is no resistance from the group towards I and A's claims. Indeed F's expression of "it's cold down there" (38) indicates an acknowledgment of the space referred to and immersion in the event. Likewise, G's turn in line 41, appears to accept the event and use this to further the activity of the group – as they attempt to repeat it.

This case, like extract 3.9 and 3.10 below, demonstrate those occasions where the locality of the event is determined and agreed upon swiftly and without resistance by the group. In these cases the location of the event is established through verbal and visual references towards space X.

Extract 3.9
Popping Sound

```
39  A     [I'm feeling really dizzy like you did
40        [(A looks at C. B looks around towards A)
41  A     we got that before didn't we
42        (B looks back towards board)
43  C     °what's that°                                    <--T
44  A     what
45  C     like popping so[und
46  E                    [(unknown) behind you
47                       [(B looks towards C. E looks at C)
48  A     ye[h
49  C       [yeh
50  D       [yeh
51  E     (unknown)
52  A     [I thought there's someone stood there .hhh
53        [(B looks to his left where the noise is          <--G
54        thought to be coming from, and then back around to C)
```

In extract 3.9, the group are participating in a Ouija Board session and have been attempting to get the spirit to move the planchette in a circular motion. During a period of 27 seconds of silence C and E produce several glances towards A. A then offers an account of feeling cold (39), after which C produces a *that* reference (43). Following this the group establish that an unusual popping sound is coming from an empty space to the left of B.

Extract 3.10
Tolbooth Bang

```
8            (31 secs - Large bang from the next room)
9            (A turns to face D and then B)
                                                           <--T
10  A        now what was that?
11           (D pans the camera to look at B who holds his hands up)
12  A        where did that come from?
13           (B points out the doorway)                    <--P
14  B        °over°
15  C        it was outside [there was it
16                          [(B starts moving towards the doorway)
```

In extract 3.10, the group are standing in silence listening for any unusual sounds when a loud bang is heard (8). After producing a *that* reference (10), the group attribute the location of the sound to an unoccupied space outwith the area that the group are standing in.

In each of these cases we see the initial *that* reference progress into a physical location *"there"* - in each instance an unoccupied or empty space. The noises heard by the group in these cases all have the potential to have an ordinary or natural explanation (i.e. the "mmmm" noise in extract 3.5 has the potential to be one of the group), however, by locating them within a space that is free from this 'normal' explanation, and in an empty space, the transgressive qualities of the event are established. However, the group do not always establish the source of an event as quickly as the above cases, and in some instances *"there"* is established through a period of negotiation and discovery of the event. As we will observe in the following extracts this can take on the form of initially locating the experience in a potentially 'normal' space. This is often directed towards one of the group members.

To examine this I would like to initially return to the first extract. In the section below, following the group hearing a noise and E describing the sound as a dog scratching, B produces a turn towards D and points at her. This turn (72) aimed at D, asks if the sound came from her. D replies with a "no" (74).

Extract 3.11
Dog Scratching

```
61  F        what was that
62  B        did you hear tha[t                            <--T
63  G                        [which is unusual because there's thi[s
64  U                                                             [m
65  G        [theory-[about  [universal language
66  B        [like
```

```
67  E                      [I heard that then[ the dog [scratching
68  U                                        [mm
69  U                                                [mmmmmmmmm
70                      [(E and B look at each other, B
71            scratches table and points)                <--P
72  B         yeh was tha- that was[n't you[  like
73  C                               [just wa[sn't you
74  D                                            [no
75                            [(B points at D)          <--P
76                               [(B makes
77            scratching gesture)
```

Following a brief exchange between F and E where they once again discuss the noise in relation to a dog, G joins the discussion with the suggestion that the sound could be coming from the Ouija Board. This is quickly dismissed by B, who redirects the potential location of the event back towards D. On this occasion she suggests that the sound was "like"' (85) D, and points towards the right of her and into the empty space that was initially orientated towards prior to the "that" reference (61).

Extract 3.12
Dog Scratching

```
84  G       is it the board again?
85  B       no: it was like-[ it was like you hh hhh[h
86  E                                                [hh
87  D                                                [hh
88                        [(B points towards the area around D)<--P
89            (B points to space at right of D)                <--P
```

In the conversation that follows the group continue to question D over the event, until they finally ask her to scratch the material that she has on as a way of proving that she is not the source of the sound. After D scratches her clothes both B and E agree that this is not the case (110 and 111 below).

Extract 3.13
Dog Scratching

```
110 B       n[o it wasn't that it was like a dog
111 E        [no it wasn't that it was a [high pitched
112                                       [(E makes scratching gesture
113           in the air and B produces point)
114 B       [you right your right
115 E       [chu chu chu chu
```

The conclusion regarding the location of the event in this case is determined by establishing where the event *did not* occur, rather than where it did. This process of discovery is instigated by a series of verbal summons directed towards a member of the group, and also regarding a particular object in the environment (the Ouija Board).

Similarly, in extract 3.14 and 3.15 below, which follow the group referencing a ticking noise that they describe as similar to a grandfather clock the group proceed to investigate a 'normal' clock in the room.

Extract 3.14
Grandfather Clock

```
82  F      Are you sure it's not that [clock
83  C                                  [Dah- I've just been over to-
84  C      that clock it makes a sss a really qui[et tick (.) it's-
85  D                                             [you sure 'cause
86  C      not that one
87                                      [(C shakes her head and looks
88         towards OB. G stands up)
```

By investigating the sound made by the normal clock they come to the conclusion that it is not the clock which is located to the right of the group, and is located "there"(112) – the space originally orientated towards before and during the "that" reference.

Extract 3.15
Grandfather Clock

```
108 C      [Ca[use that's different before it was making a tick
109 B        [Lets put it out [(?)
110 G                         [I do ( )
111 A                         [No it's not the same it's (.) it's(.)
112 A      th[ere
113 C        [It is yeah
114        [(C shakes her head and A points to the right of camera.
115        C turns to look at where A is pointing)
116 A          It's like a proper old bo[om boom boom
117 C                                    [boom boom
118 A      [It's like a[ heart beat
119 G      [Can I lift it down, [can I lift it down
120 F                           [Yeah (0.5)[take it by all means
121 E                                      [yeah
122 A                  [(A gestures to her heart)
```

There are several interactional features of interest during these negotiations regarding the location and source of an event. Firstly, in both of these cases whilst the group appear to be investigating the possible normality of the event, in each case they offer a description of the event that does not fit with a 'normal' explanation. This is offered before the investigation into 'normality' takes place. For example, in extract 3.11 the noise is described as a dog scratching (not someone scratching their clothes), and prior to extract 3.14 the group have already discussed the noise as sounding like a grandfather clock (not the electric clock that they investigate). Therefore, in each case whilst the group produce a sequence of actions to investigate the claim in what would appear to be a sceptical manner, the potentially transgressive properties of an event are established

early on in the interaction. This not only occurs through an initial reference towards an empty space, but also in the description offered after the *that* reference. Indeed, the description of the event has a significant role in establishing its transgressive properties. Through their investigation of the event the group establish that the features of it do not correspond with the 'normal' explanation they have been investigating, but the 'abnormal' explanation provided at the start. For instance in extract 3.14 and 3.15, the electric clock that is investigated as the potential 'normal' explanation for the sound is described as being too quiet and not the "proper old boom boom boom" (116) that the group experienced. This is illustrated through a verbal mimic of the sound, and a visible iconic gesture by A towards her heart as she describes it as "like a heartbeat" (118) (figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3**
**Grandfather Clock: A gestures to heart**

A:   it's like a heartbeat



122: A
gestures to
her heart
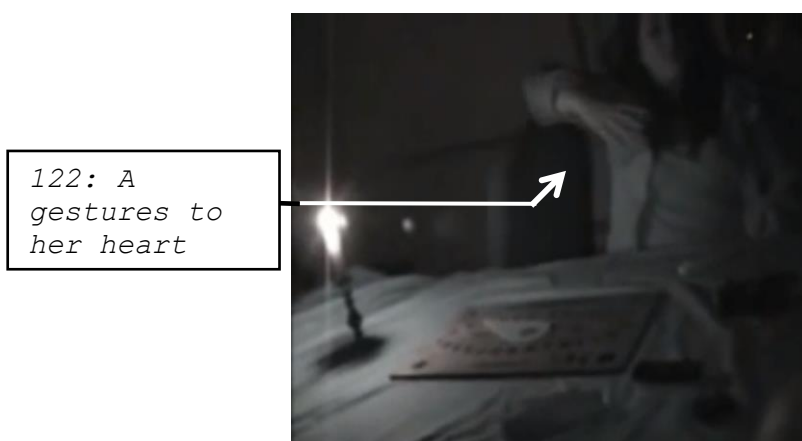
Likewise, in extract 3.13, after D scratches her clothes B and E both conclude that it was not the 'normal' sound of the clothes being scratched but was "high pitched"(111) and "like a dog"(110). As they discuss this E produces a mimic of the sound (115), and makes a scratching gesture in the air (112) (figure 3.4).

**Figure 3.4**
**Dog Scratching: E produces scratching gesture in air**

```
B: n[o it wasn't that it was like a dog      you right your right
E:  [no it wasn't that it was a [high pitched   chu chu chu chu
```



114: B points to space

113: E makes scratching gesture in the air
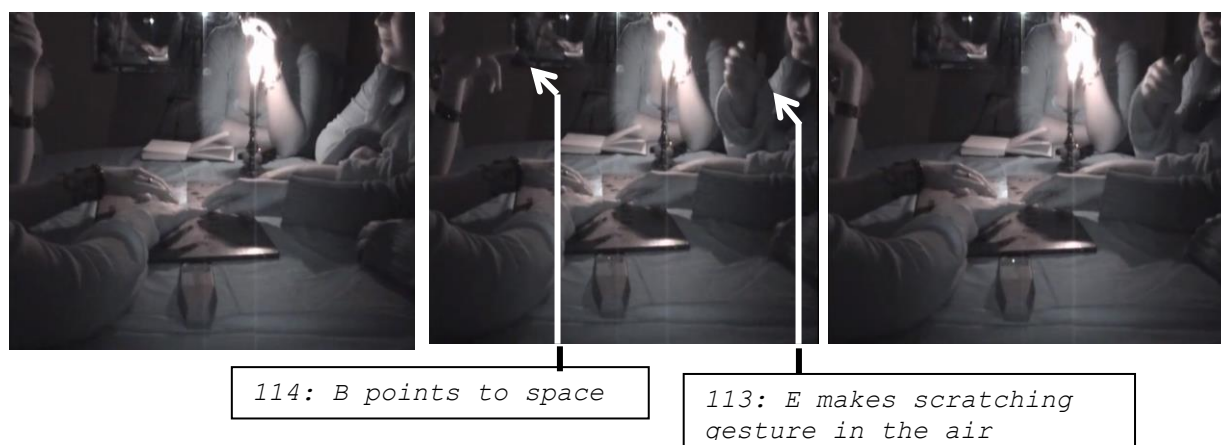
These findings bear similarities to Woods and Wooffitt's (2014) study into the tellings produced during UFO encounters. Through their analysis they suggest that additional features of a phenomenon (in this case the sighting of something unusual in the sky) are identified during a telling to mitigate against a potential normal explanation. For instance suggesting that a certain movement produced by lights in the sky is not typical of an aeroplane. As such, unusual and transgressive qualities are implied. In the two extracts examined, whilst a normal explanation is offered and even investigated, the transgressive status of the event unfolds as the features of the event are identified and confirmed by the group. Additionally, iconic gestures produced by the group appear to act as symbolic representations of these features (Lebaron & Streeck, 2000 ). Whilst providing a visual representation, they also present a known gesture (a recognisable scratching gesture) to aid the understanding of an 'unknown' event. In doing so, features of the event can be seen and understood in particular ways – as transgressive – through a socially shared understand of the gesture, and the meaning this constitutes for the event. In figure 3.4, description of the sound accompanied by a scratching gesture in the air (rather than on her clothes), suggest a different type of sound than that produced by D (further examined in chapter 7).

In addition, there appears to be somewhat of a epistemic tussle evident in these extracts, as participants offer different assessments (Pomerantz, 1984) for the source of the event. However, whilst the assessment claims that offer a non-extraordinary explanation initiate further action to investigate these claims, in both of the examples examined it is

the participants that first noticed the event that offer the concluding assessment – one that is potentially paranormal. The *first noticer* therefore exhibits rights to knowledge of the event, its features and source, as discussed by Heritage and Raymond (2005), they adopt a K+ position. As such, through the very fact that they experienced the event they are afforded epistemic rights to assess and comment upon it. Likewise, participants who have not displayed co-participation in noticing the event are given K- positions and evidently are seen as misplaced to provide explanations for it. This alludes to an interesting scenario in which those that first notice an event invite others to co-participate in the experience. However, through the production of a noticing towards empty space and subsequent production of a *that* reference, predefine transgressive qualities for it. Participants situate themselves in a K+ position by being the one(s) to notice (and as such experience) the event and due to this possess potentially a unique, subjective perspective of it. Therefore, whilst others may be invited to co-participate in discovering the event, their understanding and ability to participate will be limited to their epistemic status. Thus, what first appears as an attempt to validate the potential for an event to be paranormal or not, may indeed be a sequence of verbal and visual actions with a predefined outcome. As such, through a negotiation of gaze, talk and gesture others come to understand and see an event in a particular way – in the context of those that initially noticed it (Heath, 2000; Heath et al, 2002b; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b).

In these cases the paranormal potential of the event is then established not only by a shift from noticing "that" to positioning the source of an event "there". It also occurs through a sequence of actions that discover the features of the event as unexplainable and out with the norm for that particular space. To accompany the verbal positioning of the event the group also produce gestures to highlight and illustrate the location and features of it. These take the form of deictic pointing gestures towards space X (as seen in extracts 3.3, 3.10 and 3.15), head points (as seen in extract 3.8), and iconic gestures (as seen in extract 3.7, 3.13 and figure 3.3 and 3.4). Through the organisation of talk and these visible gestures empty spaces are highlighted and made relevant to the on-going interaction. These gestures will now be explored in further detail.

## 6.4 Configuring Empty Space through Deictic Gestures

Deictic gestures usually in the form of either a hand point or head point, often accompany a verbal "there" reference towards a particular space. Enfield, Kita and

Ruiter (2007) suggest that pointing gestures, in particular 'B-type' gestures (extended points with the hand and arm) often accompany a description of 'where' a reference is. These gestures are generally produced alongside a verbal "there" or "here", and when identifying a location will also display a shift in gaze and a head turn towards the relevant space. Thus far, we have discussed the role that gaze shifts may have in the initial noticing of an event, and have shown that participants through a sequence of gaze, talk and gesture negotiation establish the location and features of an event. To examine this further we will discuss the specific role that deictic gestures have in achieving this.

In figure 3.5 below, proceeding A's gaze towards the space and I's verbal "that" reference, they both produce a head point towards the space that A initially looked towards. This accompanies a simultaneous verbal reference to the space by both I "over there" (28) and A "down there" (29).

**Figure 3.5**
**Dungeons Moan: A points with head to space**

```
I: (unknown)[ coming from          [ over there
A:           [ mmm                  [  down there
```
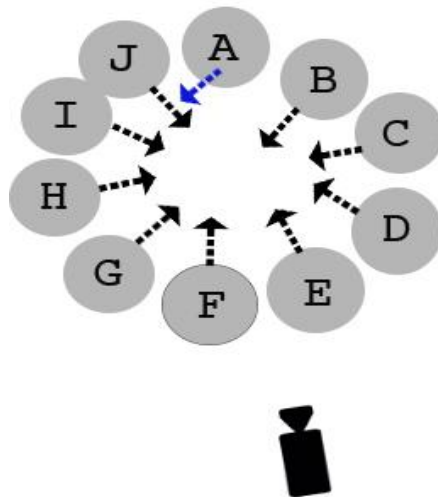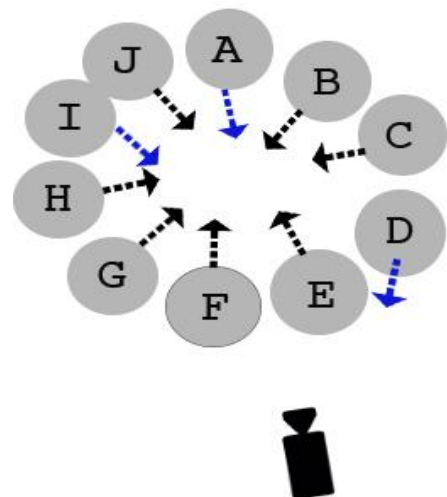


```
      A looks towards I                I points with head to space
                                       A points with head to space
                                       D looks to space
```

This head point highlights the space as relevant to the event that occurred – A and I hearing a "mmm" sound copying G's earlier summons. It is proceeded shortly by D, G, F and E all looking towards the space, and producing further turns that engage with and orientate to this particular space as the source of the event. It is worth noting that in this particular instance the group are participating in a séance session and are told at the

beginning of the session to hold hands, and not to let go until the session has concluded. As such a typical 'B-type' gesture (Enfield, Kita & Ruiter, 2007) is restricted, however, the head point produced by A achieves the same outcome – highlighting the relevant space. By accompanying the verbal "there" with this visual deictic gesture the speakers are able to invite others to not only see the space but to see it in a particular way (vom Lehn, Heath and Hindmarsh, 2001; Heath et al, 2002b) - as empty (and therefore potentially containing a paranormal source for the sound). By highlighting the potential source of an event through deictic gestures others are then invited to co-participate in discovering the event and its paranormal potential based on its connection to the highlighted, empty space.

In the grandfather clock incident (figure 3.6) in which the group investigate a normal clock as the potential source of the sound, A produces a deictic hand point towards the space she originally gazed towards. This accompanies a verbal turn which not only references the space, but also enforces the potential that it is not the 'normal' clock but one that exists in an empty space (and is therefore potentially paranormal). Her hand point is proceeded by C turning to look into this space. This is shown in figure 3.6 below.

**Figure 3.6**
**Grandfather Clock: A points to space**

```
A:   No it's not the same it's (.) it's(.)              th[ere
C                                                          [It is yeah
```



114: A points to space

115: C turns to space
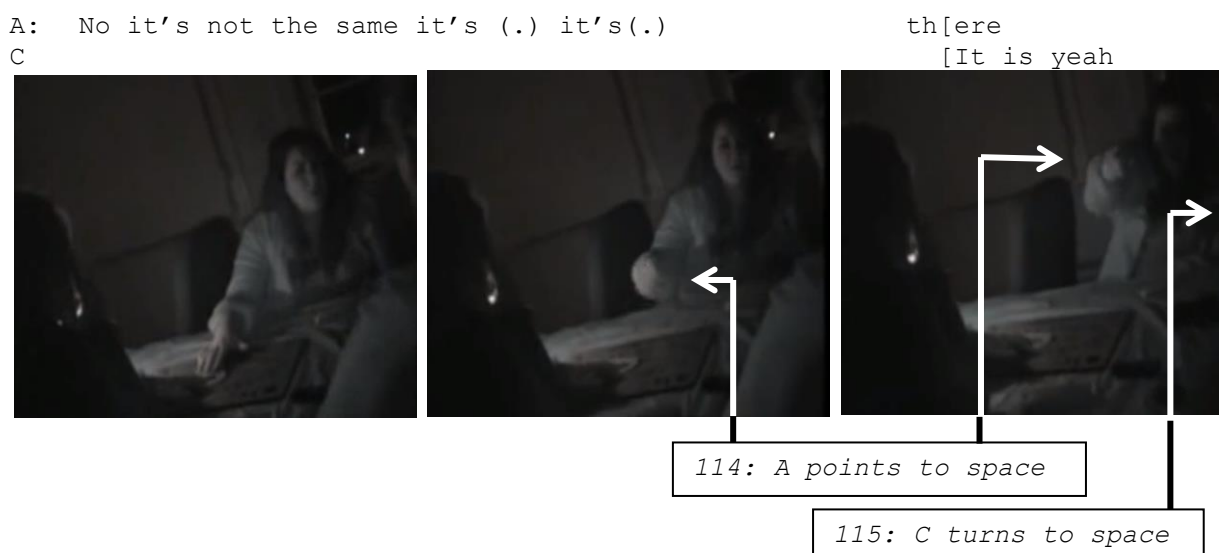
Finally, in figure 3.7 whilst the hand point produced by B accompanies his verbal turn "over" rather than 'there' the effect is the same. Following A's summons to establish where the 'bang' came from B's point out of the door establishes it in an empty space (a

separate unoccupied room), and provides a visible reference for the groups continued discovery of the event.

**Figure 3.7**
**Tolbooth Bang: B points out of doorway**

A: where did that come from?                                        B: °over°



11: B holds hands up                              13: B points out of doorway

In each of the cases a deictic gesture accompanies a reference towards empty space, highlighting its position to other members of the group and thus making the space visible and relevant to the ongoing interaction. As the event in question is often invisible to the group, producing a visible gesture that positions it in a space in the local milieu provides a point of reference, and in these cases reinforces its 'empty status'. As a result, others are not only encouraged to orientate towards this space as a point of reference, but also to see it in a particular way (vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001; Heath et al, 2002b). In basic terms, if the source of the event is from an empty space it engenders transgressive properties, and as such has the potential to be paranormal. Therefore, similar to studies by vom Lehn (2006a, 2006b), Goodwin (1994) and Heath et al (2002b) the identification of relevant features of the environment, in this case an empty space, enables the group to share a way of seeing, and thus understanding the event.

It is worth noting at this point that empty spaces by their very status of being empty present a particular difficulty in seeing the source of the event. They lack specificity, and unlike physical referents cannot necessarily be seen as inhabiting a particular position in the space. Therefore, whilst the specific source cannot necessarily be identified, deictic gestures such as those examined alongside gaze shifts, may provide an interactional resource to highlight a domain of scrutiny (Goodwin, 2003). The point occurs within a larger framework of orientation by the pointer and co-participants in

which an event has been noticed (gaze shifts), referenced (that reference), co-participation has been established, and then pointed at. The point does not occur during or immediately after the first noticing and occurs after a participation framework has been established (Goodwin, 2003). Therefore, deictic gestures in these cases are not necessarily intended to reference the exact position of an event, but highlight a domain of scrutiny in which co-participants can derive further meaning and intelligibility from it. In each of the cases examined by referencing empty space individuals are invited to see and understand an event that is essentially invisible, through collaborative activity.

## 6.5 Interacting with Tools and Objects

Finally, I would like to explore how tools and objects used by the group play a role in constituting a paranormal event, and the relationship they have with the empty space around them. Up until this point the events discussed have all been examples of occasions where something uncanny occurs seemingly without cause in the environment (i.e. sounds, feelings). In these cases empty spaces are considered to be inhabited by a paranormal potential that can interact in some way with the physical world – whether that be the sound of an ethereal clock or being physically touched. In these instances the group are attempting to experience a paranormal event by co-participating in the process of observing, investigating and confirming the 'paranormality' of unusual activity in the environment around them.

However, in some cases the group will use specific tools and objects to try and facilitate an event. For example, the group may use a Gauss Meter under the pseudo-scientific theory that a spirit may be able to interact with this device by using its own electro-magnetic field. In these cases the object or tool is likely to be placed in a space that can be orientated to by the group but not influenced by the group members or natural environment. By positioning objects in this way the group are creating a space that is in essence empty accept the object/ tool that inhabits it. This 'emptiness' is defined by the absence of normal influences that could render a paranormal explanation void. Therefore, whilst the object plays an integral part in the interaction, the empty space that it inhabits is vital to the paranormal/ normal identity an experience is given. This will be examined in the proceeding extracts.

In extract 3.16 the group are attempting to communicate with a spirit through a K2

device. The K2 meter is a type of eletro-magnetic field reader that indicates the strength of the reading through a series of lights positioned on the front of the device. The meter is positioned away from the group members on the floor in the centre of the circle where it is seemingly absent from 'normal' interference (i.e. no person is holding it/ moving it). The K2 meter indicates if it is reading eletro-magnetic (hereafter EM) fields by showing a series of lights depending on the strength of the field (as the strength of the EM field increases, the number of lights showing also increases). Up until the extract below the lights have flickered on and off a few times but not in an organised manner (which could indicate some form of intelligent communication from a paranormal source). In line 1, B proceeds to ask the spirit if it can communicate with the group by using the lights, specifically asking for the spirit to turn three lights on. After 7 seconds the light moves up to two lights (it is currently sitting on one) and after a final request in line 8 a third light appears. B then states "thank you" (8) indicating an acknowledgement that her request had been met. D and A (14 and 15) then also acknowledge the status of the K2 meter, and A goes on to say that she believes that the spirit may be a little girl (19).[27] D also says that she is 'buzzing' (23).[28]

Following this B then asks for the spirit to make the lights disappear again and instructs the spirit that this can be achieved by walking away from the K2 meter. In line 32 the lights go down to one again, and both A and B produce a "yaaay" exclamation (33 and 34).

Extract 3.16
Little Girl

```
1    B      Can you light it up all the way again to three so that-
2    B      we know that you're there
3           (4secs)
4    B      if you can then we will try and communicate with you
5    B      with that light
6           (3s - during this time the K2 light flickers and then
7           sits on 2 lights)
8    B       all the way up to three to the orange light[  thank you
9                                                        [(K2 light
10          goes up to 3 lights)
11          (1.5s)
12   B      okay now what we're gonna do is we're gonna try and ask-
13   B      you some questions
14   D      it's stuck on three
15   A      yes
16   B      okay that's good thank you very much now if you want to-
17   B      answer yes sorry have you got somethin-
```

[27]A has identified herself as a 'sensitive' or 'medium'.
[28]For D this is an indication to her that she is 'picking up' on a Spirit.

```
18  A                                                    (unknown) I
19  A     think it's a little girl
20  B     a little girl is it a little girl
21        (2.5s)
22  B     hello::
23  D     oh I'm buzzing
24  B     okay can you make those lights disappear again you-
25  B     can[ do that by walking
26           [(Third K2 lights flickers)
27    B   awa[y go right down to one again can you get it down-
28           [(K2 at 2 lights)
29  B      to one be very clever if you can[ go on down to one
30                                          [(second K2 light
31        flickers)
32        (K2 lights go down to one light)
33  A     yaa[aay:::
34  B        [ aay::: well done hh
```

In this example, we see a request by B towards the spirit to make the lights go up to three, this is met by the tool responding in the manner requested by the group (the lights go up and down in line 6), which is then confirmed as correct by the group verbally reacting to the tools behaviour ("thank you" and "aay::: well done hh", lines 8 and 34). Throughout this experience the group continue to sit in a circle around the K2 meter, orientating towards the tool but not touching or interacting with it in any physical way. Indeed the lack of any physical interaction with the tool, and the empty space around it gives this particular interaction meaning. It supports the conclusion that something is now inhabiting the empty space around the tool and interacting with it.

Likewise, in extract 3.17 the group have positioned a Gauss meter in an empty space behind B. The Gauss Meter is also a type of electro-magnetic field reader. The strength of the field is indicated by a buzzing noise that increases in volume as the strength of the field increases. In this particular extract the group are taking part in a Ouija Board session and have asked for the spirits name, to which they have received the word "Munthob" (this is established by the planchette moving around the board to the relevant letters). As A proceeds to ask the question "Is it Munthob" (71) the Gauss meter starts to produce a loud sound (indicative of a strong EM field). As the sound increases A produces a "yeh::" (line 71) acknowledging the sound as relevant and indicative of a response to her question.

Extract 3.17
Munthob

```
61        [(OB glass moves)
62        [(B and A look at OB)
63        [(OB glass stops in centre of Ouija Board)
64        [(B leans towards paper, C removes hand from OB, A looks
65        at paper)
```

```
66  C      M[unthob
67           [(A moves paper closer to group.)
68  B      Munthob
69  A      [(          )
70           [(A looks towards B)
71  A           Is it Munthob (0.5) [°yeh::°
72                                    [(Gauss can be heard increasing
73         in the background)
74                                    [(A's eyes open wide looking at
75         B. B looks at A. C and B look at each other)
76  C      Mu[nthor::b
77           [(C, B then A look at paper)
78  B      H[ello Munthob
79          [Munth^ob^
80         [(Gauss can be heard increasing in the background)
81         [(B and A look at each other. B bites bottom lip)
82  C      Its defini[tely Mu[nthorb
83  B                        [hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh Jesus
84              [(B and A look at C)
85                        [(B Leans in towards table, closes
86         eyes and exhales. A and C look at B)
```

As we see in lines 66 and 68 both C and A utter the word Munthob, however, it is not until A's utterance in line 71 in which the sound of the Gauss Meter begins, that the words gain significance as potentially meaningful to the interaction. This relevance becomes apparent in the multimodal interaction that follows A's "yeh::" as all the group members look towards each other, and A widens her eyes in a surprised/ shocked expression (74-75) (see chapter 7 for further discussion regarding the relevance of embodied facial expressions). C then repeats the word in line 76, and B says "hello Munthob" (78) addressing the potential spirit. The sound becomes louder following B's greeting, and both B and A look towards each other, B biting her lip (81). C then states, "it's definitely Munthorb" (82).[29] These interactions amongst the group identify that not only is the sound relevant to their activity of attempting to interact with spirit, but it also establishes features of that experience (i.e. the group are interacting with a spirit called Munthob).

Extract 3.18
Munthob

```
 97        [(Gauss getting louder in background)
 98        [(C looks over right shoulder. A then B look in same
 99         direction)
100  C     Hi Munth[orp
101                [(B looks at OB. C looks at OB and puts hand on
102        mouth)
```

As the experience continues C looks over her right shoulder in the direction of the Gauss Meter. A and B also look over in this direction following C's shift in gaze. In line

---

[29] The spelling of 'Munthorb' rather than 'Munthob' here is deliberate to signify a speech error produced by C.

100, C then states "Hi Munthorp". Following this, whilst the group continue to experience various phenomena they no longer discuss the name of the spirit and this final statement appears to confirm this as being the spirits name. This statement in line 100, follows a shift in gaze towards the empty space that the gauss meter is located in. C's shift towards that space, followed by A and B, establishes the relevance of this empty space and the event that has occurred.

In these interactions with tools the group establish a form of turn-taking sequence – asking a question, awaiting a response, and then reacting to this response in the appropriate manner. These questions are often quite specific and relate to the particular tool or object being used (i.e. asking for the lights to increase on a K2 meter). A perceived 'answer' from the tool to a request by the group leads to a further sequence of interactions that confirm the event as relevant. The location of the tool or object, in an empty space, and the assumption that the tool or object has no means of responding to the group on its own, establishes a paranormal potential for this particular event. It suggests that the space must be inhabited by an unseen force that is able to interact with the tool and respond in an intelligent manner.

It is worth highlighting that on some occasions the request produced by the group does not receive the expected response. For example, in extract 3.19 below C asks the spirit to tap on the board. The group are looking towards the board, presumably awaiting a response, however, shortly after this question A looks directly above her (44), B and C follow her shift in gaze. She then states "that was up there" (45) and points up towards the ceiling, followed by "it doesn't have to be the exact tap" (49). In this instance, A is referring to a tap that she has heard coming from the ceiling that proceeded her request for a tap on the board. By shifting her gaze and then producing her *that* reference whilst pointing towards the ceiling she highlights that something uncanny has occurred, but also in a space that is empty. Whilst the 'answer' does not match the request, this is still accepted as a potentially paranormal response.

Extract 3.19
Scratching

```
41  C        mmmm (2.5s) (unknown) can you tap on i[t
42                                               [(C taps on
43        board with knuckle twice. All look at board)
44        (A looks up towards ceiling, B and C follow A's gaze)
45  A        hh. [that was up ther[e
46  B                             [hhhh.
```

```
47              [(A points up towards ceiling. B looks up at
48         ceiling)
49  A        it doesn't have to be the exact tap
```

In a similar example, in extract 3.20 the group are asking for the spirit to interact with the Ouija Board by moving the planchette in a circle. After a period of 27 seconds a noise can be heard in the background. C produces a *that* reference (43) and C describes the noise as a "popping sound"(45). E then goes on to describe the event as coming from the empty space behind C (46). A, C and D acknowledge this with a "yeh" turn (48,49,50). A then states that she thought someone (a spirit) might have been standing there, B then looks to her left into the empty space where the sound is indicated to be coming from (53).

Extract 3.20
Popping Sound

```
31  C     just try and move the planchette just the piece of wood-
32  C     under our fingers
33        (1 sec)
34  C     just try and move that in a cir::cle
35        (27 secs – popping noise can be heard in background. 8
36        secs in C glances up towards A and then back to board.
37        21 secs in C looks up again, E looks towards C. 25 secs
38        in C looks over to A)
39  A     [I'm feeling really dizzy like you did
40        [(A looks at C. B looks around towards A)
41  A     we got that before didn't we
42        (B looks back towards board)
43  C     °what's that°
44  A     what
45  C     like popping so[und
46  E                    [(unknown) behind you
47                       [(B looks towards C. E looks at C)
48  A     ye[h
49  C       [yeh
50  D       [yeh
51  E     (unknown)
52  A     [I thought there's someone stood there .hhh
53        [(B looks to his left where the noise is thought to be
54        coming from, and then back around to C)
```

Similarly, in this example the request is not met by the expected answer, however, the 'popping sound' becomes relevant to the event regardless of this and is made so through the group's orientation to and discussion of the empty space that it occurs in.


## 6.6 Conclusion


In this analysis we have explored how empty spaces become relevant to the ongoing interaction of a group, and their categorisation of an event as potentially paranormal. By

noticing these spaces participants are able to demonstrate to others that they have noticed something 'unusual', by shifting their attention from the business at hand to space X. Similar to previous (although quite different) studies into workplace settings and museums, the process of noticing someone noticing something else through their verbal and visual actions renders certain objects or exhibits visible (Sacks, 1992; Haviland, 1993; Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999, 2000; Heath et al, 2002b; vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001). In a paranormal group setting, this sequence of noticing renders an empty space, and invisible event within it, relevant, and leads to a series of actions that establish the paranormal potentiality of it. These subsequent verbal and visual actions work together to develop the event from its initial ambiguous referential state of "that", to one that has its own visible space "there" and recognised features. This space is rendered visible and relevant to the group through talk and deictic gestures which highlight this particular space as a point of reference for the event. In addition, further iconic gestures (Schegloff, 1978; Kendon, 1997) performed by the group alongside verbal descriptions of the event develop a 'way of seeing' the event based on its relevant features. In the context of paranormal events, the practice of pointing at an invisible rather than visible referent, invites further discovery of its paranormal potential.

Previous research into 'space' as an interactional feature is limited. Studies that have looked into this area tend to focus on the creation of interactional space between two persons, such as Kendon's (1990) discussion of the 'F-Formation' and Mondada's (2009) study of stopping individuals in the street. These 'interactional spaces' emerge and are constantly shaped through the participant's bodies, gaze and gesture during interaction. Additionally, some studies have looked at how gestures can be produced in space, particularly during storytelling activities, to provide visual representations of things that cannot be observed, and to illustrate abstract ideas (Kendon, 1997; McNeill, 1998; Schegloff, 1978). However, this study demonstrates that these interactional spaces can not only be produced between co-participants, but can be positioned elsewhere in the local milieu. These spaces are made relevant through verbal references, and a sequence of bodily, gaze and gestural actions during interaction. As such, even though the event being referred to is essentially invisible, the group are able to produce a common referent, which can be discovered and understood in relation to its paranormal status.

# Chapter Seven

## Feeling Spirits: Sharing Subjective Experience through Embodied Talk and Action

In the preceding analytical chapters we have explored how talk, bodily conduct and gesture are used by participants to render external events noticeable and relevant to others. In giving these events significance participants are able to collaboratively discover and categorise these events as potentially paranormal. In these cases the focus of the interaction has largely been on the external environment (such as a sound), however, on occasions events are experienced subjectively by participants. In most cases this will be described as a 'feeling' or 'sense'. These inner experiences present a challenge to participants who are engaged in the social activity of collectively trying to experience the paranormal. As these experiences are unobservable as a phenomena 'out there' for others to understand and potentially share in this experience the speaker must attempt to communicate what it is they have felt to others. This final chapter will explore these 'hidden' and subjective experiences and the role that they play in developing a shared understanding of events. As such this section expands upon the findings introduced in the final theme of the single case analysis and the role of talk and action in making visible embodied experience.

Extract 4.1 introduces a typical example of a private experience. In this particular example the group are participating in an Ouija Board session when one of the group members feels as if they have been touched on the arm. [30]

```
      Extract 4.1
      Scratching

      101              (11 secs)
      102       B    are you still here
      103       A    [(unknown whisper)
      104                [(A looks at B)
      105              (After 8s B turns quickly to look at A and then
      106              looks down to her left. C follows her gaze)
      107       A    yeh
      108       B    I just felt          it's like some doing[ that
      109                                                      [(B
      110              strokes Cs arm and then looks at A)
      111       A    hh. child
      112       B    yeh:: [that [was weird
      113       C           [on your legs
```

---

[30] Note that line 108 in extract 1 "it's like some doing that" is a speech error.

```
114                          [(A nods at B)
115        B    no no like th- [ my yeh but it's all emm
116        A                    [hands and arms
117                          [(B stokes Cs arm again)
118        A    I just felt it on [there
119                              [(A strokes her own left hand)
120        B    that's weird
121        A    is that you that just touched Rachael's arm?
122             (All focusing on board again)
```

Up until this point, the group have been occupied by a (until now unexplained) scratching noise that they believe to be originating from the Ouija Board located between the three participants. They have just asked for the sound to be repeated and after a period of silence (11 seconds) B produces an utterance to establish whether the spirit (that is assumed to have caused the sound) is still present (102). After a further 8 seconds B looks towards A and then down towards her left. B then shares with the rest of the group her experience of being stroked on the arm (108) – this is shared through both a verbal utterance and accompanied by a gesture (109,110). The gesture produced by B is a stroking movement of her finger on C's arm. Indeed she does not verbally describe the experience at this stage but uses this gesture to demonstrate what has occurred, accompanying this with a verbal reference "it's like some doing that" (108). A appears to both acknowledge and support B's claim, offering a potential identity for the spirit leading on from the experience (a "child" – line 111), and nodding at B after she produces as "yeh::" (112) in agreement. C, who has been the subject of B's earlier tactile gesture, enquires further into the location of the experience asking whether it happened on B's legs. B responds to this by repeating the gesture and at the same time A produces overlapping talk that clarifies the experience as occurring on the "hand and arms" (116). A then proceeds to describe having the same experience and produces a 'stroking' gesture on her own left hand. It is, therefore, possible to see through this data that a subjective experience is not just verbally described to the group, but is situated within a series of verbal and bodily conduct between group members. This will be examined further in the proceeding chapter.

Subjective experiences, such as the one discussed above, are relatively common in the data. Indeed paranormal experiences in many cases are of a subjective nature which is a likely explanation for the fascination with research that probes the cognitive and psychological features of such claims (see Glicksohn, 1990; Irwin, 1993; Irwin & Watt, 2007). However, there is relatively little research that examines how these personal experiences are communicated and shared with others. Research that has been carried

out focuses largely on the storytelling and recounting of such experiences (Wooffitt, 1991, 1992, 1994) rather than the enveloping of the experience itself. This chapter, therefore, will focus on how subjective experiences are shared, and how the private becomes visible through social and embodied action.

As discussed previously, recent studies have started to explore how gesture and referential action (such as pointing) can help render objects visible and intelligible to others (Goodwin, 1994; Hindmarsh et al, 1998; Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999; Heath, Luff & Svensson, 2009; Heath et al, 2002a, 2002b; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b). However, research exploring the role of embodied action is still fairly minimal, although work by researchers such as Goodwin, Hindmarsh and vom Lehn, have made some significant progress in this area. As Hindmarsh and Pilnick (2007) argue, until recently much of the sociological work that has focused on the body has tended to pursue research *about* the body, rather than its organisation in embodied practice. As such, research has tended to focus on social representations of the body and its relevant meanings in different contexts including gender and sexuality, health and illness, and cultural and media studies amongst others (see Scott and Morgan, 1993). However, recent studies have started to focus on the lived experience of the body, and its organisational accomplishments within social action. This shift towards understanding embodiment has highlighted the important role that the body plays in interactive settings as a means of exhibiting joint understanding, displaying emotion, demonstrating subjective feeling and exaggerating the verbal.

Interest in embodied action has emerged in a range of settings including medical practices (Heath, 2002; Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007), dental clinics (Hindmarsh, 2010), museums (vom Lehn 2006a, 2006b), work practices (Goodwin, 2000) and in the home (Goodwin, 2000; Wiggins, 2010). In most cases these studies examine how the body is used in collaborative settings to engender joint understanding of an activity, object or experience. For example, in Heath's (2002) study of doctor-patient consultations he reveals how patients express suffering through demonstrating and enacting their symptoms. Through the use of embodied gesture – such as grasping their temples whilst describing a painful headache – patients are able to display the particular qualities and engender a sense of distinctiveness for their suffering. These displays are produced within the on-going sequence of interaction, and patients afford opportunities to enact and demonstrate symptoms with and within talk. In doing so, patients are able to

engender a joint understanding of their experience of suffering and pain with their doctors. Other studies, have shown how the body is used as an interactive display to understand objects and exhibits (vom Lehn, 2006a), and through embodied action and talk frame experiences in particular ways (vom Lehn, 2006b).

## 7.1 Demonstrating Embodied Experiences

As discussed, paranormal experiences are often subjective and as such are experienced by the individual, often materialising as 'feelings' or 'senses'. Like medical encounters where the difficulty of sharing the experience of pain and suffering with another is prominent (Heath, 1989; Heath, 2002), in these situations demonstrating embodied paranormal experiences presents similar interactional challenges. The data that will be explored in this section will therefore examine instances where individuals produce various embodied talk and action in an attempt to communicate these experiences.

The following two data extracts present instances when a subjective experience is encountered by one participant, and is then communicated through verbal and bodily actions to other group members. These will be examined before suggesting further areas of enquiry which will become the basis for subsequent analysis. In the first data extract (4.2) presented below, the group are participating in an Ouija Board session. Prior to the opening line (42) participant C has produced a gaze shift (G in transcript 4.2) off towards the door, over his left hand shoulder, he then looks around the group. Shortly after this he looks to his left again, grabs his upper left arm and rubs it with his right hand (43-45) (EG in transcript 4.2), he then looks towards participant B. Following this he gives the description of feeling as if he has been 'touched' in the arm (presumably by an unseen entity) (46) (ER in transcript 4.2).

```
    Extract 4.2
    Alley Cat

    42  E      [(I think they're turning it up) the problem with cats ar^
    43         [(C looks to left again towards the door and          <--G
    44         grabs left  arm. D Looks towards the area that        <--EG
    45         B and C are looking  in)
    46  C      [Uh I just got-[ felt like I got touched in the arm   <--ER
    47         [(C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B)
    48                     [(D looks towards C)
    49  D      did you?
    50  B      really
    51  C      literally poked yeah like
    52  D      [oo[ooo
```

```
53  B          [okay that's strang[e
54  D                               [excellent
55             [(D crosses both of his arms over his body in a

56              'shivering' gesture and rubs both his arms)
```

*(See appendix A, for description of transcript annotations – G, EG, ER)*

Following C's description the group proceed to discuss his experience, acknowledging it as "strange" (53) and making light of the potential connection between the participants name 'Al' and their request for the spirit to interact with cats. In line 55, D also crosses both of his arms, rubs them and produces a shivering gesture. Following this, A interjects with an explanation for C's experience suggesting that it may have actually been one of the cats in the room with the group. In response, C states "No like it was right – it was on my arm right there" and grabs his upper arm once again, offering a display of the precise location where the experience occurred (line 77-80).

Extract 4.3
Alley Cat

```
74  A      well there is a [cat right behind you
75                          [(C, B and D all look to C's left in
76         the direction of the cat)
77  C      [No like it was right- [it was up on my arm right[ there
78  D                                                        [hh
79         [(C looks towards A and touches behind his left          <--EG
80         shoulder)
81                             [(B looks at C)
82                                                  [(D
83         looks towards E)
```

The initial tactile gesture offered by C, proceeds a sequence of gaze shifts towards an 'empty' space. This space is positioned behind his left shoulder. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this shift in gaze towards an empty space and away from the business at hand, results in other members of the group (in this case B and D) also gazing towards this point of interest (Ruusuvuori, 2001). The arm rub and verbal reference that follows, realign the focus towards C and his experience (46,47). However, whilst the description of being touched is unusual given the business at hand, it does not necessarily allude to the assumption that this is a paranormal event. That is, the actual touching of his arm, considering that there are several members of a group sitting in close proximity is not immediately unusual. However, C's shift in gaze towards an empty space followed by the arm rub and reference to the event, has the potential to suggest through its positioning in verbal and bodily action, a spatial relationship between the noticing of an empty space, and the embodied action performed by C. Thus, the prospect of the 'touching' occurring on an area of the body, which is

positioned in an empty space, infers an unusual quality about it. As such the embodied action produced by C aids not only in highlighting where his subjective experience (which has not been seen by rest of the group) occurred, but in doing so implies that it may have transgressive properties. Furthermore, when the validity of the event is questioned by participant A, C demonstrates the location of the experience for a second time to reaffirm its unusual qualities (i.e. it is too high on his arm to be caused by the cats in the room). This supports Heath's (2002) observation that patients upgrade the severity of their suffering through dramatised gestures when an incongruence between their suffering and the practitioner's diagnosis is identified. In this case, when the validity of the experience is questioned by a member of the group, re-enacting the gesture acts to reinforce the experience and its properties. Following this the group use the properties of this experience to inform the next question for the spirit (extract 4.4).

Extract 4.4
Alley Cat

```
91  A      Great hh. [Ummm okay would you be able- would you be-
92                   [(All group members look towards centre and
93         put fingers on planchette)
94  A      able to to touch me Gurt- I'm not afraid
```

In a similar section of data (extract 4.5), the group are taking part in a Ouija Board session and are currently trying to listen for a knocking sound that they have heard coming from the board. After 8 seconds of listening, B quite suddenly looks towards A and then down to her left. This shift away from the business at hand and towards her left, also attracts the attention of C who follows her gaze towards the point of interest. Following this, B announces that she has 'felt' something, and as she reaches "that" in her verbal utterance "it's like some doing that" (109) she strokes C's arm and looks towards A.

Extract 4.5
Scratching

```
105        (After 8s B turns quickly to look at A and then looks
106        down to her left. C follows her gaze)              <--G
107 A      yeh
108 B      I just felt            it's like some doing [that   <--ER
109                                                    [(B strokes
110        Cs arm and then looks at A)                         <--EG
```

Following this description, A produces a response suggesting that it could be a "child" (111), and B confirms this with an agreeable "yeh::" whilst assessing that the event was "weird" (112). As B suggests that this experience is weird, C produces overlapping talk

questioning whether the experience occurred on B's legs. At which point B reaffirms her experience by stating "no no like th-"(115) and repeats the stroking gesture she had originally produced on Cs arm again. As B reaches "th-" A interrupts with overlapping talk and states "hands and arms" (116), expressing in her next turn that she too has felt a similar experience by stroking her own left hand and stating that she also felt "felt it on there" (118).

Extract 4.6
Scratching

```
111 A       hh. child
112 B       yeh:: [that [was weird
113 C                   [on your legs
114             [(A nods at B)
115 B       no no like th-[ my yeh but it's all emm          <--EG
116 A                     [hands and arms
117                  [(B stokes Cs arm again)
118 A       I just felt it on [there                         <--ER
119                           [(A strokes her own left hand)
120 B       that's weird
121 A       is that you that just touched Rachael's arm?
```

Unlike extract 4.2, in this instance the gesture that precedes the shift in gaze by B, is performed on a different member of the group. By enacting this gesture on another, B is able to not only describe and demonstrate the experience, but also transpose the embodied experience to someone else (Heath, 2002; vom Lehn, 2006a) – in this case by literally replicating the gesture on her hand. However, even though the gesture has been performed on a different participant, this same participant is the one to question the properties of the experience asking B if it was, "on your legs" (line 113). By repeating the gesture B is able to confirm the location of the experience, and reaffirm its properties – by repeating the stoking gesture on her arm. Additionally, it is of interest to note that as B produces this gesture on C, A interrupts B's talk at "th-" and states "hands and arms" (116), following this with a statement that she too has experienced the same event (118,119). As such, a shared understanding, and indeed a shared experiencing of the event occurs between these two participants. Following this, the group proceed to the next stage of questioning the spirit using the 'touching' experience to inform the context of their next request.

In the two data extracts examined embodied gesture is used by participants to demonstrate and make visible, experiences that are subjective in nature. By situating these embodied gestures in and within talk subjective experiences are made visible to

other group members, and through their embodied positioning become understood as carrying a certain paranormal potential. To try to develop a deeper understanding of the organisation of these verbal and bodily actions, the remainder of this chapter will focus on three areas of analytical interest. The first is to explore how embodied gestures produced with and within talk aids in making visible subjective experiences and engenders a paranormal potential for them. Secondly, to understand how the body is used to validate the unusual properties of a subjective experience. And, finally to discover how the properties of an experience, engendered through verbal and bodily action, inform continuing interaction.

## 7.2 Spatial Relationship and Experience Validity

To consider this first point further, let us consider the sequence of interaction in each section again. In both cases the gesture and verbal descriptor of the experience follows a shift in gaze away from the business at hand, towards a point of interest (Ruusuvuori, 2001). This is followed by a tactile gesture and description of the event. In extract 4.2, the initial point of interest is the space located over C's left shoulder, however, as he produces his disclosure of the experience the point of interest shifts to his upper left arm. In extract 4.5, the point of interest is initially located to C's left indicated by the gaze shift in line 105 to 106, and then shifts to the gesture produced by C on A's arm. In each case the gesture produced visually demonstrates the experience on the body (either on their own body or as is the case with extract 4.5 on another). These are accompanied by a verbal referral to the experience and similar to the non-minimal forms of *that* reference we have discussed previously, tend to express the nature of the event, in each case the feeling of being touched. However, they remain ambiguous in their description of who or what produced the event (i.e. they do not explicitly state that the experience came from a paranormal source). This ambiguity leads to a further discussion regarding the event and in each case an analysis of the properties and/or validity of the experience. Whilst this is more explicit in the extract 4.2 (A suggests that C's experience could be caused by the cats in the room), in extract 4.5 C's question regarding the location of the experience could also determine the potential validity of it. For example, if it had been on B's legs, which are under the table, rather than her hand which is clearly visible, the explanation for what may have caused this event could be different. Therefore, the spatial origin of the event, in subjective as well as external events (as examined in chapter 6), becomes an important consideration in determining its transgressive

properties and as such, its paranormal potential.

Let us consider some further examples of this in the data. In extract 4.7 below, the group have been engaging in a seemingly two-way conversation with the spirit of a little girl, through a K2 device in the centre of the room. The group infer through these interactions that the spirit would like to play. Based on this B, who has been asking the spirit questions, asks the spirit to "run around the room" (63). As she does this A announces that "it's chilly here" (65) and I, who is sat to her right disengages with the activity of communicating with the spirit, and instead quickly turns to face A. I also states, "I'm getting really cold here it's really cold" (66). This is followed by C also claiming that her elbow is feeling cold (70). Indexical expressions such as "here" and the description of coldness occurring on specific areas of the body, display the locale of the particular experience within the ongoing activity (Heath, 1989) – it is occurring at a particular moment in time, in a specific location. The expression of feeling cold on its own, given that the group are sitting in a dark old building, late at night, may not be seen as particularly unusual. However, the accompanying indexical expressions indicates a specificity about the event which could indicate an uncanny quality (i.e. it is not the whole room that is feeling cold, but specific spaces in it). In line 77, A offers an explanation for the coldness experienced by several participants, stating that she thinks the spirit is sat next to "us" (referring to between A and I), and breathing on them. This is followed by D describing feeling an "absolute shiver" following A's explanation (83).

Extract 4.7
Little Girl

```
63  B      can you run around the room for us [as fast as you can
64  A                                          [It's chilly here-       <--ER
65  A      it chilly here[ yeh yeh
66  I              [I'm getting really cold here it's really    <--ER
67             [(I turns to A and then turns back to
68         centre)
69  I      cold
70  C      My elbows really cold[ on this side it has been fo[r     <--ER
71  B                           [hh hh                        [are-
72  B      you making us cold
73  A                          [it's
74  I                          [it's
75                             [(I turns to area where A and B are
76          sitting)
77  A       I think she's sat next to us[I think she's breathing on-  <--ER
78                                    [(I turns away looking
79         scared)
80  A      our arm
81  I       oh god
82  B       okay well tha[t-
83  D                    [i just got the absolute shiver[ when yo    <--ER
```

```
84                                                              [(K2
85         flickers to third light)
```

In a different instance, in extract 4.8 the group are engaging in a Ouija Board session and have asked for the spirit to answer whether it would like the group to "go" (4). After 8 seconds, B grabs her right arm and announces that she is "feeling really cold"(7). She then waves her left hand above her right arm and produces an indexical expression "just here"(7). Following this, C grabs the thermometer located on the table.

Extract 4.8
Dog Scratching

```
1    A      Can you move it to the candle for yes or away from the
2    A      candle for no
3           (3.0s)
4    A      Would you like us to go
5           (10.0s)
6           (B grasps her right arm with her left hand after 8s)
7    B      I'm feeling really cold[ just here  its          <--ER
8                                  [(B waves her hand in front of  <--EG
9           her above her right arm)
10          (3.5s)
11          (C uses his right hand to grab the thermometer and
12          measure the temperature)
```

After 3.5 seconds, C, reading from the thermometer, states that "it's quite hot" (22). This is supported by D, who goes on to say that the room is indeed warmer than before (25). In doing so, the properties of the event described by B, a coldness above her arm gain a further potential for exhibiting unusual qualities. That is, a coldness in a specific space, within a room that is hot, if not warmer than it was previously.

Extract 4.9
Dog Scratching

```
22 C       [it's quite hot
23         [(C stops places the thermometer back on
24         the table)
25 D       it's hotter yeh it's muc[h warmer
26 C                               [mm::
```

In each of these extracts, the noticing of the experience is fairly explicit even if the nature of it remains fairly ambiguous (i.e. they do not at any point commence the turn by suggesting that a spirit is responsible for the experience). However, through a display of verbal and bodily actions a connection between the description of the experience and its locale are made, and thus its unusual (potentially paranormal) qualities are suggested. In addition, by accompanying the verbal reference of an experience with an indexical expression and a tactile or deictic embodied gesture the properties of the experience are made visible and accessible to other members of the group. By

understanding not only what the experience is (i.e. a touch, coldness etc.), but where it is located, a shared understanding of the experience starts to emerge.

In the extracts examined above, the connection between experience and its locality are made fairly explicit. This is expressed as a verbal reference towards the experience, accompanied by an indexical expression and in most instances a tactile or deictic embodied gesture. However, there are occasions where this relationship is not so apparent, as demonstrated in extract 4.10 below.

In this particular case, the group whilst participating in an Ouija Board session are presented with a name for the spirit, 'Munthob'. After verbalising this word, the Gauss Meter positioned behind participant B starts to produce a high pitched sound (which according to pseudo-scientific theory may indicate the presence of a spirit). B and A look towards each other, and B bites her bottom lip. As C states "it's definitely Muthorb", B leans towards the table, closes her eyes, exhales and says "Jesus" (83). On being asked by C if she is alright, B responds with "yeh, I think my eyes watering" (89).

Extract 4.10
Munthob

```
79                [Munth^ob^
80        [(Gauss can be heard increasing in the background)
81        [(B and A look at each other. B bites bottom lip)
82  C     It's defini[tely Mu[nthorb
83  B                [hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh Jesus              <--ER
84           [(B and A look at C)
85                       [(B Leans in towards table, closes  <--EG
86        eyes and exhales. A and C look at B)
87  C     [You alright
88        [(B's eyes squinting still leaning forwards)
89  B     [Yeh, i think my eyes watering  (3.0)      Jesus::
90        [(B turns head to left and closes eyes briefly)
```

In this extract, B does not directly reference the experience as we have seen in the previous examples. Likewise, whilst the sound of the Gauss Meter increasing behind her is unusual, she does not look in this direction but rather up towards A, and then bites her bottom lip (81). As C confirms "It's definitely Munthorb", B overlaps the word Munthorb and produces an elongated exhale followed by the word "Jesus" (83). Goffman's (1978) suggests that response cries drawn from religion (such as Jesus) aid in projecting inward states of emotion. Given the actions that accompany this reaction it could be suggested that a subjective and potentially emotional experience is being expressed by B. However, on its own this expression is fairly ambiguous. Its

organisation following the gaze shift by B towards A, and the biting of her lip in response to the increasing Gauss Meter, does however imply a connection between the subjective experience, and the external event occurring. The display of her subjective experience also attracts the attention of both A and C, who on the production of B's expression and visible body shift towards the table with her eyes closed, gaze towards her (84). Whilst the Gauss Meter noise is still ongoing the point of interest has now shifted towards B, a realignment of focus that is achieved through the verbal and bodily actions of B. When asked if she is "alright" (87) by C, B has opened her eyes but is squinting, she then responds, "yeh, I think my eyes watering (3.0) Jesus", turning her head slightly to the left and producing an exaggerated 'blink' (90). Although she does not explicitly gesture towards her eyes, the embodied facial expressions produced by B alongside her verbal responses suggest an inner experience around this area of her body. Additionally, the sequence of verbal and bodily actions that follows the Gauss Meter sound increasing infers a connection between the Gauss Meter event and the ongoing subjective experience. As the event continues, B puts her hands over her eyes (92-93) as the Gauss Meter sound continues to produce an increasingly loud noise. In line 98, C looks over her right shoulder towards the Gauss Meter, and both A and B follow this shift in gaze. C then states "Hi Munthorp".

Extract 4.11
Munthob

```
 91          [(Gauss getting louder in background)
 92          [(A sits up straight with mouth open and look at C. B
 93          puts her hand over her eyes and A looks towards her. C
 94          then looks at and points to the dictaphone. A looks at
 95          dictaphone and then at C. B removes hand from face and A
 96          and C look at OB)
 97          [(Gauss getting louder in background)
 98          [(C looks over right shoulder. A then B look in same       <--G
 99          direction)
100 C        Hi Munth[orp
101                  [(B looks at OB. C looks at OB and puts hand on
102          mouth)
103          [(Gauss getting louder in background)
104            [(B and A look at each other. B smiles and bites lip)
105 C        [It'll take off [to (          )
106 B                        [hhh  uh
107            [(B and A look at C. B shakes head and looks at OB)
108          (Gauss getting louder in background)
109 A        [.hhhhh
110          [(A raises hand to mouth. B and C look at A. B looks
111          over left shoulder. A and C look in direction of B)
112          (Gauss meter stops)
113 B        [h[hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh fuck hh hh hh
114 A         [fu:: hhh ck o::: hhhhhhhhhhhh ff
115            [(B and A look at each other and both raise hand to
116          mouth, then C and B look at each other. C looks over
```

Between lines 102-111 the group continue to react to the increasing sound from the Gauss Meter, until in line 112 the noise stops. They then proceed to look towards each other both verbalising and displaying surprise in response to the sudden cessation of the sound, A and B raising their hand to their mouths (113-116). C and then A, once again look towards the space the Gauss Meter is located in – and A asks if indeed it is the spirit "Munthob" (118). At this point B looks towards C and then the space, whilst wiping her eyes and says "oh my god" (120). In line 122, C presents a question for B, asking why her eyes are watering. As C asks this question B starts to wipe her eyes again (123) and responds with the answer "it was really strong" (124).

Extract 4.12
Munthob

```
115          [(B and A look at each other and both raise hand to
116          mouth, then C and B look at each other. C looks over     <--G
117          right shoulder and A follows her gaze)
118 A        [Is that you Munthob?
119              [(B looks at C then in direction A gazing,wipes eye)
120 B        [Oh my god
121              [(B Removes hand from face and looks at OB)
122 C        [Why are your eyes watering?
123          [(A looks at B. B starts wiping eyes again)
124 B        It was really strong [(2.0) did you not feel that? it-
125                               [(A looks at OB. B continues wiping
126          eyes)
127 B        was like ( )
```

The statement "it was really strong" (124) remains fairly ambiguous in its description of the experience, and does not explicitly make a connection between the Gauss Meter sound and her embodied experience (i.e. she does not state that the reason her eyes are watering is because of the Gauss Meter, or a connection with this). She simply implies that the experience was strong. However, the verbal and bodily actions produced by B as the Gauss Meter sound increases imply a relationship between the two. Similarly, the actions of both A and C indicate an on-going interest and focus towards the increasing Gauss Meter noise and the name 'Munthob' that has been identified. Additionally, the action of wiping her eyes following the end of the Gauss Meter sound suggests a connection between the end of the group experience (Gauss Meter), and the end of her own subjective experience. As the Gauss Meter is located in an empty space behind B, and therefore the group experience of hearing the sound possesses unusual qualities in its own right, any connection between this experience and the subjective experience of B is likely to also engender unusual properties. It is worth noting at this point that the

subjective experience of B in this case is an internal feeling, as opposed to an external feeling (i.e. it is **in** the body, rather than **on** the body).[31] Therefore, unlike the previous extracts examined it is likely to be more challenging to demonstrate the experience to others. In this instance then we see indexical expressions that help to identify the location of an experience on the body replaced with expressions similar to response cries "Jesus" and "oh my god". As suggested by Goffman (1978) these response cries project an inward state of emotion or feeling to others. In addition facial expressions are used rather than the embodied tactile and deictic gestures demonstrated in the previous examples.

From this section of the analysis it is therefore possible to establish that whilst a subjective experience may only be encountered by an individual it is actively shared with others. Whilst the nature of the subjective experience, whether this be a feeling or sense, is presented by the individual, the validity and properties of the experience are established through verbal and bodily actions that are co-ordinated with the conduct of others (vom Lehn, 2006b). Indexical expressions and embodied tactile and deictic gestures are produced by participants to display experiences that occur on the body, meanwhile response cries and facial expressions are used to express internal feelings. These verbal and bodily actions are organised with and within talk to establish the co-participation in the disclosure and discovery of the experience and its properties. In doing so, the properties of the experience are made visible and accessible to others, enabling the paranormal potential of it to be recognised not just by the individual, but by the whole group. As such the display of experience whilst designed in response to an event also reveals to others how it has been experienced, and the way it should be seen in the context of a normal/ paranormal paradigm.

## 7.3 Repeating Embodied Experience

As discussed, verbal and bodily actions are used by participants to display the location and properties of an experience. Through these actions the properties of an experience that is subjective and essentially 'invisible' to others, is made visible and relevant

---

[31] Participant B in this data extract is the researcher. The event experienced was a strong "buzzing" feeling that reverberated through the body, in particular in the head, making the eyes water.

(Heath, 2002). However, as discovered in extract 4.2 and 4.6 on occasions there is an incongruence between the subjective experience of one participant and the objective understanding of it for another. In extract 4.2 for example, this is demonstrated when C repeats the embodied gesture of touching his upper left arm following the suggestion by A (74) that the experience could have been caused by the cats in the room (and as such a non-paranormal explanation). As he repeats the gesture, rather than just rubbing his arm he grabs a precise point on it, upgrading his response (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987) to "No like it was right- it was up on my arm right there" (77). The repeated gesture offers a precise locale for the experience, accompanied by an indexical expression to illustrate this. In doing so, he enforces the unusual qualities of the subjective experience that occurred (i.e. he was poked in his upper left shoulder – away from the cats that are on the floor). Figure 4.1 below illustrates the initial embodied gesture (46), and the repeated gesture (77).

**Figure 4.1**
**Alley Cat: C grabs arm**



46: "Uh I just got- felt like
I got touched in the arm"

77:"[No like it was right-
it was up on my arm
right there"

Likewise, in extract 4.5, participant B demonstrates the feeling of someone stroking her hand by producing a stroking gesture with her finger on participant C's hand. However, when C asks if the experience occurred on B's legs, B repeats the action to show that it occurred on her hand, not her legs. Before she produces this action she responds "no no like th-" (115), producing the stroking action as she reaches "th-", which presumably was meant to be "this" or "there", however,  A overlaps her turn with the statement

"hands and arms". A's expression "hands and arms" serves the function of describing the locale of the experience, but also as will be explored in the proceeding section demonstrates a shared understanding of it. Like the extract 4.2, the repetition of the gesture accompanied by a indexical expression reinforces the unusual properties of the experience, aligning one participant's subjective experience with another's objective understanding of it. Figure 4.2 illustrates the initial embodied gesture (108), and the repeated gesture (115).

**Figure 4.2**
**Scratching: Repeated scratching gesture by B**



108: "I just felt it's like some doing that"

115: "no no like th- my yeh but it's all emm"
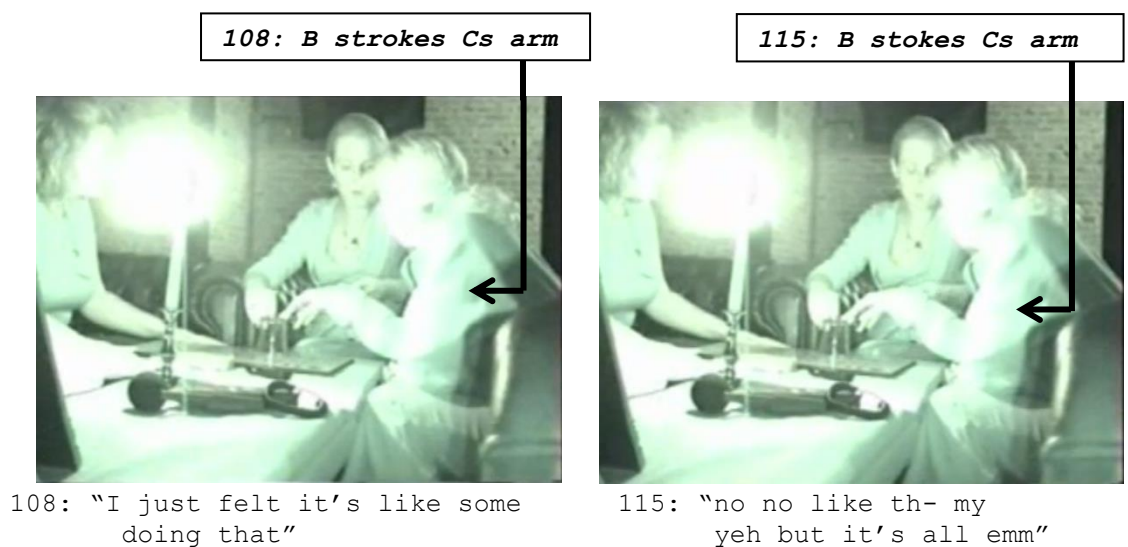
The repetition of an embodied action to illustrate an event is common through the data when the validity of a claim is brought into question. These actions, therefore, not only highlight and make visible an experience, but display properties of the experience that frame it in a certain way. In each of these cases, by repeating the embodied gesture and emphasising its location on the body, participants are able to frame it in the context of 'unexplained'. Therefore, embodied talk and gesture enable subjective experiences to not only be seen by others, but understood in a particular way (vom Lehn, 2006a).

## 7.4 Establishing Shared Understanding of Experiences

In addition to participants repeating embodied gesture to illustrate properties of their own subjective experience, on occasions the data highlights moments when different participants will express their own embodied experiences in response to the first

participant's disclosure of the event. For instance, in extract 4.13 following A's statement that she is "chilly", I also claims that she is "really cold" (66), C describes that her "elbows really cold" (70), and D states that she "got an absolute shiver" (83).

Extract 4.13
Little Girl

```
63  B      can you run around the room for us [as fast as you can
64  A                                         [It's chilly here-    <--ER
65  A      it chilly here[ yeh yeh
66  I                    [I'm getting really cold here it's really- <--ER2
67                       [(I turns to A and then turns back to
68         centre)
69  I      cold                                                     <--ER3
70  C      My elbows really cold[ on this side it has been fo[r
71  B                           [hh hh                        [are-
72  B      you making us cold|
73  A                         [it's
74  I                         [it's
75                            [(I turns to area where A and B are
76          sitting)
77  A       I think she's sat next to us[ I think she's breathing on <--ER4
78                                       [(I turns away looking
79         scared)
80  A      our arm
81  I       oh god
82  B       okay well that[
83  D                     [i just got the absolute shiver[ when you  <--ER5
84                                                        [(K2
85         flickers to third light)
```

In extract 4.14, following C rubbing his arm and claiming that he has been "touched in the arm" (46-47), D crosses his arms, and produces a shivering gesture whilst rubbing both his arms (55-56).

Extract 4.14
Alley Cat

```
42  E      [(I think there turning it up) the problem with cats are-
43         [(C looks to left again towards the door and grabs left   <--EG
44         arm. D Looks towards the area that B and C are looking
45         in)
46  C      [Uh I just got-[ felt like I got touched in the arm       <--ER
47         [(C continually rubs his arms whilst looking at B)
48                        [(D looks towards C)
49  D      did you?
50  B      really
51  C      literally poked yeah like
52  D      [oo[ooo
53  B         [okay that's strang[e
54  D                            [excellent
55         [(D crosses both of his arms over his body in             <--EG2
56         'shivering' gesture and rubs both his arms)
```

Finally, in extract 4.15 after B produces a stroking gesture on C's arm to demonstrate her embodied experience, A also claims "I just felt it on there" (118) and produces a

similar stroking gesture on her own hand (119).

Extract 4.15
Scratching

```
105          (After 8s B turns quickly to look at A and then looks
106          down to her left. C follows her gaze)
107 A        yeh
108 B        I just felt              it's like some doing [that        <--ER
109                                                     [(B strokes      <--EG
110          Cs arm and then looks at A)
111 A        hh. child
112 B        yeh:: [that [was weird
113 C              [on your legs
114            [(A nods at B)
115 B        no no like th-[ my yeh but it's all emm                    <--ER
116 A                      [hands and arms                              <--EG
117                      [(B stokes Cs arm again)
118 A        I just felt it on [there
119                            [(A strokes her own left hand)           <--EG2
```

In each of the cases above, at least one participant, visually or verbally, describes a similar subjective experience to that which is first referred to. In doing so, other participants exhibit a shared understanding, and in some cases a shared experiencing of the event. Heath (2002) reveals in his study of doctor-patient consultations that imitations are used by doctors to demonstrate an understanding of the suffering being experienced, and confirm a diagnosis from this. Imitating the gesture produced by the patient is organised in such a way within talk to engender a confirmation from the patient of their symptoms, or as in the case examined in Heath's work further discussion of the relevant symptoms if a discrepancy arises (p.611). Likewise, vom Lehn (2006a) discusses how the feeling of pain is shared by participants when studying a medical exhibit. By enacting their understanding of the pain on their own bodies, participants are able to establish a joint understanding of the exhibit but also by transposing these feelings onto their own body they are able to evoke and share bodily experience. In the cases examined here, by imitating the embodied talk and action produced by the first participant, individuals are able to share a joint understanding of the properties of the experience. In each case the nature of the gesture or verbal description of embodied experience produced shows similarities to the initial disclosure. For instance, in extract 13 the other participants not only relate to the 'cold' properties of the experience, but also refer to its specificity describing similar 'cold spaces' near to them. Similarly, in extract 4.14 D rubs his upper arms following on from C's description of being poked in the upper left arm. Finally, A describes also being stroked on the arm following B's disclosure in extract 4.15. By imitating these embodied experiences participants reveal that they understand the subjective experience of another, but also through this display

in some cases that they too have experienced a similar event. By sharing and validating each others claims through their own similar embodied experiences the event progresses from individual to social. The group become involved in 'experiencing' the event and the process of establishing its paranormal potential through this.

### 7.4.1 Imitation

It could also be suggested that expressions of shared understanding can be seen in the vocal utterances of participants to ongoing events. Whilst in the examples examined above participants demonstrate shared understanding by producing a repetition of the gesture or verbal description of the initial event properties. In the cases shown below, participants vocalise reaction tokens (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006) as it takes place. These are often in the form of a non-speech sound (such as "ooo" or "whooo"). For example, in extract 4.16 below, two participants are discussing an unusual feeling that they have encountered in the basement. Whilst talking about the history of the building they are investigating, B announces that she is "feeling it again" (70), both participants then proceed to verbalise a sequence of exaggerated non-speech sounds as they encounter the event (73,74,76,77). [32]

```
Extract 4.16
Basement

69  A     know a passageway or tunnel here [or
70  B                                      [I'm feeling it again-
71  B     [just now
72  A     [yeh        just on the
73  B     it's coming through just now   Oo[oooooo Oooo that's it- <--
74  A                                       [Jee:::sus Christ
75  B     just gone [right through
76  A              [Ooooooooo                                      <--
77  B     hh. Ooo[oo                                               <--
78  A            [what is going on with that Tracey cause it's-
79  A     real[ly
80  B         [oh my go::d
```

Likewise is extract 4.17 whilst the group are participating in a Ouija Board session the planchette starts to move in spiral circles. D, B and E all produce an overlapping prolonged "whooo" sound as this occurs.

---

[32]The two participants in this section of data have been feeling an unusual sensation in the basement for several minutes before this particular data extract. It is this sensation that they refer to in line 70 (extract 4.16).

Extract 4.17
Spirals

```
148          [(Planchette starts spinning in circles, the groups
149          fingers try to follow it. A looks back to the board)
150 C        °the darkness is coming°
151 D        w[uuuhh HHHOoooooooo                               <--
152 B         [Whoooooooooo:::::: (unknown) again Hh [hh        <--
153 E         [Whoooooooooo:::::::::::        hh hhh hhh hh h h yeh   <--
154 A                                                      [it's a
spiral
155 C        hh hh hh[ hh hh
156 A               [circle are we
```

In extract 4.18, during a table tilting session the table starts to rock from side to side. As the rocking motion of the table starts to increase several members of the group produce different sounds and expressions in reaction to the event.

Extract 4.18
Table Tipping

```
124          (Rocking motion of table gets faster)
                                                          <--
125 B         oooooo00
126 C         can you twist the table round
127          (Table starts to rock faster, creaking as it moves)
128 B         oh god
129 F         hh hhh hhh
130          (The candle and EMF reader start to slide off the top of
131          the table towards E and F due to the intensity of the
132          tables rocking movements)
133 C         well done your doing very well
134 A         oooooohhh                                     <--
135 F         whaa [whaa hh
136              [(E removes candle and EMF reader before they fall
137          of the table)
```

In the examples above, the reaction tokens produced by different members of the group allude to a sense of surprise towards the event unfolding. The prolonged "ooooo" that we see in each case, often accompanied by additional utterances, is suggestive of a surprised or shocked reaction to the event. However, as suggested by Goffman (1978), and built upon by Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2006) the "exclamatory imprecations" (Goffman, 1978:798) or reaction tokens (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006) are not necessarily involuntary emotional responses, but interactionally organised performances. We see in each case that reaction tokens are produced following a change in the ongoing activity. In extract 4.17 and 4.18 for instance, they are produced when the properties of the experience change – the planchette moves in a spiral rather than circle, and the table becomes more vigorous in its movement. The reaction tokens are therefore produced in context and evoke a 'feeling' towards the new activity, framing it as something that is surprising in the context of the business at hand. However, in

addition the reaction tokens are produced by more than one participant and are produced in a similar imitative way to the first. For example, in extract 4.16 and 4.18, the first "ooo" token (extract 4.16 (73), extract 4.18 (125)) is repeated by a different participant later in the conversational sequence (extract 4.16 (76), extract 4.18 (134)). Likewise, in extract 4.17 participants D, B and E all produce a "whooo" type sound in reaction to the Ouija Board at the same time (although D's turn is positioned slightly before the others). As such, co-participants appear to align their response to the event by producing an imitative sound based on the first speaker. In doing so they display a joint recognition that this change in activity is something that is significant, or indeed unusual. By producing imitative reaction tokens in response to a change in the activity, the group establish themselves as co-experiencers (similar to Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006, findings on co-cultural memberships). They have both recognised and reacted to the experience in the same way as others, and as such demonstrate their shared understanding and experience of the event.

Embodied talk and gesture do not only, therefore, highlight subjective experience and make their properties visible to others. By illustrating the properties of subjective experiences they also make these accessible to others, and as such invite others to share their understanding and experience of the event through talk and bodily conduct. For example, (as in extract 4.14) if a participant describes feeling cold in a particular area and illustrates this through their verbal reference, it becomes possible for others to understand the exact nature of the individual's experience. As a result, the experience and its properties becomes visible and relevant, and this provides a platform for other similar experiences to be shared and discovered. In addition as discussed, the experience of an ongoing event is shared by participants through reaction tokens that imitate and as such infer joint understanding of its qualities. By jointly recognising the changes in an activity as 'surprising' the group evoke unusual properties for an experience, and as such it becomes significant to the business at hand. Given the disputed nature of paranormal experiences, the potential to jointly discover and share experiences could be seen as essential in claiming validity of these – i.e. the same experience shared by several participants is more significant than that encountered by a single individual.

## 7.5 Shared Experience and the Epistemic Engine

As evidenced, through a sequence of verbal and visual actions participants are able to share and elicit co-participation in embodied events. However, whilst individuals evidence their co-participation through these actions there are occasions when epistemic tussles appear in the data. For instance, by returning to extract 4.15, it is interesting to note that after B's embodied reference A provides an assessment for the event (and potential identity for the spirit), a "child" (111). This turn seems somewhat odd following B's account, and embarks on a different type of activity – that of naming (Wooffitt, 1992). Furthermore, following C's uncertainty about the event (113), A produces overlapping talk during B's repeated embodied reference to it (115). This occurs as B produces her embodied gesture and states "th-" (presumably intended to be 'there'). A's turn again names the body parts that the event occurred on.

```
          Extract 4.15
          Scratching

105            (After 8s B turns quickly to look at A and then looks
106            down to her left. C follows her gaze)
107 A          yeh
108 B          I just felt          it's like some doing [that
109                                                      [(B strokes
110            Cs arm and then looks at A)
111 A          hh. Child                                                   <--
112 B          yeh:: [that [was weird
113 C                      [on your legs
114                  [(A nods at B)
115 B          no no like th-[ my yeh but it's all emm
116 A                        [hands and arms                               <--
117                     [(B stokes Cs arm again)
118 A          I just felt it on [there
119                              [(A strokes her own left hand)
```

The production of naming turns by A whilst relevant to the interaction, are somewhat out-of-place given the trajectory established through B's embodied reference. However, through their production they do imply a knowledge about the event – i.e. that the spirit is a child, and that it touched B on the hands and arms. Wooffitt (1992) discusses naming in relevance to paranormal accounts, and discusses the delicacy with which naming is managed by the reporter when relating their experience. In many cases the reporter will refer to their experience as "it" happening, rather than naming it appropriately. Wooffitt argued that by naming an experience the reporter exhibits an epistemic stance towards the experience (i.e. they know what it is they encountered), and furthermore imply an ontological commitment towards it. By not naming the reporter is able to avoid some of the negative personal attributions that may be

associated with having a paranormal experience. In the case examined here, the opposite occurs in which a participant offers up a naming turn within a sequence of interaction. In doing so, they present themselves as knowledgeable, perhaps even more knowledgeable about the event, as they offer up not just a reference to the event but a categorisation of it – a child spirit touching their hands and arms. Indeed, it appears that A's turn is almost in contest with B's referral offering clear assessments in contrast to B's ambiguous reference to the event. Whereas B states, "it's like some doing that" (108), A follows with her assessment that it is a "child" (111). Likewise, when B states "no no like th-" (115) and strokes C's arm, A interrupts with "hands and arms" (116). In line 118, A produces an embodied reference and states that she also felt the touch, stroking her own left hand. It appears then that A shared the experience with B, or is at the very least a knowing participant in the event. As B is the first to produce a reference and is seemingly the one to have the experience, they claim primary epistemic rights to share and assess the event. As such, whilst A may also have access to the event, they are positioned as a secondary speaker (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). By producing naming turns, A is therefore able to upgrade her epistemic status towards the event and reassert her rights to assess it.  There is then evidence here that participants do not only want to be seen to be sharing an experience, but in some cases may compete for a primary epistemic status on the event (Heritage & Raymond, 2005).

In addition, the assertion of epistemic status towards an event appears to initiate further talk and action. Again, by returning to extract 4.13 following on from A's "it's chilly here" (64), several participants also offer up their own upgraded embodied experience. I states that she is "really cold here" (66), C then states that her "elbows really cold" (70), A remarks that she thinks the spirit is sitting between her an I and breathing on them (77), and D states that she got "an absolute shiver" (83). During these turns the experience is upgraded from a 'chilly' feeling to the event being 'really cold' to the point of causing D to physically 'shiver'. At the same time the chill shifts from being in a certain area, 'here', to an embodied feeling on a specific area of the body, to the spirit actually sitting between two members of the group and breathing on them.

Extract 4.13
Little Girl

```
63  B     can you run around the room for us [as fast as you can
64  A                                         [it's chilly here-      <--
65  A     it chilly here[ yeh yeh
66  I                   [I'm getting really cold here it's really-    <--
```

201

```
67                         [(I turns to A and then turns back to
68        centre)
69   I    cold
70   C    My elbows really cold[ on this side it has been fo[r        <--
71   B                         [hh hh                      [are-
72   B    you making us cold|
73   A                             [it's
74   I                             [it's
75                         [(I turns to area where A and B are
76         sitting)
77   A     I think she's sat next to us[I think she's breathing on-   <--
78                                      [(I turns away looking
79        scared)
80   A    our arm
81   I     oh god
82   B     okay well tha[t-
83   D                 [i just got the absolute shiver[when you-      <--
84                                                    [(K2
85        flickers to third light)
```

It would seem that the collaborative production of epistemic upgrades may, therefore, not only be a mechanism for individuals to exploit their knowledge status. When collaboratively produced, individual upgrades contribute to the trajectory of the overall understanding and experience of the event. Thus, the interpretation of an event is seen in the context of the upgraded turns – in this case a spirit that is able to physically impact and interact with the group (by causing them to shiver), and whom appears to be sitting with them. As Heritage (2012b) argues, the exploitation of epistemic status and stance within the interaction can initiate and expand sequences of interaction. Whilst it is clear in other sections of data that the epistemic engine is at work in the form described by Heritage (2012b), addressing the balance between K+ (knowing) and K- positions (not knowing) (for instance, extract 4.14). In the case examined here the epistemic engine is fuelled by escalating epistemic upgrades that initiate further interaction, and contribute to the social understanding of the event.


## 7.6 Producing Embodied Gestures to Illustrate External Events

In addition to producing gestures that display embodied events, the data also shows incidences where gesture is performed on the body, to illustrate an external event. For instance, in extract 4.19 the group use embodied gestures to illustrate the sound of the dog scratching which has become a focal point of the experience. In this extract several members of the group hear a noise that they perceive to sound like a 'dog scratching'. F is the first to verbalise a noticing of this (61), E responds by describing the sound as a 'dog scratching' (67), and during E's response two members of the group respond with

agreement 'mmms' (68, 69) (Jefferson, 1984). Following this, in line 70, E and B look towards each other, and B produces a scratching gesture with her arm and points. B then follows this by directing a question towards D, asking if the sound came from her (72). Before she reaches the end of her utterance and states "you" she points towards D, and then brings her hand back and produces a scratching gesture on herself as she says "like". In line 88, as B finishes her utterance and gesture (79) with "dat", E responds by also producing a similar scratching gesture on her left arm (82) whilst agreeing with B. At this point F also produces an agreeable "yeh" (81) as E produces the gesture.

Extract 4.19
Dog Scratching

```
61  F      what was that
62  B      do you[ (unknown)
63  G           [which is unusual because there's this[ theory-
64  U                                                       [mmm
65  G      [about  [universal langua[ge
66  B      [that
67  E            [I heard that then[ the dog [scratching
68  U                                  [mm
69  U                                         [mmmmmmmmm
70                                     [(E and B look
71         at each other, B scratches arm and points)           <--EG
72  B       yeh was tha- that was[n't you[  like
73  C                            [just wa[sn't you
74  D                                     [no
75                                   [(B points at D)
76                                        [(B makes         <--EG
77         scratching gesture)
78  F       I heard that[ tha[t aswe::ll
79  B                   [dat
80  E                       [yeh yeh like a [dog grooming chu [chu
81  F                                                          [yeh
82                          [(E makes dog grooming movements    <--EG
83         with left arm)
```

Figure 4.3 below shows the embodied illustrative gestures produced by both B (72) and E (80).

76: B makes scratching gesture

82: E makes dog grooming movements with left arm

72: "yeh was tha- that wasn't you like"

80: "yeh yeh like a dog grooming chu chu"
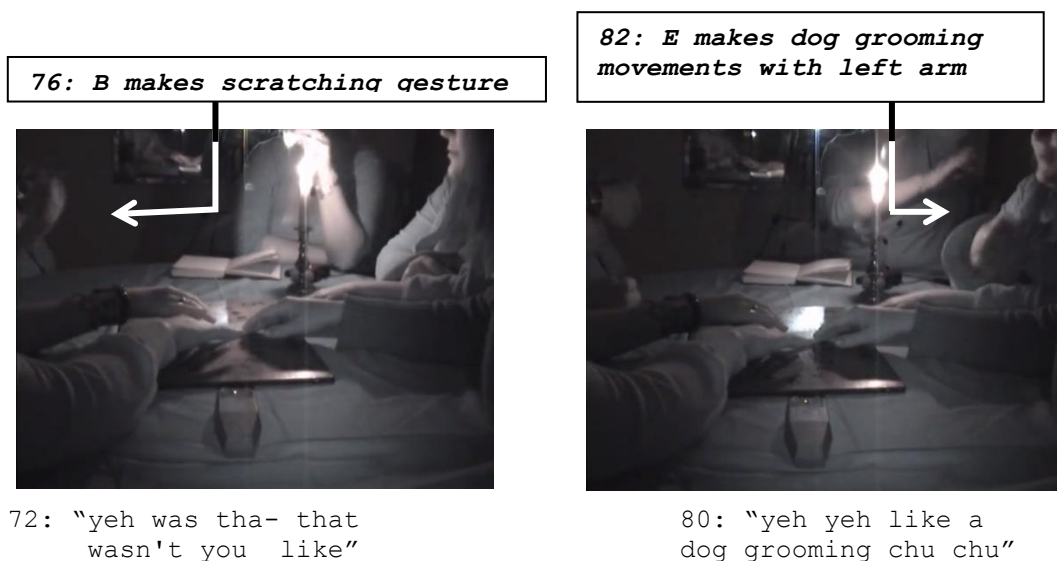
Although there is some agreement within the group that the sound was similar to a dog scratching/ grooming they continue to question the validity of the event, by questioning D. During this section E directs a statement towards D "we thought it was you scratching" (90), and as she produces the word "scratching", displays a similar scratching gesture to before on her arm. Likewise, shortly afterwards C states "like you went like that" (105) and as she states "like that" produces a scratching gesture on herself (107). At this point B also produces an agreeable "yeh" (106).

Extract 4.20
Dog Scratching

```
84  G      is it the board again?
85  B       no: it was like-[ it was like you hh hhh[h
86  E                                               [hh
87  D                                               [hh
88                          [(B points towards the area around D)
89          (B points to space at right of D)
90  E      we thought it was you[ scratching
91  C                           [yeh I'm sure it was [you scratching
92                                                    [(E makes
93          scratching motion on herself)                      <--EG
94                                                    [(C points at D)
95  C      yourself
96  D      no
97          (D puts hands down – B,C and E have returned to
98          previous positions)
99  B      did you hear it
100 D      no
101 B      really[ it was really lo[ud
102 D            [no
```

```
103 E                                        [yeh aye definitely yeah
104                                          [(E nods her head)
105 C      like you went[ like that
106 B                   [yeh
107                     [(C makes scratching gesture on herself)   <--EG
108 E      scratch your material what you got on
```

Within this data the group progress from an ambiguous noticing of the event "what was that" (61) to a point where they are largely in agreement regarding the nature of the experience – initially a dog scratching, and then D scratching herself. The participants use verbal descriptors alongside embodied gestures to illustrate the event to other members of the group, through producing scratching gestures on themselves, and in doing so obtain agreement through other participants about the properties of the experience. In this case three participants produce the scratching gesture, whilst they and others also produce agreeable verbal responses to these, displaying both agreement of the action in relation to the event and a shared understanding of it. In producing gestures, the properties of the event become visible and accessible to others, and as such provide an opportunity for a joint understanding of the event and its properties to occur. It should be noted that even though D denies scratching herself four times (74, 96, 100, 102), the group still request that she scratch the material that she has on (108), to prove that the sound did not come from her. The commitment by the group towards the properties of the experience (i.e. it sounded like D scratching their arm) is, therefore, strong enough at this point that they do not accept D's claim without an action to prove her deniability is acceptable.

Extract 4.21
Dog Scratching

```
109 F      yeh I definitely heard it as well
110 B      n[o it wasn't that it was like a dog
111 E       [no it wasn't that it was a [high pitched
112                                     [(E makes scratching      <--EG
113        gesture in the air)
114 B      [you right your right
115 E      [chu chu chu chu
116 F      it was lik[e
117 D                [there's movement outside the door
118                  [(F scratches the table)
```

Following D scratching her clothes, the group quickly assert that the experience was not D, and produces a scratching gesture in the air, rather than on her body (112). F follows this by also producing a scratching gesture on the table (118).

In this instance, the production of verbal descriptions and gestures on the body to

illustrate the properties of the event serves two functions. Firstly, it makes the event accessible to others participants by illustrating the properties of it, and as such provides the opportunity for others to demonstrate a shared understanding of the experience. This shared understanding is displayed not just through verbal agreement, but by other participants repeating the scratching gesture first produced by B. Secondly, by establishing the properties of the experience the event is framed in a particular way. At the beginning this is framed as a dog scratching (i.e. paranormal – there are no dogs in the room), and as the conversation about the event progresses as D scratching herself (a non-paranormal explanation). As the latter explanation would account for a non-paranormal explanation, if the properties of the experience agreed upon by the group were to match the sound of D scratching the material that she had on, then the experience would be categorised as such. However, when D does scratch her material and it is not the sound that the group have agreed upon, they are able to discount this possibility. As such, alternative (and potentially paranormal) explanations are returned to. It is worth noting, that the gestures that follow the agreement that the sound is not D are no longer produced on the body and instead occur in the air and on a table(113, 118).

As discussed in the above example, description of the event, alongside embodied gestures can therefore be used to illustrate the properties of an experience. In doing so the nature of the event becomes accessible to others, and as such can be jointly understood, experienced and framed in a particular way (i.e. paranormal or non-paranormal). To demonstrate this in a separate example, we will examine extract 4.22 below. In this particular extract, A notices a sound (22) and describes it as "another clock" (27), to which G responds by stating "it sounds like a proper clock" (28). Following this statement, A goes on to describe it as "a grandfather clock" (32).

Extract 4.22
Grandfather Clock

```
22  A     [What the fuck is that?
23  A     [(A winces whilst speaking. C and G look at A)
24        (Gauss meter can be heard increasing in the background)
25  C     [Ehh-
26        [(C shakes her head whilst looking at A)
27  A     That's another clock it's somewhere [else 'in it
28  G                                          [It sounds like a
29  G     proper clock
30                                             [(G and C look at each
31        other)
32  A     [It's a grandfather clock
```

```
33          [(G looks like listening intently, mouth slightly open)
```

Between lines 34 and 81 the group continue to discuss the significance of the grandfather clock sound, relating it back to an earlier experience with the Ouija Board where the letters 'GF' were produced (potentially indicating **g**rand**f**ather). However, in line 82, F interjects with a suggestion that it could be the 'other' clock which is in the room.[33]

Extract 4.23
Grandfather Clock

```
82  F      Are you sure it's not that [clock
83  C                                  [Dah- I've just been over to-
84  C      that clock it makes a sss a really qui[et tick (.) it's-
85  D                                            [you sure 'cause
86  C      not that one
87                                    [(C shakes her head and looks
88         towards OB. G stands up)
```

C mentions at this point about the "really quiet tick" (84) of the 'electric' clock which has been identified as potentially causing the noise. Following this, G stands up and walks over to where the 'real' clock is located. G then announces to the group that "it is the clock" (98). However, regardless of G being best positioned to validate the claim that the sound is indeed the 'electric' clock (non-paranormal), and not the ethereal grandfather clock (paranormal), this is not accepted by C who again refers to the "loud sound" (107) that she experienced, supposedly in contrast to the "quiet tick" (84) of the 'real' clock. A follows this by stating that the sound is in a different location (112) from the clock being examined by G, but also that she too experienced it as "a proper old boom boom boom". C joins in with A, producing overlapping talk to emphasise the "boom boom" (117) sound. Following this, A states "it's like a heart beat", and on the word heart beat gestures towards her heart.

Extract 4.24
Grandfather Clock

```
98  G    [It is the cloc[k                          it is the c[lock-
99  B                   [(unknown speech)                      no-
100 F                                                [Well
101      G    it's d- clock
102 F    yeah
103      (C leans behind E to whisper to F)
104 E    [It is the clock is it
105 B    [(unknown spee[ch)
106 C                  [I was just over there a minute ago but it-
```

---

[33] n.b. there is an electric clock on the wall in the room

```
107 C      wasn't making that loud sound
108 C    [Ca[use that's different before it was making a tick
109 B      [Lets put it out [(   )
110 G                      [I do ( )
111 A                        [No it's not the same it's(.) it's(.)
112 A    th[ere
113 C      [It is yeah
114      [(C shakes her head and A points to the right of camera.
115      C turns to look at where A is pointing)
116 A    It's like a proper old bo[om boom boom
117 C                             [boom boom
118 A    [It's like a[ heart beat
119 G    [Can I lift it down, can[ I lift it down
120 F                        [Yeah (0.5) [take it by all means
121 E                                    [yeah
122 A              [(A gestures to her heart)              <--EG
```

Figure 4.4 shows the embodied illustrative gesture produced by A towards her heart as she describes the sound as "like a heart beat" (118).

**Figure 4.4**
**Grandfather Clock: A gestures to heart**



*122: A gestures to her heart*
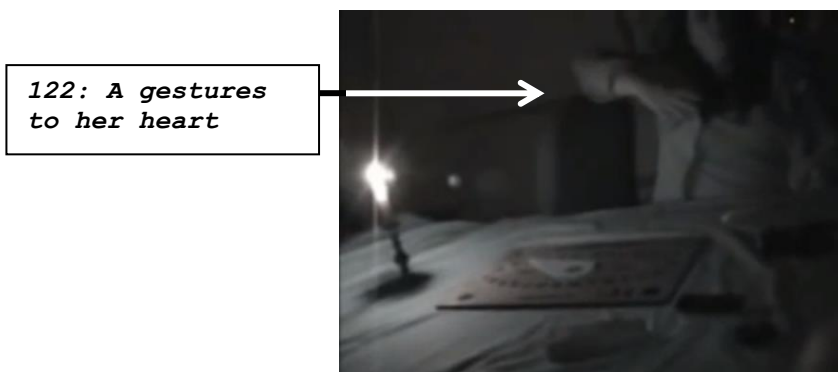
```
118: It's like a heart beat
```

Following the description and gesture provided by A and C, G takes the electric clock down and brings it over to the group to hear the noise for themselves. As she does this C, A and E all agree that it was not the sound that they heard, with C, E and then G again referring to the properties of the experience as being "louder" (132), "really loud"(135,136), and "very loud" (138), compared to the electric clock they have been presented with.

Extract 4.25
Grandfather Clock

```
128 C    It's[ not that
129 A        [It's not [no
130 E                  [No:: that wasn't I heard [either
131 C                                           [Di-d you hear
132 C    something louder than that
```

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```
133              [(A and C look at G and shake heads)
134 F    hhh[hhhhhhh hh      I'm not committing myself
135 E       [It was really loud yeh
136 E    Re[ally loud
137 D      [HH HHH HHH HHH HH
138 G    It was very loud I must say
```

In this instance then, like extract 4.19, the properties of the event are framed in a paranormal and non-paranormal narrative, and this is achieved through verbal description of the properties, but also visible gestures. In this case the gesture produced by A towards her heart emphasises the properties of the sound as being a "boom" rather than a "tick". Through exploration of the non-paranormal narrative, and its potential cause (in this case the electric clock), and by establishing a shared understanding of the properties of the event before exploration of the non-paranormal narrative (i.e. it is loud), the group are able to jointly establish the nature of the event. In both of the cases examined, the non-paranormal narrative is dismissed as it does not 'fit' with the shared understanding of the event that occurred. As such, a paranormal potential is established.


## 7.7 Informing Continued Interaction

In this chapter, we have discovered how embodied experiences are displayed and shared with other participants. Similarly, we have discussed how the nature of external events are made visible through gestures on and around the body. By sharing the properties of experiences the subjective and largely 'invisible' qualities of uncanny events, become accessible and visible to others, and as such enable others to produce verbal and visual actions to suggest that they are jointly experiencing the event too. By fostering social experience in this way the group are able to explore and discover the nature of events through paranormal and non-paranormal narratives. As such, the  paranormality of events is determined through the course of this narrative, and validation of the properties discussed and determined through multimodal action and discourse. In addition to this, the properties of the event established through this discourse become part of the continuing interaction for the group, particularly when a paranormal narrative is established. For example, when we look at the data extracts explored in this chapter, we can see how properties established through the course of interaction become embedded in the next sequence of interaction.

In extract 4.26 (Alley Cat), the group determine that C was touched inexplicably on his upper left arm. Following on from the conversation that brought them to this conclusion

and as such the 'closing' of an experience, A commences the next sequence of interaction by asking the spirit to also "touch" (94) her.

Extract 4.26
Alley Cat

```
91  A      Great hh. [Ummm okay would you be able- would you be-
92              [(All group members look towards centre and
93         put fingers on planchette)
94  A      able to to touch me Gurt- I'm not afraid
```

Likewise, in extract 4.27 (Scratching), when the group conclude C's experience of being touched on her arm, they refocus on the Ouija Board. A starts the next sequence of interaction by asking the spirit (using the Ouija Board) whether they "touched Rachael's arm" (121).

Extract 4.27
Scratching

```
121 A       is that you that just touched Rachael's arm?
122        (All focusing on board again)
```

In extract 4.28 (Munthob), the group conclude based on the external event of the Gauss Meter reacting to an unseen cause, and B's subjective experience, that the spirit must indeed be called Munthob. In line 145, C commences the next sequence of interaction by addressing the spirit directly as 'Munthob' whilst the group again refocus on the Ouija Board.

Extract 4.28
Munthob

```
138 C    [I guess his names Munthorp
139      [(B looks at C and then OB)
140 B    [Let's carry on then shall we
141      [(B looks at paper)
142 C    [Yep
143      [(C moves back in chair, leans towards OB and puts
144      finger on glass)
145 C    Okay Munthorp[ well nice to meet you
146 A              [It says [Mun Munthob
147                      [(A looks at C, C looks at A)
148 C    [Munthob
```

Finally, following on from the discussion about the nature of the 'clock sound' encountered by the group, in extract 4.29 (Grandfather Clock). G suggests that they "get this guy going"(152), referring to the spirit. She then reaffirms that the group agree that it is a male spirit based on the assumption that the spirit may be someone's 'Grandfather' established through the properties of the experience encountered (i.e. it was the sound of

a grandfather clock and not the electric clock), and this is confirmed by C (161).

Extract 4.29
Grandfather Clock

```
152 G     [Okay[ (0.5) lets get this guy[ going do we think this-
153 F         [(unknown speech)
154 A                                  [Let move(?) this cause it's
155 G      a man                    yeh
156      A     jus- it's just bu[zzing
157 C                            [umm::
158      [(G looks at OB. C followed by E and then G put fingers
159      on OB)
160 G     Do we think this is a man?
161 C     I think this is a man
162 G     Okay umm::
```

As such, it can be seen that by establishing the properties of an event, the group are not only able to frame the experience as paranormal or non-paranormal. The properties also enable the interaction to continue and evoke further co-participation in the activity of looking for, making sense of and discovering paranormal events.

## 7.8 Embodied Experience as a Resource for Mitigating Non-responses

In addition to informing continued interaction there is evidence to suggest that producing talk about embodied experiences may also act as a resource to mitigate non-response from a spirit. Given that the activity of communicating with spirit relies on their presence, a non-response is potentially problematic. It could imply that the spirit is either ignoring the request, unable to respond or is simply just not there. As such, the interaction and activity the group are participating in is put in jeopardy. However, as demonstrated in the extracts below the expression of an embodied experience may help in navigating these potentially troubling moments in interaction by shifting the focus of attention. This presents parallels to studies on medium-sitter interactions, in which topical shifts are produced by mediums following potential trouble in the relevance of the information they have offered to the sitter (Wooffitt, 2006). In such cases, mediums evidently shift a topic from the trouble talk, to a new topic producing a turn that is repair-orientated. In doing so the medium is able to manage potential threats to their authenticity and credibility that may arise through invalid information.

In the extracts presented here, shifts towards embodied experience talk often occur when a relatively significant period of time has elapsed between a request to the spirit,

and a non-response. For instance in extract 4.30, participant A asks the spirit if it would like the group to "go" (4). After a period of 10 seconds, B states that she is "feeling really cold" (7).

Extract 4.30
Dog Scratching

```
1   A      Can you move it to the candle for yes or away from the
2   A      candle for no
3          (3.0s)
4   A      Would you like us to go
5          (10.0s)
6          (B grasps her right arm with her left hand after 8s)
7   B      I'm feeling really cold [just here  its
8                                  [(B waves her hand in front of
9          her above her right arm)
```

In extract 4.31, after the spirit is asked if they are "still here" (102), using the Ouija Board. After 8 seconds B produces a shift in gaze (105). This is followed by her expression of an embodied experience of being touched on the arm (108).

Extract 4.31
Scratching

```
102 B       are you still here
103 A      [(unknown whisper)
104        [(A looks at B)
105        (After 8s B turns quickly to look at A and then looks
106        down to her left. C follows her gaze)
107 A       yeh
108 B       I just felt           it's like some doing[that
109                                                    [(B strokes
110        Cs arm and then looks at A)
```

Additionally, in extract 4.32 below, a shift towards embodied experience can be seen when a potentially troublesome request is presented to the spirit – to run around the room. In this particular case, other than the spirit proceeding to fully manifest and run around the room, the ability for the group to know whether this has occurred is limited. However, in line 64, A produces overlapping talk at the same time as B continues her request, stating that it is "chilly here". This is proceeded by several other members of the group also stating that they are feeling cold. By presenting potential evidence of a spirit response through the form of an embodied experience, A and those that follow, are able to mitigate the trouble that B's initial request could engender.

Extract 4.32
Little Girl

```
63  B      can you run around the room for us   [as fast as you can
64  A                                           [It's chilly here-
```

```
66  I                        [I'm getting really cold here it's really-
67                           [(I turns to A and then turns back to
68         centre)
69  I      cold
```

In each instance, following a period of non-response to the request for a spirit to produce a particular activity – in each case interacting with the Ouija Board – an embodied experience is presented by a member of the group. Whilst it is not possible to authenticate the claims of embodied experience, it is interesting to note that the presentation of an embodied claim at moments of trouble provides continued evidence of spirit presence. As such, embodied experience with spirit may be recruited as a resource for displaying continued access to the spirit and the relevant experiences this infers. Thus, the activity of communicating with spirit remains relevant.

## 7.9 Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored how experiences that are subjective, and therefore hidden from the social gaze, are made visible and relevant through embodied talk and action.  Paranormal experiences are inherently seen as subjective, and as such a response to, and acknowledgement of experience is perceived as immediate and reactionary. However, the data analysed in this section suggests that the disclosure of a subjective experience may be organised with and within talk to engender co-participation in the discovery of the event, and evoke a shared understanding of its properties. As vom Lehn (2006b) suggests the display of experience does not necessarily reflect internal, subjective experience but is "produced in the light of the presence of others" (p.1352). This also supports studies that have shown the organisational accomplishments of embodied talk and gesture to display internal feelings such as suffering (Heath, 1989; Heath, 2002), and gustoral pleasure (Wiggins, 2010). As such, a subjective experience whilst occurring on or in the body, is displayed and transposed to others through embodied talk and gesture. In doing so the properties of an experience (i.e. where it occurred) are made visible and shared with others. Thus, enabling these properties to be understood and shared by the group, shifting the experience from individual to social. Additionally, when the validity of the experience is questioned, repeating embodied gestures aids in confirming these properties and as such framing them within a normal/ paranormal paradigm.

In chapter 6, we discussed how empty spaces become visible and relevant through

verbal and bodily action. Through these actions a 'way of seeing' an event is established, and as such the group understand and discover it in relation to its paranormal status. Similarly, the properties of a subjective experience are accomplished through talk and embodied tactile and deictic gestures to both locate the experience on the body, and infer from this unusual properties (i.e. a participant is touched on the arm when there is no (living) person present to cause this). In addition, as we discovered in extract 4.10, facial gestures and reaction tokens situated within talk, enable experiences 'in' the body and their potential cause, to be expressed and shared. By sharing the properties of an experience participants evoke a way of seeing the event, and as such frame it in relation to its paranormal status and the on-going participation in, and discovery of paranormal events.

# Chapter Eight

# Discussion

## 8.1 Introduction

This final section will review the findings from the four empirical chapters presented in this thesis. It will then go on to discuss these findings in relation to their contribution towards understanding collective paranormal experiences. Furthermore, it will discuss some of the broader implications of these findings in relation to work in the field of conversation analysis and social interaction more broadly. Finally, this chapter will reflect upon the methodological approach taken during this study, and provide some considerations of limitations and potential further avenues of inquiry.

The aim of this research study has been to develop an understanding of how ostensibly paranormal experiences in the context of Modern Paranormal Groups, emerge from and are shared by, collective group practices. By examining these experiences as they occur the purpose of this study has been to describe the multimodal activities produced by individuals during a paranormal event. It is worth stating here, that the aim of this project was not to assess the ontological reality of such claims or to imply that individuals achieve certain ends through these practices, but to observe these implicit actions and the relevant next turns that they engender. Through this it has been possible to develop an understanding of the interactive resources used by individuals as and when an experience occurs, and the relevant next actions that invite others to co-participate, co-produce and see uncanny events in certain ways.

In chapter 4, a single case was examined to identify relevant sequences of interaction for further analysis. Through the examination of the "Ally Cat" case it became evident that paranormal events in the context of MPGs are managed through socially organised practices. From this initial analysis three analytical themes emerged, and have been used to inform the subsequent analytical chapters. These three themes focused on; socially organised practices for disclosing experiences, establishing the extraordinary character of individual and group experience, and making visible embodied experiences.

In chapter 5, the ways in which individuals refer to and disclose an event in the environment was examined. In this section several extracts of data were analysed at the point an event commences – at least in terms of it becoming part of the dialogue and interaction between the group members. It is argued that individuals frequently produce a first noticing of an event through a "that"-type question, and through the linguistic formulation of this turn engender particular types of response. In addition, it is discussed that the use of the word 'that' within the context of this particular reference gives it a certain transgressive quality, and thus the way that an event is seen by others from the production of a first noticing is shaped in a particular way – as potentially paranormal. Finally, this chapter also examined the role that gaze and gesture have in this noticing sequence, enabling individuals to establish co-participation in the production of their account.

Chapter 6 examined how the group reach a collective understanding that the experience encountered is paranormal, and not normal. In particular, this section analysed the role that situating experiences in 'empty space' has on the status that the experience acquires. By positioning an event in an empty space, void of 'natural' causes, it engenders further unusual properties (i.e. there is nothing ordinary in the space that could have caused it to happen, and as such it becomes seen as extraordinary). It is argued that the group render these spaces visible through a series of multimodal practices and through this elicit talk about not only where the event occurred, but also its relevant situated features. This is achieved through the co-production of talk, gaze and deictic gesture towards a particular point in the local milieu.

Finally in chapter 7, the practice of embodied gesture and talk is discussed. Through this analysis it is evident that embodied action is a frequent activity during both the experiencing and account of paranormal events. It is observed that embodied action in this particular context is not simply reactionary to an event, but can be seen to be produced in the presence of others. Given the subjective nature of a number of paranormal experiences, embodied action, provides a resource to display and transpose these events to others, and as such invite others to share and see them in certain ways. Thus, a private experience can be understood and shared socially. In the data extracts examined by producing embodied talk and gesture individuals were able to display their own experience, evoke a particular way of seeing it, and invite others to produce talk

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that renders the experience relevant to the group's activity. Furthermore, as in chapter 6, by displaying certain actions on the body individuals are able to show the location and features of the event, and through this engender a paranormal rather than normal potential for it.

As such, this research makes the case that a collective paranormal event is not simply experienced and seen by participants through an individual gaze, but becomes understood and co-experienced through organised social practices. From the initial noticing of an event, through to the discovery and identification of its features, as well as its classification as paranormal, individuals produce talk and action that are designed to be seen and responded to by others. Thus, the experience of an individual in the context of a collective paranormal event is one that can be seen as a socially constructed.

## 8.2 The Paranormal Event as a Socially Constructed Experience

At the beginning of this thesis we discussed that the academic approach to studying the paranormal has been largely dominated by parapsychological studies which probe the cognitive and psychological features of such claims (see for instance, Glickson, 1990; Hough & Rogers, 2007; Irwin, 1990; Palmer & Neppe, 2004; Thalbourne, 1994). Those studies that have ventured into the field of sociological thought have primarily focused on macro-level interests. There has, however, been an increasing interest in the opportunities that studying paranormal experiences at an interactional level can afford, with researchers such as Markovsky and Thye (2001), and Wooffitt (1991, 1992) calling for micro-level sociological study of these events. This thesis provides clear support of this approach, and has revealed a number of allusive features of paranormal experience that support the notion that these events are socially constructed. This is not to discount or discredit the ontological reality of such claims, but to provide evidence to show that in a group setting, individuals highlight events and determine their categorisation as normal or paranormal, through socially organised practices. Previous studies have discussed the social production of knowledge about, and experience of, the paranormal at a macro level (Hess, 1994; Westrum, 1997, 1998). However, through the use of a CA informed approach this study offers new insights into the social production of paranormal knowledge and experience in real-life settings and at a micro level. In this final discussion, the findings from this study will be discussed in the context of how

paranormal events are constructed through social action. In the first section, how paranormal events and their features are made visible and relevant to others will be discussed. This is followed, secondly, by looking at how the production of transgressive talk and action lead to the categorisation of an event as paranormal or normal. Finally, this section will discuss how the self is managed during paranormal events, and how the epistemic status of both speakers and hearers is negotiated during these occurrences.

### 8.2.1 Seeing and sharing paranormal events as a collective

*"Surely there had been no figure leaning on the back of his chair; no face looking over it. It is certain that no gliding footstep touched the floor, as he lifted up his head, with a start, and spoke. And yet there was no mirror in the room on whose surface his own form could have cast its shadow for a moment; and, Something had passed darkly and gone!"*

- Charles Dickens, The Haunted Man

By their very nature, paranormal events and their associated entities (i.e. ghosts, spirits), are considered to have an insubstantial or spectral form. They rarely appear as a solid, tangible presence, and more often are seen as a fleeting vision, or 'ghostly' figure. As demonstrated in the activities examined in this thesis the paranormal experiences reported are intangible in nature, manifesting as unusual sounds, feelings or momentary visions. There is often no clear or easily observable feature within the environment which can be used as a point of reference to locate and recognise the experience. It is interesting then to question how individuals come to share their experiences, and indeed invite others to co-participate in them. Through the analytical findings of this study it is argued that we have come some way to revealing the interactive features that facilitate this.

The findings from this study show that in the context of MPGs participants refer to paranormal events in ambiguous ways. In each of the extracts examined a reference made to an event engenders a 'vagueness' occasioned by the presence of a *that*-type question. It is argued that by producing these references speakers highlight an event in the local milieu and invite others to notice and co-participate in further talk and action that discovers the relevancy and features of an event. The findings suggest, *that*-type questions, are designed with the epistemic status of both the speaker and others in mind.

Thus, in the first question examined (*'what that'*) the speaker orientates to the potential that the event is shared, this being established through the event's distinctive qualities or the noticeable gaze shifts produce by others. In this instance the speaker invites further discussion through a wh-type question (Perakyla & Vehvilainen, 2003), and as such is able to initiate a sequence of interaction to collaboratively discover what 'that' may be. In addition, when there is an uncertainty about the epistemic status of others (whether or not they noticed the event) a typical polar question is designed to invite confirmation of this. The potential relevant responses are then confined to a 'yes' or 'no' answer (Lee, 2015), and as observed in chapter 5 both of these responses are evident. However, of particular note is the production of a 'no' answer. If a negative response is received (i.e. others did not share in the experience), speakers regularly expand their third turn with a negative interrogative and upgrade their 'knowing' status with a description of the events features. It is, therefore, argued that questions designed to invite a polar response allow for an event and its features to be shared regardless of whether others have noticed it. Finally, speakers also produce questions that display their noticing of an event whilst mitigating against the possibility that it could have a normal explanation. Thus, they are able to highlight an event, whilst displaying their own status as a speaker that 'knows' there is a possibility that it could be non-paranormal. These findings, therefore, suggest that speakers delicately construct turns to display that they have noticed a paranormal event. These turns are sensitive to the epistemic status of both the speaker and others, and are designed to elicit sequences of talk that collaboratively establish the relevancy and understanding of an event.

Previous studies, predominantly in the field on linguistics, have examined the use of 'that' as a form of demonstrative reference (see Scott, 2008; Strauss, 2002). In this context, *that* is treated as a form of demonstrative that has the potential to refer to any number of potential references. Thus, it is suggested that individuals come to an understanding of what referent is being discussed as a result of its distinctive or out of place qualities (Ariel, 1990; Fillmore, 1997; Grudel, Hedburg & Zacharski, 1993; Scott, 2008), or accompanying gestures (Scott, 2008; Strauss, 2002). Given the allusive nature of paranormal events the ability to highlight the exact nature of the referent is somewhat hindered. Unlike the examples drawn upon in the studies mentioned the ability to point towards or see a referent based on its distinctive characteristics is somewhat harder to achieve. However, the findings from this study suggest that despite this challenge individuals employ a number of interactional resources to render paranormal events and

their features visible and intelligible to others. As evidenced in the analysis, following on from a *that* reference individuals come to collectively understand the event and its relevant features through a series of multimodal actions between co-participants, objects and the local milieu. This is achieved in several ways.

Firstly, it is evident through the analysis that individuals come to collectively see events in a particular space through the production of talk, gaze shifts and deictic gestures. By positioning the event in space, notably an empty space, individuals create a domain of scrutiny within which the categorisation of the event and its features can be accomplished. Secondly, the features of an event are collaboratively achieved through the production of verbal descriptions (occasionally mimicking the event) and iconic gestures. These forms of referential and illustrative practice occur within a broader framework of interaction in which talk, the body, objects and the local milieu are used to render a paranormal event and its features intelligible. As such, this study supports the growing body of literature that has considered the organisation of multimodal action in the production of collaborative activity (Heath, 2002; Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000; Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007; vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b).

Furthermore, this study has explored how private experiences are made public, and through this become part of the group's collaborative activity. These findings suggest that whilst a response to a private experience may be considered an immediate reaction or response there is evidence to suggest that these are organised with and within talk. In doing so, speakers invite co-participation in the discovery of the experience, and through embodied talk and action evoke a shared understanding of its properties (supporting previous studies by researchers such as Heath (1989, 2002) and Wiggins (2010)). Thus, whilst embodied paranormal experiences may initially be private to the individual they are experienced, accounted for and displayed in the presence of others who are invited to share and make sense of it in the light of these actions. In doing so, embodied experiences do not simply become understood by others but, as demonstrated through the analysis, may inform the trajectory of future sequences of interaction. For instance, the findings suggest that they may initiate the production of further embodied talk and action, escalate experiences, mitigate against the absence of an external event and inform the context of continued activity.

Thus, paranormal events whether experienced in the external environment or in the body are made relevant and visible to others through verbal and visual action. These actions are organised within talk to evoke the collective discovery of an event, from its first noticing through to the establishment of its features and its position in the local milieu. As such, paranormal events are seen, understood and, as will be discussed in the proceeding section, categorised, through socially organised practices.

### 8.2.2 Becoming paranormal: transgressive talk and action

Many of the experiences presented in this research are capable of having, in normal circumstances, rational causes. For instance, the ticking in the 'Grandfather Clock' extract could be considered to be just another other clock in the room, or the loud noise in 'Tolbooth Bang' could be accounted for by an object being knocked over. However, in these instances the group attach a paranormal, rather than normal, rationale to them. The analysis of these extracts presents a case to suggest that the collective understanding that the event is paranormal, or at least engenders paranormal qualities, is achieved through socially-organised communicative practises.

In chapter 5 it is discussed that the potential for an event to be categorised as paranormal is first presented during the *that*-type question. It is suggested that selecting the word 'that', instead of providing an identity for the event, has interactional implications. As discussed, a 'that' turn through its question format engenders certain next turns which invite the collective discovery of what 'that' could be. However, it is also argued that the selection of the word 'that' implies transgressive qualities to the event. At the very least, the ambiguous quality of 'that' combined with a lack of categorisation of the event, and the disjunctive and somewhat urgent ways it is produced at least imply unusual properties to it. This finding compliments previous research by Jackson (2013) who presents the argument that by 'not-naming' when producing a demonstrative (i.e. using man or woman, instead of their names when these are known) individuals can inferentially imply hostility and distance towards the referent. In the context of this research, the selection of the demonstrative 'that' and the implications of not-naming inferentially imply transgressive qualities. However, similar to Jackson's (2013) work it also provides distance between the speaker and their categorisation of the referent which as discussed in the proceeding section provides a resource for managing their identity as an 'experiencer'. In addition, and as discussed, these turns are often

accompanied by transgressive words, or surprise tokens. As previously discussed, Wilkinson & Kitzinger (2006) have observed the interactional achievement of surprise during conversation, and argue that surprise is often set up in the course of talk. They do, however, observe accounts in which the topic of surprise is set up by the speaker rather than situations in which the surprise is unexpected in the course of interaction. This study, therefore, argues that surprise tokens in the context of a paranormal event can also be used to engender a shared understanding of its properties – as sudden and unexpected. As such, surprise tokens and the visual actions that often accompany them (i.e. jumping, looking fearful) set up a way of seeing and understanding an event.

Further, beyond rendering events visible through deictic talk and action as discussed in the previous section, by positioning events in an 'empty space' an additional inexplicability is also engendered. These spaces become seen and understood through collective talk and action as the group come to discover the event from its uncategorised state of 'that', through to the discovery of the event and its features in the environment. Thus, if the features of an event, for example a large bang, are not accounted for in the space the group have made relevant, transgressive qualities are implied. Previous studies have discussed how features of the environment are made visible and seen in particular ways (Heath & Hindmarsh, 1999; Heath, Luff & Svensson, 2009; vom Lehn 2006a), these findings add to this research, and suggest that the interactional space is not only produced between co-participants but embedded in the inferential practices designed to discover new features in the local milieu.

Thus, the transgressive qualities of an event are not immediately realised by an individual or group, indeed findings suggest (as explored below) that an immediate categorisation of an event as paranormal is avoided. Instead, events are rendered paranormal through transgressive talk and action. Events are referred to ambiguously and the group are invited to collectively discover the features of them. Furthermore, participants jointly establish the location of an event and its relevant features through deictic talk and action, and in doing so collectively discover its paranormal potential. As such, groups co-produce a paranormal narrative for events through these verbal and visual actions.

### 8.2.3 Paranormal events and presentation of the self

In Wooffitt's (1991, 1992) study into accounts of paranormal experiences he discusses a feature of conversation that was prominent within his analysis, which he terms the "I was just doing X when Y" device. As described in his work when giving accounts of paranormal events, individuals will often describe ordinary activities that took place before the experience. Through the production of this device Wooffitt argues that individuals can present their paranormal account whilst maintaining the identity of an 'ordinary person'. Thus, he suggests that identity is used as a pragmatic resource during the production of these accounts. Within the data analysed for this thesis there is evidence to suggest that management of identity and how the self is presented during an experience, is also orientated to as an event occurs. This is interesting as unlike an account produced after the event in which the individual has time to shape and construct their narrative to manage their identity. In the case of an event 'in the moment', the individual is subjected to a situation where production of an account is expected at the time it occurs. However, as will be discussed individuals draw upon various resources to manage their status as an 'experiencer', particularly when the validity of their claim is brought into contest.

As discussed in Chapter 5, speakers orientate to different types of 'that'-type question during a noticing, and in doing so engender different types of next response. Through the selection of a question format, these findings also suggest that speakers present their own epistemic stance of the event, but also orientate to the perceived epistemic stance of others. A "what was that" type question assumes a shared experience, but presents the speakers stance as unknowing. A "did you that" type questions is set up in a typical polar question format (Lee, 2015; Heritage & Raymond, 2003) inviting a 'yes' or 'no' response, and as such a shared experience is not assumed. However, when a negative response is received, it is typical for a negative interrogative question to follow (i.e. "did you not that"). These turns are also often followed by a further description of the features of the event, and in doing so the speaker upgrades their stance to one of a knowing participant, regardless of the negative response previously received. As such, they determine epistemic authority on the event and display their knowledge as an experiencer. Finally, the "was that you" question identifies an event, but displays an epistemic uncertainty about its cause (i.e. it could have been caused by a group member). Similar to the "what was that" question it assumes that others experienced the

event, but by displaying an epistemically weak stance regarding the event the speaker mitigates their status as a 'knowing' participant. Thus, if the event was caused by another participant the speaker has displayed their knowledge of this, whilst at the same time if there is no explanation the speaker has still been able to notice and draw attention to a potentially paranormal event.

It is, therefore, argued that these findings show that speakers carefully negotiate their own status as a speaker during the production of a turn which references a paranormal event. The 'that'-type question, is not only produced to engender next turns that orientate to the speakers noticing, but through its linguistic format presents an assumption about the 'shared' nature of the event and positions the speaker so that their status as an 'experiencer' can be mitigated through the talk that follows. As such, their noticing of an event whether it is paranormal or not is seen to be established through the social practices that follow, and not on individual terms. In both the "what was that" and "was that you" questions, the speaker assumes the experience to be shared but the nature of the event, paranormal or not, remains open to the interactive processes that follow (although as discussed transgressive qualities are implied). The "did you that" question does not assume a shared experience, and when a negative response is received this is mitigated by the very fact that others did not experience the event, but the speaker did, and as such they claim epistemic rights to discuss its relevance as paranormal or not. Wooffitt (1992) discusses that the naming of experiences is often omitted from paranormal accounts with speakers referring to these events as "it" or "thing" (see Woods & Wooffitt, 2014). This, he argues, is used as a resource to distance themselves from an ontological commitment towards their experience which may imply possible negative personal attributions. The findings of this study suggest that this is also seen as an experience occurs with an event being referred to as 'that', and this is delicately managed by the speaker. In all cases the categorisation of the event is not implied by the speaker, and others are invited to co-participate in establishing what 'that' might be. At no point does the speaker immediately state a paranormal cause, and as such it is suggested that speakers avoid individual categorisation in favour of a collective understanding of the event and its features. The findings also suggest that beyond protecting the speakers status, questions are also produced with a sensitivity to others stance as an 'experiencer' in the event. Paranormal events are, therefore, not simply decided as such from the moment they occur, or at least are not presented as such, but are derived from the organised social practices of the group.

In addition, in chapter 7 it is also discussed that beyond the initial noticing of an event speakers apply epistemic upgrades to their description of the event to claim primary epistemic rights to the experience. The epistemic tussles that appears to occur between speakers as they claim their own experience and interpretation of the event not only enables participants to exploit their knowledge status as an 'experiencer', but also as demonstrated provides a trajectory for the overall collective understanding and experience of it. The event itself, becomes seen in the context of the upgraded turns. Thus, these findings suggest that the exploitation of epistemic status and stance during the production of paranormal accounts initiates and expands sequences of interaction. As such, these findings contribute to research into the workings of epistemics during conversation and suggests that in addition to the epistemic engine described by Heritage (2012b), epistemic upgrades can be used to initiate further interaction, and contribute to the collective understanding of an event.

Thus, these findings suggest that in accordance with the findings of Wooffitt (1992) during the production of paranormal accounts speakers delicately negotiate their status as an 'experiencer' through talk that is designed to manage their identity. In contrast, this study examines events as they occur 'in the moment' and as a collective. However, it is observed that speakers still employ resources such as 'not-naming' and through this create a distance between themselves and the event. In addition, findings suggest that speakers evoke collaborative discovery of an event and its features as a mechanism for mitigating their status as an individual 'experiencer' and design turns to engender relevant next turns. These turns are sensitive to epistemic status of both the speaker and the rest of the group, and produced to manage the epistemic stance of the speaker as 'knowledgeable' about the event. Indeed, it is also observed that epistemic tussles also arise during the collective discovery of an event, and it is suggested that this helps to drive the trajectory of interaction. In conclusion, these findings reveal that the production of a turn that references or accounts for a paranormal event is designed to manage the identity of the speaker. Through the construction of turns speakers invite the collective, rather than individual, discovery of an event and its features whilst still presenting themselves as a 'knowing' participant. Thus, the trajectory of interaction that informs paranormal events are driven by an incentive to manage the presentation of the self through collective accomplishments.

*8.2.4 Summary*

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that regardless of the additional factors that may be considered to influence paranormal events, be that ontological or psychological concerns. In the context of MPGs (regardless of the investigative approach adopted by the group), when paranormal events are experienced as a collective they are noticed, their features established, and their status as paranormal, are determined by organised social practices. Events are noticed, talked about and displayed in the presence of others, and through this invite relevant next turns that co-produce the nature and features of it. Turns are constructed to invite these next turns, but also to engender certain qualities to the event and are sensitive to the speakers status and future trajectory of the interaction. As such, the very nature of an event, what it is and how it is experienced, is established through these social practices.

## 8.3 Contributions to Conversation Analysis and Social Interaction Studies

*8.3.1 Demonstratives & referential practice*

It has been discussed that studies into the interactional accomplishments that can be achieved through demonstratives, such as the word *that*, have been relatively minimal. Research that has been carried out in this area has largely been dominated by linguistic enquiry. Previous studies have focused on the contrastive relationship between *this*, *that* and *those,* and proximal and distal relationship between them (Filmore, 1987; Scott, 2013). From these studies, in contrast to *this* which often refers to referents in close proximity and in the context of talk, it is argued that the deictic nature of *that* is more pronounced, and through this requires more interpretive work to be carried out to establish the nature of what *that* is referring to. As such, one of the main concerns of linguistics in this area has been to make sense of how individuals arrive at a joint understanding of what *that* may be. However, it is argued that much of this work has been focused on the pragmatics of demonstratives using invented sentences in which particular demonstratives may be used (for example, Acton & Potts, 2014; Gundel *et al*, 1988). However, Enfield (2003) calls for the study of demonstratives in naturally occurring conversation which he develops in his analysis of the Lao language. His findings suggest that demonstratives should be considered not just in environmental

space, but interactional space where things like objects, gesture, gaze, body orientation and the relationship between these are all significant in the production of a demonstrative utterance.

It is argued, that the findings from this research go some way to extending our understanding of the use of demonstratives during interaction. Like Enfield (2003), this work supports the study of demonstratives with a consideration for interactional space. As seen in this analysis, demonstratives are accomplished alongside gaze, deictic gestures and body orientation through which an understanding of events are realised. Furthermore, this research provides support for the work of Jackson (2013) who suggests that the use of demonstratives as a resource for 'not-naming'. In the context of this research, the 'not-naming' inferentially implies potential transgressive qualities for the event referred too. Indeed, it could be suggested that the context of this study, and the ambiguous form that the events being referred to embody, provides a rich environment in which to study the use of demonstratives. In this particular study, we are able to see not only how individuals collectively make sense of an object or thing in the environment, but that thing is intangible. Thus, this research provides a somewhat extreme example in which individuals come to understand an event which is potentially unobservable and often highly subjective. However, as this analysis shows by employing a 'that' demonstrative, alongside visual action, individuals are able to render events visible to others and engender certain next actions that inferentially deduce what 'that' is.

Furthermore, whilst some work has made progress on the production of deictic gestures alongside verbal references such as "there" and "here" (Enfield, Kita & Ruiter, 2007), this research contributes to discussions concerning how individuals come to arrive at a particular domain of scrutiny (Goodwin, 2003). The findings suggest that deictic gestures produced alongside verbal references form part of a larger framework of interaction within which participants shift their gaze, produce demonstrative utterances and orientate their own and others attention to a space through deictic action. In addition, referential action as demonstrated in this context can do more than just align the attention and co-participation of individuals towards a space, through these actions a space can be made to be seen in a particular way. Thus, through the identification of particular features made visible through referential talk and action individuals are encouraged to see and understand events in particular ways. This research therefore

extends our understanding of the ways that individuals share and understand the environment and its relevant features, extending and complimenting recent studies which have implied the importance of referential action in this process (see Goodwin, 1994; vom Lehn, Heath & Hindmarsh, 2001; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b).

### 8.3.2 Embodied practice

There has been an increasing interest in recent years into the relevance of embodied action in a range of settings. These studies have provided valuable insight into the role of the body during interaction analysing its use as a resource for demonstrating subjective feelings, exaggerating verbal descriptions, displaying emotion and exhibiting joint understanding. This research provides further insight into the role of embodied action within a setting where private and subjective experience is common. Vom Lehn (2006b) suggests that subjective experience is "produced in the light and presence of others" (p.1352), and the findings from this research would support this claim. Embodied action, it is argued, has an important role to play in accomplishing a shared understanding of an event. Individuals display and transpose internal feelings to others through embodied talk and action (an observation discussed by Heath in his studies of doctor-patient consultations (Heath, 1989, 2002)). This is achieved by producing deictic and tactile action on both their own bodies and others. In doing so, they are able to share the features of an experience, infer relevant qualities to it and enable others to jointly experience a previously private event. Additionally, they regularly produce embodied gestures to accompany verbal descriptions of the features of an external event (such as the heart beat gesture in the 'Grandfather Clock' transcript). As such, individuals are able to highlight and display the relevant properties of an event to others and engender a shared understanding of it in relation to these features. Thus, this research substantiates claims that embodied talk and  action is used in collaborative settings to display and engender a joint understanding of an experience (or activity) and its features (supporting recent work by Goodwin, 2000; Heath, 2002; Hindmarsh & Pilnick, 2007; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b; Wiggins, 2010).

### 8.3.3 The work of epistemic talk and the trajectory of interaction

In earlier discussions, the role of epistemics was raised in relation to how speakers

manage their stance in the production of a paranormal account. In addition, it was mentioned that epistemic tussles often arise in the data, escalating the experience and initiating further sequences of talk. The importance of epistemics within conversation has received attention from several researchers who have examined issues in relation to epistemic primacy (Heritage & Raymond 2005), and in the context of this study Wooffitt (2006) has examined the management of epistemic authority in mediumship demonstrations. It is suggested, that this study provides evidence to support the role of epistemic talk in conversation as an interactional resource. In particular, whilst the tussles identified provide evidence to support that individuals seek epistemic primacy over an event, it is also implied that these initiate and expand sequences of interaction. In this context, we find that the initial description of an experience which is often ambiguous, is escalated to a point where it is categorised as having certain properties, and this is achieved through upgraded turns which display an individual's knowledge of the event. Heritage (2012b) defined what he termed the epistemic engine, a feature of conversation in which the epistemic status and stance of speakers are exploited through turns of talk produced to address the balance between knowing (K+) and unknowing (K-) participants. The 'see-saw' effect that is created by individuals attempting to address this balance drives the trajectory of conversation forward. It is argued that the findings from this study support the notion that an epistemic engine helps to build the trajectory of an activity or conversation. However, they also provide evidence to support that the K+ and K- (re)balancing of epistemic stance is not necessarily the only driver. Indeed, in the context of this interaction the trajectory of interaction is driven by the continued upgrading of epistemic status. In the context of this research the purpose of conversation is to discover and establish what 'that' is, and therefore the aim is to reach an informed conclusion about this. As such, it could be suggested that epistemics and the negotiation of stance within conversation plays an important role in reaching this, and indeed informing the trajectory of any conversational 'goal', however, the context and purpose of the interaction will likely establish the role that epistemics have in achieving this.

## 8.4 Methodological Reflections & Contributions

The methodological approach adopted for this study afforded new insights to be gained into the social interaction produced during paranormal experiences. By drawing upon the principles developed by pioneers in the CA field and the advantages afforded by

visual data, this analysis has aimed to provide a holistic perspective of interaction considering multimodal action. Furthermore, due to the unique position of the researcher as a reflective participant the methodology has also considered ethnographic reflections in the development of an informed analysis and discussion of the findings. This section will provide some reflections on this approach, identifying the advantages afforded and the challenges encountered during the scope of this research project.

### 8.4.1 Conversation Analysis & Video Data

Several researchers have called for the integration of visual data and sociological research (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 2010; Pink, 2007). Indeed, recently the use of recorded data to capture aspects of social interaction have started to emerge providing insights into a range of settings (for examples see work by Heath, 2002; Hindmarsh et al, 2010; Mondada, 2009). Given that this research project aimed to analyse data of naturally occurring multimodal action the adoption of an approach that used visual data seemed appropriate. Furthermore, with the exception of Woods and Wooffitt's (2014) study into UFO encounters it is the only study that the researcher is aware of in the context of paranormal experience that has adopted this approach.

The video data used in this study was captured in situ during several MPG investigations, capturing over 100 hours of data. The data was captured prior to researcher-led interests and is therefore truly integrated within the culture under study. This provided an excellent opportunity to observe paranormal experiences, as they occur, without concerns such as participant reflexivity interfering with the data.

One of the earlier challenges that arose with the analysis of this particular data set was the need to transcribe data from several participants. In all of the sections of data there are at least three participants, with numbers often escalating upwards of 10 individuals within the group all participating in the same activity. Unlike a large number of CA studies, which observe the interaction between two participants, this study required consideration of several potential pieces of talk and interaction at any one time. Therefore, the decision of how to transcribe what could become a very complex data set needed to be considered early on in the process. As such, although multimodal interactions are integrated into the verbal transcripts the decision was taken to include these in a descriptive form, rather than the level of detail adopted by researchers such as

Goodwin (1980). It is, therefore, acknowledged that whilst this captures the onset of a multimodal action, the transcripts do not always fully capture the finer detail of these actions unfolding. This approach does, however, provide a transcript that is accessible for the reader and the researcher during analysis. The conflict between accessibility and the level of detail required for the transcript was a frequent challenge during the transcription process. This was, however, aided during analysis by the frequent review of visual footage - an advantage greatly afforded by this particular form of data (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 2010).

An additional challenge that was highlighted by this approach concerns the presentation of data. To provide further accessibility and transparency through the analysis, and in accordance with studies such as vom Lehn (2006a, 2006b), Heath (2010) and LeBaron and Streeck (1997), the researcher has aimed to provide visual stills throughout the analysis to illustrate multimodal actions. However, this raised a number of challenges. Firstly, the data is recorded on low quality night vision cameras and due to this it is difficult to fully enhance images so that they are clearly visible on paper. Secondly, and as a result of this, due to the number of participants and the low quality of some of the images it has been challenging to fully highlight the feature being discussed (particularly shifts in gaze). To counter this, I have where possible, tried to enhance the images and provided annotations to highlight features in the still. Additionally, where the quality of images is poor and the details of the action (such as shifting gaze) can be illustrated through diagrammatic form, a diagram rather than still has been provided. As such, whilst the in situ nature of the data is highly advantageous to the integrity of the activity being analysed, it has been collected with the culture under study in mind, rather than the researcher. Therefore, some of the considerations that would likely be paramount to the researcher, such as visual and audio quality, are somewhat hindered in the data analysed. It is, however, argued that provision of visual images, where possible, compliments the analysis and therefore every effort has been taken to provide these in a manner that is accessible for the reader.

## 8.4.2 Integrating ethnography

It has been acknowledged in earlier discussions (see chapter 3) that whilst the contributions that fieldwork and observations can bring to the analysis of CA data have been appreciated (vom Lehn & Heath, 2007), in general CA has avoided integration

with interpretive methodologies to maintain a descriptive focus (Psathas, 1995). This research has, however, drawn upon some of the principles associated with an ethnographic approach. The decision to integrate ethnographic reflections into a primarily CA focused analysis arose due to the researchers participation in the data being analysed. At an early stage in the analysis it became evident that the reflective knowledge of the researcher provided an advantage to the analysis of data which could on occasions be ambiguous in nature. The cultural and situational knowledge gained from participation in the data provided a unique perspective into the cultural talk and practices embedded in paranormal investigations. However, it is noted that this also caused initial challenges in maintaining a purely objective and descriptive stance towards the analysis of data. Thus, the researcher needed to become not only reflective of their role as a participant in the data, but also as their position as a researcher. To ensure that the analysis was descriptive and not interpretive continuous reflection of the emerging analysis and a critical perspective towards the language and descriptions used to highlight emerging features of interaction was adopted. This enabled an objective gaze to be established, and it is noted that this gaze became clearer and more established as the analytical process progressed. As such, it is suggested that the integration of an ethnographic detail alongside CA can afford some significant advantages to the analysis of data. Perhaps even addressing some of the criticisms that a purely CA approach has received (Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherhell, 1997; Fairclough, 1995). Although the unique position of the researcher in this circumstance (i.e. having access to a corpus of video data capable of being analysed from an reflective ethnographic perspective) is acknowledged, and it is evident that this type of approach will simply not be possible for all researchers

## 8.5 Summary of contributions

In summary, this study has provided a number of theoretical, methodological and substantial contributions to knowledge. Theoretically, the study contributes significantly to work in the field of referential practice.  The verbal reference *that* has been examined in relation to its role in referential practice, and the transgressive inferences implied through its use in the context of paranormal events. As such, the study of *that* references provides a deeper understanding of their organised production during face-to-face interaction (an approach called for by Enfield, 2003). In addition, the accompanying multimodal practices involved in referencing have been examined. In doing so this

study contributes significantly to work concerning how individuals and groups come to see and understand the environment and its relevant features through these practices (for instance Goodwin, 1994, vom Lehn, Heath and Hindmarsh, 2004, vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b). As has been discussed, these activities often involve the practice of pointing at empty space or invisible events. In examining the referencing of invisible events, rather than visible 'things', this study contributes to the work of McNeill (1993) and Haviland (2000) whilst providing new knowledge into the practices involved in not only pointing at space, but also how groups come to understand and negotiate these spaces in the context of paranormal events. Furthermore, by examining multimodal practice, this study also contributes knowledge to the study of embodied talk and action, and the role of the body in communicating private experience (Goodwin, 2000, Heath, 2002, Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007, vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b, Wiggins, 2010). Finally, from a theoretical perspective this study examines the role of epistemics in action adding to current research that explores their use in driving conversation (Heritage, 2012b) and the management of the self when accounting for paranormal events (Wooffitt, 2006).

From a methodological perspective, the integration of CA with ethnographic reflections provides an argument to support the combination of these methods. In adopting a predominantly descriptive CA approach the interactive practices of paranormal groups have been examined. However, by also integrating ethnographic reflections, the context, and cultural practices of the topic under study have been illuminated. This has enabled an informed analysis of the data to emerge that considers the structure of action and the context within which it occurs (Maynard, 2003, Moerman, 1988). In addition, video data was chosen to enable an analysis of multimodal practices. The choice to analyse video data from a CA perspective provided an opportunity to examine naturally occurring multimodal action in context, adding substantially to the findings of this study. As such, this study also supports the use of video data as a research tool for the study of social interaction (as seen in the work of Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff, 2010, Heath, 2002, Hindmarsh et al, 2010, Mondada, 2009).

Finally, this study has contributed more substantially to research in the field of paranormal studies. In doing so, this study has described the practices that inform the way that groups come to see, share and understand paranormal events at a collective. By examining paranormal events as they occur 'in the moment' within organised groups, the findings show that regardless of the approach adopted by paranormal groups (be that scientific or spiritual), that these events become seen as potentially paranormal through

the same socially organised practices. As such, this study contributes significantly to understanding the social practices of paranormal groups, and the study of collective paranormal experiences.

## 8.5 Limitations & Further Research

At the beginning of this thesis we discussed that Markovsky and Thye (2001) had called for a *meso* level analysis of paranormal events to analyse the interpersonal and small group interactions that take place during their occurrence. We have discussed how researchers such as Wooffitt (1991, 1992, 2006) and Child and Murray (2010) have started to provide some insight into the organised interactional practices that occur during paranormal accounts. Woods and Wooffitt (2014) also provide an analysis of tellings by examining YouTube data of a group sighting of a potential UFO. However, this is the first study to examine naturally-occurring data of paranormal experiences as they occur 'in the moment' in a structured group setting (i.e. the MPG), and to examine multimodal practices. Whilst this study provides some insight into how these practices inform the experience that occurs and the paranormal status that is inferred it is acknowledged that further study of these features would be highly advantageous to developing our understanding of this social phenomena. Indeed, this study whilst providing a detailed description of several features of interaction that contribute to the collective experience of a paranormal event, there are additional areas of enquiry observed during analysis that were out with the scope of this research project. For instance, it is noted that participants frequently produce choral talk, collectively interact with tools, provide characteristics for spirits (i.e. scary, nice, young, old), and attempt to invoke a response from the spirit. Whilst some of these areas have been touched upon within this analysis, they all provide potential avenues of further enquiry in this area.

The researcher would also invite further research into the trajectory of interaction informed by epistemic primacy and authority observed in this study. It is suggested that this may help to inform how paranormal events and their features are understood, but may also aid in contributing to a wider body of research concerning the production of epistemics within talk (Heritage & Raymond 2005; Heritage, 2012a, 2012b; Mondada, 2013a). Furthermore, this research has advocated a holistic perspective to the study of interaction inviting a perspective that considers the study of interaction beyond just talk, and views visual action and the local milieu as important aspects of the broader interactional framework. As such, the researcher supports the direction of research

currently being pursued by units such as the Work, Interaction and Technology Research Centre at Kings College London, and the progress being made into the study of interaction in collaborative settings - an approach that appreciates the delicate relationship between talk, action, object and environment. On reflection of the methodological challenges raised in this particular study it would be useful to review the technical principles that inform the CA transcription and analysis process. Whilst the researcher supports the continued use of video to inform studies into social interaction following this study it would be useful to consider developing a more comprehensive framework for the analysis of visual data, given the valuable data and insight this form of analysis can offer.

Finally, the findings of this research complement those that have embraced CA as a methodological resource to examine human experience (Heath, 2002; vom Lehn, 2006a, 2006b). Thus, it is argued that developing our understanding into the ways that human experience is communicated and shared with others, and the interactional implications of this, can be greatly enhanced by this approach. Therefore, additional research into the practices that inform embodied talk and action will help to further aid our knowledge of individual and social experience in a range of settings.

## 8.6 Conclusion

Paranormal experiences are often seen as events that are beyond rationale thought and explanation. Whilst academic study of this area has provided some insight into the cognitive, psychological and social factors associated with these events, relatively little progress has been made in truly understanding this allusive phenomena. Although this thesis cannot provide an explanation for the ontological reality of events, and indeed does not seek to, it does provide new knowledge to suggest that whilst paranormal experience may be extraordinary and private, the management, disclosure and sharing of events is subject to mundane interactional processes. Therefore, the findings of this thesis not only contribute new knowledge to our understanding of how collective experiences are communicated and achieved, but also invites further research that considers interactional practice as a key resource for understanding our paranormal, and normal, experience of the world. As such, it is hoped that this study provides a solid foundation from which future studies can emerge and further contribute to our knowledge of our human and social experience.

# Appendix A

## Transcription Key

| Symbol | Meaning |
|--------|---------|
| Symbol | Meaning |
| A – Z | Indicates each group member |
| [ | Indicates overlapping speech |
| **[** | Indicates overlapping action (bold) |
| .hhh | Indicates an inhalation (the number of h's indicates the length of the inhalation) |
| hh | Indicates hearable aspiration, such as laughter and exhalation (the number of h's indicates the length of the sound) |
| :: | Indicate a prolonging of the preceding sound (the number of colons indicates the length of the prolonged sound) |
| - | Hyphen mid-sentence indicates a cut-off from speech |
| - | Hyphen at the end of a line of script indicates speech carrying on to the next line |
| ____ | Underlining of a word indicates emphasis or rise in pitch |
| CAPITALS | Indicate louder sounds |
| ° ° | Degree symbols indicate quieter sounds |
| (.) | A short break in speech of less than 0.2 seconds |
| (0.5) | Within talk brackets indicate the length of a break between speech in seconds/ During non-verbal interaction the numbers within brackets indicate how long the interaction lasted for |
| (text) | Text in brackets indicates unsure speech |
| ( ) | Indicates an unknown piece of talk |
| *(Text)* | Bold italic text indicates a description of non-verbal actions and environmental details. |

# Transcription Annotation

| Symbol | Meaning |
| --- | --- |
| <-- | denotes a relevant feature in the transcript (often referred to in the text) |
| T | denotes a *that* reference |
| P | denotes a pointing gesture |
| G | denotes a gaze shift |
| E | denotes an experience being referred to |
| EG | denotes an embodied gesture |
| ER | denotes an embodied verbal reference |

## Appendix B

**Video Data Clips**

Alley Cat: http://youtu.be/3dtRIWrNfoY

Feeling Cold: http://youtu.be/rfga3OdWStk

Dog Scratching: http://youtu.be/6nVrWswWPQg

Dungeons Moan: http://youtu.be/rKJo9GK-xNg

Grandfather Clock: http://youtu.be/SWVI1qABEfk

Liliath Breath: http://youtu.be/j2RttauqZpk

Little Girl: http://youtu.be/ih2Ke4jH1C4

Munthob: http://youtu.be/0DATj_DUC4I

Popping Sound: http://youtu.be/qQDmrKgTd3w

Scratching: http://youtu.be/2IB8Qq-bbf0

Spirals: http://youtu.be/TjkIWADw_mg

Spooksfest: http://youtu.be/LcPLfBCHbPc

Stamping Table: http://youtu.be/CvotdE0p_0I

Basement: http://youtu.be/cJDQD_oYG-4

Table Tipping: http://youtu.be/GNyvA5_feuk

The Runaway Train: http://youtu.be/EtNb1VD0cVE

Tolbooth Bang: http://youtu.be/pMjosbQHJaU

Under the Bed: http://youtu.be/cJDQD_oYG-4

Whistle: http://youtu.be/J3gzREdmrbI

# Glossary

**ASSAP**

Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

**Clearings**

A term used by paranormal groups to refer to the practice of 'clearing'/ removing spirits from a particular location, usually through spiritual-type activity.

**Dowsing Rods**

A tool used by paranormal investigators to locate spirits consisting of two long metal rods that an individual holds in front of them. Usually the investigator will ask questions and when the rods cross this is believed to be an indication of an interaction with spirit.

**EMF reader**

Refers to an Electro Magnetic Field reader. This device measures electro magnetic fields and is used by investigators under the pseudo-scientific theory that spirits 'give off' an electro-magnetic field when the manifest. Thus, this tool can be used to detect the presence of a spirit.

**Gauss Meter**

A form of electro-magnetic field reader that indicates an increasingly strong field by omitting a high pitched buzzing sound.

**Macro-PK**

A category of psychokinesis (the movement of objects with the mind), used to refer to the movement of physical objects in the environment with no immediate rational cause.

**Medium**

A person who is believed to be able to communicate directly with spirits.

**MPG**

Modern Paranormal Group, a term used in this study to refer to paranormal groups that have been established in the last 10-20 years.

**Pendulum**

A piece of string or chain with a crystal hanging at the end. Used on paranormal investigations to detect the presence of a spirit.

**Planchette**

The moveable device located on the centre of a Ouija Board. Participants place their fingers on the planchette when participating in a Ouija Board session, the movement of the planchette towards different letters or numbers on the board is used as a tool for communication with the spirit.

**Psi**

Used to refer to the existence of parapsychological or psychic faculties or phenomena.

**Ouija Board**

A board with letters and numbers positioned on it, usually in a circular or half-moon set up. Used as a tool to communicate with spirits which is indicated by the planchette moving to different letters or numbers on the board in direct response to questions from participants.

**TAPS**
The Atlantic Paranormal Society

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