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Organization of Participation in the Meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous

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AA meetings are an arena of mutual help for recovering substance abusers. They are characteristically formal interactions in which turns are pre-allocated to parties. Through the analysis of audio-recordings of interactions, I have shown that the formality of interaction is members' collaborative achievement. The opening rituals of a meeting are members' method to mark the boundary between mundane talk and the specific institutional sphere so that parties may move from conversational turn-taking to formally arranged turn-taking. As a collaborative achievement, the format of meeting interaction is an enabling structure that allows parties to design their turns so that they may talk into being the institution of mutual help. Participants orient to the pre-allocated time-slots as an aspect of the format of AA meeting interaction that allows them to construct their turns in collaboration with recipients. AA members use the specific format of their meeting interaction to share their experiences and to establish egalitarian relationships with each other.

This article explores the organization of participation in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. AA meetings are therapeutic speech events that are based on the participants' talk as having been designed for giving and receiving mutual help. AA meetings are not a form of professional group therapy but rather are places in which recovering substance abusers help each other to recover from addiction. AA got its start in Akron, Ohio, in 1935, but since then AA has grown into a worldwide fellowship, covering all the continents, with a reported membership of about two million in 1990 (Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 25-39). The regular, weekly meetings are the main form of activity in AA. In this study, I will analyze the ways in which the meeting participation is organized, thereby enabling a better understanding of how mutual help is done in practice. The aim of this study is to analyze the forms of participation in a particular institutional interaction order of AA.

I will focus specifically on the relevance of the organization of participation in AA meetings for therapeutic mutual help. It will be shown that the speech exhange system of AA meetings is an enabling structure that allows individual freedom for AA members but also demands self-directed responsibility as a condition of participation in mutual help. AA meetings are characteristically formal interactions in which extended turns are preallocated to parties (for preallocation vs. conversational allocation of turns, see Sacks et al., 1974/1978). The preallocation of turns in AA does not generate the turns, but allows parties to construct their turns so that recipients may ratify these turns by withholding from conversational responses, thereby acknowledging the current speaker's right to produce an extended turn. In this study, I will analyze how extended turns are achieved through members' ori-

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entation to the meeting format that enables therapeutic interaction. Further, as the parties' orientations to the preallocation of turns forecloses conversational exchanges, each current speaker is attributed both a right and a duty to design a turn as being appropriate to the sharing of experiences as long as the speaker wants to commit her/himself to mutual help. In this fashion the participation format of AA meetings allows parties to take individual responsibility in order to participate in mutual help. This article analyzes the organization of participation in AA meetings as a way to contribute toward individual responsibility in mutual help in which participants aim at recovering from addiction. In this way, the study explicates the nature of therapeutic interaction in AA through the exploration of the endogenous construction of a context.

I will first discuss the bedrock of AA meeting interaction, the pre-allocational mode of turn-taking. I will show that the formal turn-taking distinguishes AA meetings from ordinary conversational interactions. Further, the formal turn-taking is an achievement. The members' methodical work to draw a distinction between everyday interaction and AA starts as early as the opening rituals. In the main part of the article, I will explore the therapeutic and organizational relevance of AA's particular system of turn-taking and members' orientation to the constraints concerning the turn-types in AA. It will be shown that the format of meeting interaction enables self-directed individual responsibility in mutual help.

DATA AND METHODS

The material in this study comes from the large open[1] speaker meetings held every week by an AA group (the Vuori group) in Helsinki, Finland. The audiotape recordings of these meetings were made by the group itself and are publicly available through the central office of AA in Finland[2]. These meetings always have a longer opening turn (about twenty minutes), followed by about twenty "commentary" turns by different speakers (maximum three minutes each). The speakers who volunteer represent only a minority of the up to two hundred people who attend meetings (see Appendix A for the floor plan of the meeting hall). For this study, twelve of these meetings are used, of which seven were transcribed completely (about eleven hours of recording time), and the rest of the materials were transcribed partially (for further details, see Arminen, 1998, pp. 25-29). In addition, ethnographic notes about some AA meetings were collected in eight societies during a related international study (Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 261-273). These ethnographic materials will be used here to point out the specific features of some of the recorded meetings that will be analyzed in detail through conversation analysis (CA).

THE PRE-ALLOCATIONAL MODE OF TURN-TAKING IN AA

In AA's own words, the purpose of an AA meeting "is to give members an

opportunity to discuss particular phases of their alcoholic problem that can be understood best only by other alcoholics. ...These meetings are usually conducted with a maximum of informality, and all members are encouraged to participate in the discussions" (Anonymous 1990/1952, p. 22 [44 questions]). This maximum of informality is, however, achieved through the formal format of the meeting, which notably is not discussed in AA literature. Despite the lack of written regulations, the format of AA meetings tends to be rather uniform (on its variability, see Mäkelä et al. 1996, pp. 149-152). The constitutive, defining feature of AA meetings, also interculturally, is the fact that they are organized around a series of relatively long "monological" turns (ibid., pp. 133-148; Denzin, 1987, pp. 109-122). The preallocation of lengthy monologic turns distinguishes AA meetings from most of the known forms of group therapy (Turner, 1972; Wootton, 1976; Morris & Chenail, 1995), and other types of meetings (Atkinson et al., 1978; Cuff & Sharrock, 1985; Linde, 1991; Schwartzman, 1993; Larrue & Trognon, 1993; Boden, 1994). In purely formal terms, the organization of turn-taking in AA bears a resemblance to jury deliberations (Maynard & Manzo, 1993; Manzo, 1996), but notably the agenda of a therapeutic interaction in AA is different from jury deliberations.

During their extended turns, AA members relate their personal experiences: "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now" (Anonymous, 1950/1939, p. 70). The deliberate function of these meetings is therapy, sharing experiences, and giving and receiving support: "AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism" (cited from the AA preamble which is commonly read at the beginning of the meetings; cf. Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 137-138; Denzin, 1987). In general, AA meetings are a setting for mutual help, accomplished with the help of extended turns which members allocate to one another in formally organized ways.

In the Vuori group the overall format of the meeting is the following. First, the meeting scene is set through the opening rituals (to be discussed subsequently). After the opening rituals, a longer 20- to 25-minutes opening speech follows. The slots for these opening turns are allocated two to three times a year, when the chair of the meeting requests that those come forward who are willing to reserve a time for their opening speech. The main part of the meeting, however, is devoted to commentary turns that follow the opening turn. After the opening turn the chairperson very briefly summarizes the opening turn with a couple of sentences, thereby proposing the topic of the meeting. Subsequently, the chair takes up the names of those who volunteer to share comments. The chairperson allocates the turns but does not usually comment on the speakers. The commentary turns are up to three minutes long at which time their closing is marked by a signal given by the secretary. There are as many commentary turns as can be fit into the one and a half hour meeting time, from about 7 to 8:30 p.m.. After about twenty commentary turns, the meeting is closed with brief closing ceremonies.

This particular format for sharing experiences has many interesting consequences. The major one we will be concerned with here is that this procedure does not allow the speakers to engage in conversations with one another. That is, the contributions of speakers are not allocated and mutually interlinked on a local, turn-by-turn basis as in ordinary conversation. This "disconnectedness" between turns is an oriented to, and reflexively sustained, feature of these meetings. The turns are allocated into a series of extended turns by the chair. In data extract 1 the chairperson comes in after a contribution (only the end shown here), thanks the speaker for it, calls for the next, and asks the subsequent speaker to be ready, in a plain and routine-like manner.

Extract 1 (V2OlaviK1089) ((simplified))[3]

1 M: ...ja omista vaikeuksistani. (0.5) ↑Ja sitä kautta, .hhh[h
...and my-own difficulties and it way
...and my own difficulties. (0.5) ↑And in that way, .hhh[h

2 B: [rrr

rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr] [rrrrrrrrrrr]

3 M: saatoin vältty]ä: s[iltä kaikke]in tär:keimmältä asialta mikä
I-was-able avoid it most important thing what
I was able to avo]:id t[he most] impo:rtant thing that I

4 mulla on täs↓sä (0.4) j-juomiselta. (1.0) ↓Kiitos.=
I have here drinking thank
have he↓re (0.4) d-drinking. (1.0) ↓Thank you.=

5 A: =tt tt tt tt tttttttttt[ttTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT ttttttt tt tt tt tt tt]

6 → C: [Kiitos Matti, Olavi K::: ja Osmo K:: seuraa]va
[Thanks Matti, Olavi K::: and Osmo K:: nex]t

7 (2.0) ((next speaker walks to the podium))

8 O: .hhh Iltaa mä oo:n Olavi K::: ja alkoholisti,
.hhh Good evening I:'m Olavi K::: and an alcoholic,

9 Kalle puhu tuosta <alemmuuden tunteesta>hh (0.3)
Kalle talked about that <feeling of inferiority>hh (0.3)

10 >Mä oon monta kertaa miettinyt että mitä se on< ja o:malta osalta
I have many times thought that what it is and my-own part
>Many times I've thought what it is< and in terms of myself

11 mä oon mi̲ettinyt että se on hu̲:o:nommuuden tunnetta, .hhhh
I have thought that it is worse-ness feeling
I've tho̲ught that it is a feeling of po̲o:rness, .hhhh

12 Ja .kch tää huonommuuden tunne hhh on ollu mulle paljon
and this worse-ness feeling has been for-me much
And .kch this feeling of poorness hhh has been for me much

13 helpompi selvittää mistä (.) se: (.) ta̲as johtuu.
easier to-clarify where it again comes-from.
more easy to sort out where (.) i:t (.) co̲mes from.

Extract 1 starts very near the end of Matti's turn (M), and the end of his time is signalled with the bell (B), after which Matti rushes to conclude his turn with a truncated utterance (line 3-5). Matti marks the conclusion of his turn with thanks, after which the chair allocates the floor to Olavi, the next speaker (line 6). There is no immediate connection between Matti's turn and Olavi's turn following it. In this fashion, each turn in AA meetings is produced as a self-contained, monological unit.

Further, the chair's turn is reflexively tied to the characteristics of this meeting, and particularly to the fact that contributions to the meeting are made from a podium. The chair not only thanks the previous speaker and allocates the turn to the next speaker, but also alerts the subsequent speaker to be ready. This third part exhibits that the change of speakership under these conditions does not just take place unnoticeably but that it demands some preparatory work. The chair tries to minimize the gap between the turns by asking the subsequent speaker to be ready to walk to the podium (see Appendix A, for the floor plan of the hall).

As a whole, the chair's turn conveys a sense of considerable routineness, in which the members' personal experiences form a series of turns that are allocated in a maximally efficient, and relatively impersonal manner. Mostly the chair's turns are extremely plain, purely functional, and void of any extra elements. However, occasionally the chair may add a short compliment of the previous speaker, or remind the speaker to stay in the time limit, as we will later notice. However, as a whole, this laconic way of chairing, which is characteristic of this group irrespective of who does the chairing, invokes a specific role for the chair. The chair who is limited to strictly procedural tasks, is a servant of the meeting (as AA members call their group functionaries, see tradition nine: Anonymous, 1986/1952).

This formal allocation of turns poses a great challenge for members in designing their turns to manage and sustain the social cohesion of these gatherings without any conversational exchanges. In ordinary conversation, the organization of turn-taking guarantees, among other things, the sustained attention of recipients, since, in principle, anybody can be addressed at any stage to become the next speaker. Therefore, everybody must follow the course of conversation in order not

to fail to respond when response is due. By contrast, in AA meetings the conversational turn taking is suspended, and members have to find alternative solutions in order to maintain shared attentiveness (see Arminen, 1998, pp. 86-88). Here we turn our attention to the role of opening rituals which shift the event away from the realm of everyday interaction, thereby gaining the shared attention of those who became participants in a ritually framed activity.

OPENING RITUALS

In this section I will discuss the role of opening rituals for setting the scene of a particular participation framework in AA, in general, and in the Vuori group, in particular. The opening rituals mark the boundary between everyday life and AA as a distinct therapeutic sphere. The amount and the forms of opening rituals vary from group to group, and culture to culture (Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 137-138). More or less universally, the beginning of the meeting includes a salutation and the rituals proper. The rituals most commonly include a reading of some AA texts, which vary from group to group. The rituals of the Vuori group are relatively few. The Vuori group always starts with a salutation. Generally, salutations are a conventional way of starting many types of social gatherings. Nevertheless, the salutation for an AA meeting includes some elements through which the persons can already orient to the specific purpose of the gathering. The summons and the salutation of the Vuori group is the following.

Extract 2 (V12Tate0692) ((simplified))

1 C: K K K ((Knocks on the table; background noice starts fading))

2 No ni?, (.) jospa (.) mentäis vähä (.) hiljasemmin paikoillee=
Oh well?, (.) if you (.) could take (.) the seats a bit more silently=

3 =↑HYVÄÄ ILTAA=
=↑GOOD EVENING=

4 =minun nimeni on Tate ja minä olen alkoholisti,
=My name is Tate and I am an alcoholic,

5 .hhhh TERVEtuloa (0.3) Vuori-ryhmän avoimeen kokoukseen.
.hhhh WELcome (0.3) to the open meeting of the Vuori group.

6 Tänä iltana meillä alustaa Veke ja: (.)
This evening we-have speaking [name] and
Tonight the opening speaker is Veke a:nd (.)

7 spiikkerinä toimii (0.3) Olavi.
as-a-chair acts [name]
the chair is (0.3) Olavi.

The salutation is composed of 1) a call for order, 2) greeting, 3) identification, 4) welcoming address, and 5) introduction of the (main) speaker and the officials of the meeting (chair). This is a common format of salutation also cross-culturally (cf. Denzin, 1987, p. 109; Johnson, 1987), which of course has local modifications. A call for order is not necessary if the group is already silent. A greeting draws the attention of the participants.

I will now spend some time discussing the role of identification as it touches on the key aspects of AA. The universal format of identification is that the speaker tells her/his first name and adds the attribute "alcoholic," or one of its variants "alcohol and drug addict," etc.[4] Members in AA are known to each other by their AA name only, and not by their family name, or by their profession, or by any other possible social attribute. In this fashion members enter AA as individual atoms who are cut off from their social statuses. The practice of calling members only by their AA names maintains the commonality between members, as they are presented as individuals who lack everything else but one common attribute: an addiction to substances. AA meetings are presented as being composed of individuals, one alike to the next, and who speak in turns producing a series of turns, one alike to the other.

The convention that only the first name, and not the whole name, is used, goes back to the anonymity principle of AA (see tradition eleven: Anonymous, 1986/1952). Sometimes when several members of the same group have the same first name, they may distinguish each other with numerals, "Peter," "Peter the Second," etc., or with often humorous characterizations, like "Peter the Dry," "Soft Simo," etc. Some AA members have taken for themselves names that are loaded with symbolism to celebrate the change in their life. For instance, Kolumbus [Columbus] who had discovered AA in California, was active in establishing AA in Finland. Specific AA names, and symbolic names in particular, show that persons do not just identify themselves in AA, but they identify themselves *in terms* of AA.

The identification with one's role in AA is an achievement. In AA, the attribute "alcoholic" not only refers to one's past, but it is an ongoing accomplishment which demonstrates the person's orientation to being an AA member. By using their AA name and acknowledging their alcoholism while identifying themselves, the participants display their orientation to the specific nature of the gathering, where alcoholism is the common condition. In this fashion, persons choose, and make relevant, one categorization of all the possible categorizations: old, young, black, white, woman, man, etc. (see Jayyusi, 1984). Consequently, the identification is "procedurally relevant" (Schegloff, 1991) so that it limits the range of choices the speaker has to continue his/her turn. That is, the speaker cannot doubt the identity of a recovering substance abuser if the admission of the identity is done in the very onset of the turn. By contrast, if a speaker does not admit addiction in the beginning of his/her turn, then the speaker does not display commitment to AA and a radical doubt may be expressed (see Arminen, 1998, pp. 105-107).

The welcoming address gives information about the nature of the gathering. Normally the type of meeting is stated, "open" or "closed." Usually the name of the group whose meeting is held is stated. In some groups it is suggested for whom the meeting is especially designed, for young people, for women, etc. Finally, the officials of the meeting, usually only the chair, and the opening speaker are introduced. Again the style is laconic. No attributes and characterizations, such as how excellent and extraordinary the speaker is, are generally mentioned. They do not belong to the AA style: personalities are not put ahead of principles. In smaller discussion meetings where there are no predesigned speakers no introductions are needed.

In the Vuori group the salutation is followed by announcements (not studied here)[5]. They include calls for special events and to members' AA anniversaries, etc. At a certain phase in the announcements, the chair declares that the meeting will be tape-recorded and that the tapes are available through the AA service office. Then the chair asks if any newcomers are present. When a newcomer shows up, he/she is given some free copies of AA leaflets.

The other opening rituals of the Vuori group that follow the salutation are few and remain more or less the same from one meeting to the next. They include a moment of silence after which the Serenity Prayer is uttered, and a thought for the day is read. The amount and the content of the opening rituals vary from group to group, but they all contain the same elements, reading of texts and ritual moments that consolidate unity. Besides accomplishing shared attentiveness the opening rituals inform the persons present about the style and atmosphere of the meeting. The informed AA member can, through the opening rituals, find out information about how program-oriented, how spiritual, etc., the group in question is. Moreover, usually, the opening rituals are used to introduce the topic of the meeting so that, for instance, readings are selected according to the topic.

The moment of silence is especially apt for creating shared attentiveness, since the person who takes the turn after the silence will have the undivided attention of all the participants. If the first turn after the silence is heard as being felicitous, that is, having been uttered by the right person in the right way, then the meeting can continue as uniformly ratified, legitimated by all the participants.

Extract 3 (V12Tate0692) ((simplified))

1 C: JAaha? hh JOSpa sitten hetkeks (.) hiljentyi ↑simme (.)
WE:ll? hh IF We could have ↑silence (.) for a moment (.)

2 että palauttaisimme mieleemme miksi olemme tänään täällä,
to remind us why we are here today.

3 ((Audience was already quiet when silence was declared.
The silence continues for almost ten seconds.))

4 C: Jumala suokoon minulle tyyneyttä hyväksyä asiat=
God grant me the serenity to accept the things=

5 =joita en voi muuttaa rohkeutta muuttaa mitkä voin=
=I cannot change courage to change the things I can=

6 =ja viisautta erottaa nämä toisistaan.
=and wisdom to know the difference.

Tate, who is chairing the opening of the meeting, declares silence for a moment. The silence is not long for a silence (although it would be extremely long for a pause in conversation), but it is long enough to be audible. The unanimous quietness of the audience ratifies Tate's floor-taking. Nevertheless, Tate did not start the first turn after the silence with just any words, but with a poetic phrase known by AA members as the Serenity Prayer. In this respect, Tate did not select himself as the principal whose ideas were to be presented. Instead he took as a source an AA text which he only animated (Goffman, 1981; Maynard, 1984, pp. 56-76; Clayman, 1992). Through this choice of footing, Tate selected the community of AA for the goal of legitimation rather than himself. Hence, the moment of silence ratified the ongoing event as a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, where the participants acknowledge the authority of AA with respect to that occasion.

After the moment of silence and the Serenity Prayer a thought for the day is read. The thought for the day is selected according to the topic of the meeting. Of the twelve analyzed meetings, five focused on a psychological problem or a personality trait (shyness, double life, problems of life, self-centeredness, guilt); three on the steps and traditions (steps four and five, first tradition, third tradition); two were story meetings, where the AA life story of the speaker was told; and in two meetings the topic of the meeting was not defined[6]. The short text to be read is taken from some AA approved book. The most commonly used textbooks, not only in the Vuori group but also more generally, are *Alcoholics Anonymous* [known as *the Big Book*] (1950/1939), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1986/1952) and *As Bill Sees It: The AA Way of Life. Selected Writings of AA´s Co-Founder* (1967).

Together the opening rituals of AA meetings bring forth the shared attentiveness of participants, which is a condition for the cohesion of a gathering. Through the opening rituals a specific institutional order is invoked, and the meeting is separated from ordinary social interaction. As the participants' shared attention is gained, the formal organization of interaction becomes the members' own practical accomplishment. Further, the opening rituals introduce the topic of the meeting thereby contributing toward the sense of each single occasion. In some meetings other than those of the Vuori group there may be many more rituals, but this does not change their elementary function.

TURN-TAKING AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL PHENOMENON IN AA MEETINGS

In comparison with many group therapies, AA meetings are characteristically tightly formatted. The uniform format of AA meetings is based on the preallocation of turns, which can be arranged in several ways. At the so called "discussion meetings," turn taking follows the seating order, and the only choices left for participants are to speak or to let the turn pass. At the "speaker meetings" commentary turns are allocated according to the list of volunteer speakers. Thus the turn order will normally be organized at the beginning of the meetings (for instance, after the opening speech). The design of turns and the transitions from one turn to another have to be interactionally managed at the very time of their achievement. Through these instances of local management, the whole format of AA meetings becomes an interactional achievement.

The order at the meetings depends upon the participants' ongoing monitoring of the course of the meeting, through which departures from the ordinary course become accountable and sanctionable when necessary. In this way, the format of the meetings is defined and adjusted by sanctions against departures from the format. In this section I explore how the speakers and recipients orient to institutional constraints in order to maintain the special, therapeutic purpose of their gathering. I will show how extended turns are achieved via the speaker's and recipients' collaboration, and explore the speakers' techniques to project extended turns. For practical reasons, the analysis is concentrated on the commentary turns[7]. The following extracts are taken from various points of the round of commentary turns. In extract 4, the commentary turn is presented in its context, that is, the chair's turn in which he summons the speaker by name is included.

Extract 4 (V4Merja1190)

1 (0.2)

2 A: tt ttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttt tt tt t ((roughly four seconds))

3 (0.2)

4 C: kiitos Viljo s-seuraavana (0.2) Merja-Leena ja sen jälkeen
thanks Viljo n-next (0.2) Merja-Leena and after that

5 Antero A::.
Antero A::.

6 (7.2) ((next speaker walks into the podium))

7 M: Iltaa mä oon Merja ja (0.2) alkoholisti
Good evening I'm Merja and (0.2) an alcoholic

8 → ja (.) ja tota: (1.0) kiitos Olaville tost alustuksesta
and (.) and e:rm (1.0) thanks Olavi for your presentation

9 → kyl mä (0.2) niinku tunnis- e e tunnistin sen mitalin
sure I like recog- recognized the medal
sure I (0.2) like rec- e e recognized the other side of the

10 → toisen puolen siitä se ujouden vastakohdan sen, (0.6)
other side from+it it shyness' opposite it
coin the opposite of being shy the, (0.6)

11 sen just to häirikön ja ton .hhhhhh hälisijätyypin
it just that troublemaker and that loudmouth-type
the just th' troublemaker and th' .hhhhhh loudmouth-type

12 ja ja se että kyl mä sen oon kokenu näin että:
and and it that sure I it have experienced this+way that
an' and I really have the experience tha:t e:rm

13 (0.2) on ollu aika nöyryyttävää sitt täss matkan varrella
it-has been quite humiliating then here way along
(0.2) it has then been quite humiliating to notice here along

14 huomata et se todellakaa ei oo semmosta .hhhhhh nf.hhhh
to+notice that it really not is such
the way that it isn't really like that .hhhhhh nf.hhhh

The turn starts with a greeting, which is an optional component, and then moves to a self-identification as was seen in extract 1. The self-identification has at least one feature we have not yet discussed. Each speaker repeats his or her name even though the chair has summoned him or her by name. Note that in extract 4 the chair uses the two-part name **Merja-Leena** for the speaker who subsequently identifies herself as **Merja** (lines 4 and 7). Either the chair misremembers the name, or the chair uses the real first name of the person, by accident, who has chosen herself a slightly truncated version of her name as her AA name. If the latter is true, then this again shows that AA identities are constructions that are to some degree separate from the person's identity outside of AA[8]. In general, the fact that speakers repeat their name shows that the saying of one's name in the beginning of the turn is not an introduction in the ordinary sense, as the chair has already taken care of that. In fact, the attribution of the label "alcoholic" to oneself licenses one for giving one's name. When the name is produced together with the label that acknowledges addiction, the name is merely a repetition of what has just been said, but forms one part of an admission of a personal problem. In this way, persons who open their turn with the format "name + problem identificatory label" display their orientation to the context as one for mutual help where participants suffering from personal problems help each other to come to terms with their com-

mon problem.

We may still add that the saying of one's name is not a conditional feature, but a constitutive part of a personal admission, and by definition, an admission has to be a personal act. Each person alone can make an admission, no other party can attribute the admission to the person in question. In this fashion, as routinized as the openings in AA meetings are, they invoke the common spiritual heritage of AA, whose first step says "we admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable" (Anonymous, 1986/1952, p. 21).

After this conventionalized opening line, the speaker enters into a reorientation phase. In extract 4, immediately after the opening line, the speaker produces items that project a continuation "**and (.) and erm**" (line 8). These turn-extension devices that we may also call *floor holders* indicate the speaker's willingness to continue and orientation to the possibility that recipients might take the turn (Schegloff, 1982, p. 76). Through this displayed orientation to continue, speakers foreclose the possibility that recipients would take the turn, and mark the transition from the opening as an initiation of the extended turn. This special effort preserves the speaker's right to go ahead after the first potential transition-relevance place in order to begin a multi unit turn.

After the speaker's right to hold the floor is established, the construction of the extended turn begins. At this point no conventionalized format of turn design any longer constrains the speaker who thus may choose the design for a multi-unit extended turn of talk[9]. I will discuss briefly a few of these techniques for initiating the construction of expanded stretches of talk. Recurringly, the speakers use various types of items, which mark the *sequential position* of their turn and its connection to previous turns of talks. These position markers, such as "**thanks Olavi for your presentation**" (4, line 8), are reflexively related to the specific format of these occasions in that they maintain topical cohesion between preallocated turns.

Furthermore, the establishment of linkages to previous turns projects and makes relevant topical affinities between these turns, thereby providing "tellable items," which serve as starting points. In extract 4, the tellable is produced in the following way: "**sure I like recognized the other side of the coin, the opposite of being shy...**" (lines 9-10). A common feature in the formulations about tellable items is that they are *prospective indexicals*, i.e., the sense of what is said in an utterance is not lent available to recipients, but a floor is reserved for a subsequent "enrichment" that will clarify the sense of the utterance (Goodwin, 1996, pp. 383-384). In (4), "**the other side of coin, the opposite of being shy**" (9-10) is a prospective indexical, which makes relevant an explication about this "**other side**". The use of prospective indexicals is a technique to initiate an extended turn. In extract 5, we can see a parallel organization through which the speaker makes relevant the production of an extended turn.

Extract 5 (V1Kalervo0686)

1 K: .hhh Minä olen Kalervo ja alkoholisti ((knock)) (.)
.hhh I am Kalervo and an alcoholic ((knock)) (.)

2 ja tuota, yhm (.) minä olen (.) Vuoriryhmän jäsen ja (.)
and well I am Vuori group's member and
and er:m, u:h (.) I am a member of the Vuori group and (.)

3 minä olen samalla AA:n jäsen.
I am simultaneously member-of-AA
so I am an AA member.

4 .h Jos .hhh ↑Saku kysy että, (.)
.h If .hhh ↑Saku asked that, (.)

5 minkälainen on AA-AA:n jäsen
what-kind-of is AA- member
what an AA- AA-member is like

6 niin se on tä:mmö:nen just tässä ↑nyt.
so it is this-kind just here now
so it's li:ke thi:s just here and ↑now.

7 Paljon kärsiny vähän kokenu yyh
A-lot suffered a-little experienced
Suffered a lot experienced a bit of u:h

8 laitapuolen elämää .hh ollu pikkusen linnassa,=
skidrow life have-been a-bit in-jail
life in skidrow .hh been a while in jail,=

The turn begins again with a conventional identification, after which a micro-pause and a floor holder "**and erm, uh**" follows at line 2. Subsequently, the speaker goes into an extended identification: "**I am a member of the Vuori group and so I am an AA member**" (2-3). This elaboration of identification is prospectively linked with the topic of the turn, which is subsequently initiated with a question "**what an AA member is like**" (5). This topic initiation, for its part, is provided after the sequential position marker "**If Saku asked that**" (4). Here, the speaker, Kalervo, links his turn back to the chair's question, which the chair had made in order to summarize an aspect of the opening speaker's turn[10]. Further, the turn continues with a new prospective indexical, which provides an answer to the question the speaker has attributed to the chair: "**what an AA member is like - so it's like this just here and now**" (5-6). Again this prospective indexical makes relevant an explication of what "**this just here and now**" means. The prospective indexicals are a methodical way to initiate an extended telling. In extract 6, the

turn initiation is designed in a somewhat different way than in the cases above, thereby allowing us a chance to elaborate further the turn opening patterns in AA.

Extract 6 (V1Markku0686)

1 M: Markku ja alkoholisti. (2.0)
Markku and an alcoholic. (2.0)

2 Mä oon tässä ollut matkoilla (1.0)
I have here been traveling
I've just been traveling (1.0)

3 eräiden AA-jäsenten kanssa (.) tuolla (0.5) Tukholmassa
some AA-members with there in-Stockholm
with some AA-members (.) there (0.5) in Stockholm

4 ja hhh (0.5) oli hyvin mielenkiintoinen matka siellä, (1.0)
and was very interesting journey there
and hhh (0.5) that was a very interesting trip, (1.0)

5 pääsin hyvin (.) tutustumaan itseeni ja. (1.0)
I-was-able well to-learn myself and
I got a chance (.) to learn a lot about myself and. (1.0)

6 .mth Mä muistan muutamav-muutamia vuosia sitten hhh
.mth I recall some:y- some years ago hhh

7 kun mä tulin tänne, tähän AA-yhteisöön ja, (1.5)
when I got here, to this AA-community and, (1.5)

8 mul-mä olin hyvin voi-yyh voimakkaasti alemmuudentuntoinen
my- I was very str- strongly feeling-inferior
my- I was feeling very stro- uh strongly inferior

9 ja (1.0) ja tuota yhm (1.0) vähättelin itseäni ja (0.8)
and (1.0) and er:m u:h (1.0) I belittled myself and (0.8)

10 (0.8) häpesin menneisyyttäni ja (1.0) tekojani ja (1.0)
(0.8) I was ashamed of my past and (1.0) my deeds and (1.0)

11 <kaikkia tämmösiä ja>. (0.8)
<all these things and>. (0.8)

In extract 6, the speaker does not provide any "floor-holding cues" after the conventional identification, and a lengthy gap, about two seconds, emerges after the opening line. However, no recipient makes an attempt to take a turn. The fact that none of the nearly 200 recipients comes in during this silence demonstrates

recipients' unanimous acceptance of the speaker's right to go on. Hence, both the speakers and their recipients treat the speakers as having the right to produce long multi unit turns. Under these circumstances, it is not interactionally consequential whether the speakers display their willingness to continue after the first turn constructional unit (as in extracts 4 and 5) or whether the recipients withhold from coming in. However, on both occasions the speakers are allowed to continue, and their right to go on is unanimously ratified. Note however that already the conventional design of the first utterance displays the speaker's understanding of the institutionality of the ongoing occasion, thereby initiating a turn as being a recognizable part of an AA meeting. After the turn is initiated in that fashion and the recipients have also recognized it as being a part of the AA meeting, the speaker may move on, and continue the construction of an extended turn as a turn in, and for, an AA meeting that has been ratified by both the speaker and the recipients. In this way, the AA meeting is a collaborative achievement, and its distinct system for turn-taking is an accomplishment that is based on participants' orientation to maintain and to manage this meeting format.

Further, extract 6 is slightly different from the cases above in that it does not have any explicit sequential position markers. Nevertheless, as extract 5 included an expanded identification (lines 2-3), which was prospectively linked to the telling of what an AA member is like, extract 6 includes a synopsis (lines 2-5) of a story to be subsequently told (lines 6-11). At lines 2-5, Markku tells that he has been traveling with some AA members and that the trip was interesting as he learned a lot about himself. After this *abstract* (see Labov & Waletsky, 1967), a story is told that reveals what he has learned about himself. (Note that only the beginning of the story is shown in extract 6). We find out that Markku's turn, even if it is not explicitly linked to previous turns, is topically connected to preceding talks. Markku tells his side of what an AA member is like. (Extracts 5 and 6 are from the same meeting.) The story itself is initiated with the help of a laminator verb "**I recall**" (line 6), which again is a common device for launching a story (Arminen, 1991).

To conclude, both speakers and recipients orient to turns being constructed as extended turns. The turns are allocated by the chair, and their order is preallocated on the basis of a list of volunteer speakers. The production of expanded units is a methodical accomplishment which relies on several members' methods, of which we have noted prospective indexicals, in particular. We may note yet another feature in common in turns in the Vuori group. All the turns presented share an autobiographical commitment. The prospective indexicals and abstracts that are used as devices for constructing tellable items all share a first-person stance. This shows that mutual help in AA consists of autobiographical reflection about personal problems and their solutions. Next we will discuss more in detail the types of turns used in AA.

ORIENTATIONS TO THE SHARING OF EXPERIENCES

Thus far we have explored the members' orientations to the format, the opening rituals, and the turn length at AA meetings. The members' orientations to the institutional constraints concerning turn design merit further consideration. We can get an idea of what should go inside the turns in the AA literature, such as in the steps, the traditions and the preamble (Anonymous, 1986/1952). Although the AA literature forms an identifiable ethical program, it does not amount to a clear set of rules for what and how members should speak at the meetings. Hints and suggestions can be found; for instance, members should not try to advise, diagnose or counsel each other at the meetings (Mäkelä et al., 1996, p. 142). Tradition ten directs members not to express opinions on outside issues and draw AA into controversial issues such as religion or politics (Anonymous, 1986/1952). Finally, the preamble maintains that the meetings are for the"sharing of personal exeriences". This entails two prescriptions. First, it proposes that the participants take a first-person stance, thereby delimiting their talk to issues known by their own experience. Second, it suggests that these experiences are to be related in a special way: they are to be "shared." Personal stories are to be told in relation to each other in order to be recognized and identified with by the recipients. Regardless of whether the topic of the meeting is a step study, a tradition, or a personal story, participants are expected to cover it through their experiences. This limitation to personal experiences can be interpreted in various ways, and generally it is the individual member's responsibility to draw the lines on the subject and manner of speaking. As a whole, the responsibility to learn by participating and observing the proper behavior and speaking style is left to members, doing this is a part of AA's voluntaristic ethos.

Personal experiences are a broad category to the extent that it would not be reasonable even to try to give a full description of what is being talked about in AA. What counts as personal experiences is open to manipulation: almost anything can be said from a subjective, first-person stance (Goffman, 1981; Maynard, 1984; Clayman, 1992). Political opinions, unwelcome as they are, can be expressed, when they are stated from the viewpoint of the experiencing subject[11]. "I talk of political matters as a personal problem, how Holkeri (Prime Minister) or Koivisto (President) make me mad when I see them on television" (citation from an interview of an AA member, in Mäkelä et al., 1996, p. 141). But generally, AA members orient to a more narrow interpretation of personal experiences[12]. The focus on personal experiences entails that each member speak only on behalf of him/herself, and avoid imposing his/her views on others or criticizing others. A paradoxical consequence is that as long as AA members routinely avoid criticizing and commenting on other members, the existence of this orientation is very difficult to demonstrate. Each turn of talk is simply composed of personal experiences the content of which is highly variable but does not include critical evaluations of other members. The felicitousness of turns becomes observable and documentable

only on those occasions when some aspect of the talk is accounted for, or sanctioned as being somehow inappropriate. Sometimes speakers' orientations come to the surface of talk when they treat a part of their own talk as being improper (Arminen, 1996). Let us return to extract 6. Markku is telling how his trip with other AA members has liberated him from his feelings of inferiority, but then (line 20) he pays attention to the potentially inappropriate implications of his account.

Extension of 6 (V1Markku0686)

6 .mth Mä muistan muutamav-muutamia vuosia sitten hhh
.mth I recall some:y- some years ago hhh

7 kun mä tulin tänne, tähän AA-yhteisöön ja, (1.5)
when I got here, to this AA-community and, (1.5)

8 mul-mä olin hyvin voi-yyh voimakkaasti alemmuudentuntoinen
my- I was very str- strongly feeling-inferior
my- I was feeling very stro- uh strongly inferior

9 ja (1.0) ja tuota yhm (1.0) vähättelin itseäni ja (0.8)
and (1.0) and er:m u:h (1.0) I belittled myself and (0.8)

10 (0.8) häpesin menneisyyttäni ja (1.0) tekojani ja (1.0)
(0.8) I was ashamed of my past and (1.0) my deeds and (1.0)

11 <kaikkia tämmösiä ja>. (0.8)
<all these things and>. (0.8)

12 ↑Mä olin tuolla reissulla ja (1.6) huomasin että (0.8)
↑I was on that trip and (1.6) I noticed that (0.8)

13 .mth mulla on poistunu tämmöset- (.) tämmöset ajatukset (.)
I have disappered these-kind these-kind-of thoughts
.mth these kind- (.) these kinds of thoughts (.) have vanished

14 mielestä (.) aika pitkälti ja. (2.0) uuuh Huomasin ett mä e:hkä
from-mind quite largely and I-noticed that I maybe
from my mind (.) quite largely and. (2.0) u::h I noticed that maybe

15 saatan=ett mä oon tervehtynyt hieman tällä alueella. (0.5)
can that I have become-healthy a-bit in-this area
I can=that I've become a bit healthier in this respect. (0.5)

16 .hhh Mä(.hh) h(.hhh)uomasin et(.hh)tä
.hhh I(.hh) n(.hhh)oticed tha(.hh)t

17 → mä oon <a:i:van> turhaan väheksyny itseäni, (1.0)
I've <co:mple:tely> in vain belittled myself, (1.0)

18 → kun mä katselin sitä joukkoa ympärillä,
when I was watching the group around,

19 → että mä oon <aivan> <ihan> turhaan, (1.0)
that I've <completely> <fully> in vain, (1.0)

20 → >siis< yhm-m-mää- >tää ei tarkoita sitä että mä arvostelisin,<
>I mean< u:h-I-I::- >this doesn't mean that I would criticize,<

21 → >mut mä uskoisin että mä oon niinku< yyh-#t#-
but I would-believe that I have like
>but I believe that I've like< uu:h-#t#-

22 → jollakin tavalla itse tuota (1.0) ruvennu muuttuu,=
in some way myself e:rm (1.0) begun to change,=

23 mun vaimoni sanoi tänää että, (0.3) .mth hän yhtyy sinuun,
my wife said today that, (0.3) .mth she agrees with you,

24 (0.3) et-tota @sä et oikein luota itsees,@
(0.3) th-er:m @you don't quite trust yourself,@

After Markku has started to state for a second time that he has belittled himself in vain (19), he leaves the utterance unfinished, pauses and produces an explicatory particle "**I mean**" **[siis]**, followed with "**uh**" and the repeated "**I**" that is cut off (20). Then a repair is produced with a rejection component "**this does not mean that I would criticize**" (20), and the correction proper "**but I believe that I have ... begun to change**" (21-22). The repair concerns the implications of the prior segment. Just prior to the unfinished utterance, Markku says that he was watching the group around him (18). This explication of the context of his realization makes his statement vulnerable to being heard as a comparative judgement about the inferiority of his fellow members (e.g. while he was watching others he noticed that he had belittled himself in vain). His repair counters exactly this line of hearing: he points out that he is not assessing others critically but he himself has started to develop.

We find a similar kind of instance of self-monitoring for the implications of talk in extract 5. Kalervo is producing his version of "what AA members are like," and subsequently makes a corrective formulation.

Extension of 5 (V1Kalervo0686)

4 .h Jos .hhh ↑Saku kysy että, (.)
.h If .hhh ↑Saku asked that

5 minkälainen on AA-AA:n jäsen
what-kind-of is AA- member
what an AA- AA-member is like

6 niin se on tä:mmö:nen just tässä ↑nyt.
so it is this-kind just here now
so it's li:ke thi:s just here and ↑now.

7 Paljon kärsiny vähän kokenu yyh
A-lot suffered a-little experienced
Suffered a lot experienced a bit of u:h

8 laitapuolen elämää .hh ollu pikkusen linnassa,=
skidrow life have-been a-bit in-jail
life in skidrow .hh been a while in jail,=

9 → =>no se nyt ei kuulemma ole< välttä:mätöntä,
it now neg. have-heard is necessary
=>well they say it isn't< ne:cessa:ry,

10 → mutta minun kohdalla se oli tar:peellista,
but in-my case it was needful
but in my case it was use:ful,

11 .hh kaikkee muuta vähän siltä väliltä (.)
everything else a-bit in between
.hh and everything else in between (.)

12 ja sitt minä vielä tunnustaudun olevani alkoholisti. .hhh
and then I also avow being an-alcoholic
and then I also avow to be an alcoholic. .hhh

After the third characteristic of an AA member "**been a while in jail**" (8), Kalervo latches a particle "**well**" [no] and speeds up to initiate a repair "**>well they say it isn't necessary<**" (9), which rejects the implications of the trouble source, "**been a while in jail**". Then, he produces the correction proper "**but in my case it was useful**" (10), whose type of operation is "explanation" (Schegloff, 1992, pp. 1312-1313). Kalervo states that for him, and for him only, jail was useful (or necessary) for getting into AA because the prison experience taught him to realize that AA might be a good idea. Thus, through his repair, Kalervo conveys the idea that even if prison was a useful experience for him, he does not want to suggest that it would be useful, and certainly not necessary, for all AA members.

Both the extracts above display the speakers' ongoing process of monitoring their talk for any impressions arising from it that may potentially be unwanted and troublesome, and hence repairable. They demonstrate speakers' relentless orienta-

tion to the avoidance of criticism against others or to the imposition of their own values on others. In extract 5, Kalervo amends the implication that he would see a prison experience as necessary for AA membership. In this way, he conveys his respect for the integrity of other members by not imposing his own standards on them. In a similar mode, Markku corrects the depreciatory and critical impressions of his comparative statement that he has belittled himself in vain. Here the word selection "**this doesn't mean that I would criticize**" indicates the speaker's devotion to the cause of the moral integrity of others, and the final part of his formulation "**I believe that I have ... begun to change**" points the finger of moral responsibility at himself.

To summarize, these extracts exhibit a moral work in which AA members assign the moral liability to themselves, and avoid imposing normative standards on others. In the Vuori group, speakers orient to sharing their experiences, and they avoid critically assessing others' behavior and turns of talk. Instead, speakers occasionally display that some aspect of their own talk has been incorrect and troublesome due to its critical tone (for a more detailed discussion about the specificity of some self-repair practices in AA, see Arminen, 1996). We may also note that these kinds of corrective formulations about the implications of one's own talk are reflexively related to the distinct formal turn-taking organization. They are not occasioned by recipients' responses, or the lack of a response, but they are based mainly on the self-monitoring of one's own talk. That is, these corrective formulations solve "embedded misunderstandings," since the suspension of close ordering makes it practically impossible for recipients to indicate these misunderstandings. (Although the lack of video materials does not allow me to judge the role of kinetic interaction.) In this sense, corrective formulations are anticipatory devices that allow AA members to maintain interactional arrangements that, for their part, occasion these devices. As the conversational close ordering is suspended, each speaker in turn becomes the solely responsible narrator of her/his experiences, which leads to accentuated self-monitoring of talk. Consequently, speakers in AA meetings display a considerable sensitivity toward other participants, thereby collaboratively maintaining an institutionally distinct setting in which delicate issues can be discussed without fear of direct confrontations.

Finally, we may also notice that speakers themselves orient to the sanctionable status of their talk on those rare occasions when they depart from refraining from criticism. Extract 7 provides us a case on the point.

Extract 7 (V9Kake0691)

1 K: Joo: minä oon Kake (.) ja alkoholisti (0.4)
Yeah: I'm Kake (.) and an alcoholic (0.4)

2 Mull on tänään erinomaiset suhteet vaimooni (.)
I have today a great relationship with my wife (.)

3 jota aikoinaan kutsuin riivinraudaksi (0.8)
who I once called a harpy (0.8)

4 ↑Ja hyvät suhteet mull on mielestäni
↑and I think I have a good relationship going

5 kaikkien ↑muittenkin ihmisten °kans:° (0.3)
with all other ↑other people °as well°(0.3)

6 Ja luultavasti lähtökohtana on se että (.)
And probably the basis for this is that (.)

7 AA:ssa mä oon kasvanu ymmärtämään
at AA I've learned to understand

8 ettei: ihmisten tarvitte keskenään riidellä
that: people don't have to fight with each other

9 .h vaikka asioista oltais eri °mielt° (0.9)
.h even when they would °disagree°(0.9)

10 → ja koska (.) minä: h minä pyysin tän puheenvuoron (.)
and because (.) I: h I asked for a turn here (.)

11 sen takia (.) tähän yhteyteen
because (.) in this connection

12 (.) koska mä en voi osallistua enää
(.) because as a member of the Rantasalmi group

13 Rantasalmen ryhmän jäsenenä .h
I can no longer take part .h

14 Vuori-ryhmän asiakokouksiin (0.5)
in the business meetings of the Vuori group (0.5)

15 → Kuitenkin mä haluaisin tässä sanoa semmosen asian
However I'd like to say such a thing here

16 → .hh joka on.h meidän kaikkien yhteinen asia (.)
.hh which is .h a matter common to all of us (.)

17 → ja myöskin asiakokouksen asia
and also a matter of a business meeting

18 → .hh ja=jotta osaisin sanoa sen ly:hyesti:
.hh and=in order to be able to put it briefly:

19 → niin oon pannu sen paperille (0.8)
I've written it down on paper (0.8)

20 ja se kuuluu näin (.)
and this is how it goes (.)

21 @voidakseen toteuttaa ainoan päätarkoituksensa
@in order to pursue their only main purpose

22 .h perinteisiin pitäytyvät AA-ryhmät
.h tradition-bound AA groups

23 ovat jättäneet kiinteistöjen (.)
have handed over the management of real estate (.)

24 ja toimistojen hallinnon (.) sekä palkkojen maksamisen (.)
and office facilities (.) and the payment of wages (.)

25 sellaisille yhteisöille jotka toimivat
to such organizations that are

26 täysin irrallaan AA:sta sellaisenaan@ (.)
completely independent of AA as such@ (.)

The beginning of Kake's turn is unnotable. He tells about how he has learned to live with his wife and others without argument. At line 10, though, he starts to recount why he has asked to speak at this very occasion. Through this activity, Kake prepares the listeners for some impertinence to follow. His account displays an understanding that his turn will depart from the ordinary course of events, which is evidently justified. At lines 12 to 14, Kake explains an external contingency concerning his turn. As a member of another group (which is located in another town) he is no longer entitled to attend the business meetings of the Vuori group. Note also the way Kake formulates his tellable item. First he produces a prospective indexical "**However I'd like to say such a thing here**" (15). Then he produces a characterization about the tellable item: "**which is a matter common to all of us**" (16). In this fashion, Kake displays his understanding of the nature of expected talkable items in AA, and only afterwards does he state that the issue he is going to talk about would be "**also a matter of a business meeting**" (17). Kake also pays attention to a stylistic issue; subsequently he justifies the fact that he is going to read his "statement" from the written notes in order to be brief (18-19). Also, on other occasions, AA members display that they value spontaneous talk and not reading of notes. In all, Kake's departure from the normal course of the meeting has given us a good picture of what the speakers in the Vuori group are expected to talk about. Speakers orient to telling about matters common to all of them, experiences about their problems and the ways of dealing with them. The

speakers are not supposed to bring up controversial issues, start arguments, or criticize others in the meetings[13]. Finally, a spontaneous delivery of talks is preferred to written notes or preplanned speeches.

ON THE RELEVANCE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF TURN-TAKING FOR THE SHARING OF EXPERIENCES

We have shown that AA members in the Vuori group are oriented to sharing their experiences, and that normally turns of talk are designed so that each person speaks only on behalf of him/herself. This respect for others' integrity is the foundation for the sharing of experiences. However, we may wonder how this kind of an organization of interaction works as it does not seem to leave any possibilities for participants to counter turns that challenge the occasion and its aims. In that respect, Kake's turn discussed above is a good candidate for a turn that clearly is a departure from the primary purpose of mutual help. We can now look at how Kake's turn is received, thereby shedding light on the ways in which troubles inside the meetings are managed.

Extract 8 (V9Kake0691)

((Kake goes on reading. About two minutes omitted after the last extract. After Kake's turn the ordinary course of the meeting is disrupted as several speakers take turns that were not preallocated. These speakers have not been identified, and their turns have simply been marked with the symbols V (+ the turn number).))

1 K: EIKÄ puheenjohtaja välittänyt ollenkaan aikaisemmin
AND the chair completely disregarded the earlier

2 lukkoon lyömästään yksimielisestä päätöksestä
unanimously agreed decision

3 lopettaa maakuntaseudun palvelukeskus ry:n
to discontinue the financial support to the rural

4 taloudellisen t-tukemisen kokonaan .h[h
service center association altogether .h[h

5 B: [rr

6 rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr[rrrrrrrrrrrrrr]

7 K: JOTTA AILAHTELEVILLA AA:l[aisilla e-]ei olisi
SO THAT UNSTABLE AA me[mbers would u]o- not have

8 → A: [tt tt tt tt tt t]ttttttttttt

9 ttttttttttt TTTTTTTTTTTTTTT TT TT TT TT] tt tt tt tt tt tt

10 K: tilaisuutta KÄYTTÄÄ TOISTENSA RAHOJA]
the chance TO SPEND EACH OTHER'S MONEY]

11→V1: aika loppu
time up

12 →K: olkoon aika loppu mu:l(h) on #viimenen puheenvuoro#
so what I:ve(h) got the #last turn#

13 (.) kai mä saan käyttää tämän loppuun?
(.) you are going to let me finish aren't you?

14 V2: ei käy=
sorry no=

15 V3: =ct saa=
= no =

16 V4: =meil o kolmeminuuttia vuoro—=
=it's three minutes a turn—=

17 V5: =———

18 K: AHA

19 V5: ——(toimitus jäljellä vielä)—
——*(we have some things left)*—

20 K: SENPÄ TAKIA MINÄ TÄSSÄ PUHUNKI [jos mä oisin
WELL THAT'S WHY I'M TALKING HERE [if I were a member

21→B: [rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

22 rrrrrrrrrrrrrr

27 K: [Yhm
[Hm

28 (.)

29 V8: oma on mielipitees
it's your opinion

30 K: ni: se on MInun käsitykseni=
yeah: it is MY view=

31 V9: =puhu loppuun vaan=
=just finish your talk=

32 K: =JOTTA AILAHTELEVILLA AA:laisilla
=SO THAT UNSTABLE AA members

33 ei olisi tilaisuutta käyttää
would not have the chance to spend each

34 toistensa rahoja ryhmän nimissä kaikenlaisiin #vouhotuksiin#
other's money in the group's name on all sorts of #nonsense#

35 (.) AA:n kuudes perinne sanoo (.)
(.) AA's sixth tradition says (.)

36 että AA-ryhmän ei tulisi milloinkaan ryhtyä
that an AA group ought never

37 rahoittajaksi millekään sukulaisjärjestölle .hh
finance any related facility .hh

38 jotta raha-asiat (.) omaisuus (.) ja arvovalta (.)
lest money matters (.) property (.) and prestige (.)

39 eivät vierottaisi meitä alkuperäisestä tavoitteestamme
divert us from our primary purpose

40 .hh niinpä on lupa odottaa (.) että aa-kokousten normaali
.hh so we may expect (.) that the normal profits from

41 lipastuotto .h sen jälkeen kun ryhmän
collections at AA meetings .h once the group's

42 omat menot on maksettu .h luovutetaan
own expenses have been paid .h are transferred

43 kokonaan ja yksinomaan AA:n tileille (.)
in full and exclusively to AA's accounts (.)

44 silloin linja on selvä (.) avustusten kohteista
that'll be a clear line (.) about goals of aid

45 ei tarvitse KIIStellä >niinkun-nytkin-
there's no need to ARGue >like-right-now-we

46 meinas-tulla-kiista< .hh eikä sen tähden
almost-had-an-argument< .hh nor for that reason

47 rikkoa ryhmän rauhaa tai AA:n yhtenäisyyttä (.)
cause discord in the group or break AA's unity (.)

48 Tässä sanoin sen minkä halusin sanoa
I said here what I wanted to say

49 Vuoriryhmän entisenä [jäsenenä.]=Kiitos.
as a previous member of [the Vuori group.]=Thanks.

50 B: [rrrrrrrrrrrr]

51 A: tt tt tt ttttttttTTTTTTttttt[ttttttttttttt ttt t tt tt]

52 C: [Kiitos Kake. Enne]nko päästetään
[Thank you Kake. Be]fore we let

53 (.) Heikki lukemaan loppusanoja
(.) Heikki read the closing words

54 (.) niin lyhyet ilmoittautumiset ANNA ja VUOKKO
(.) so could you briefly come forward ANNA and VUOKKO

55 >olkaa-hyvä< Anna ensin.
>please< Anna first.

56 Vu: Vuokko, ja olen tänään liittynyt Vuori-ryhmän jäseneks:
Vuokko, and I have today joined as a member of the Vuori group

57 (.)

58 A: tt tt tt ttttttttttttTTTTTTTTTTttttt tt tt

During the first three minutes of Kake's turn, that is, during the normal, reserved length for commentary turns (only part of the data shown), no audience reactions are heard on the tape. Of course, with the absence of video recording we

cannot tell whether any unusual "gesturing" takes place. However, the audio tape gives no hints about possible forms of disapproval (no disaffiliative laughter, whispering, buzzing, murmuring, booing nor an unusual amount of background noise is audible). This all gives us evidence regarding how strongly the participants in the Vuori group are commited to maintaining the format of these gatherings. The participants sustain their orientation to the nature of the gathering even during turns of talk, which they may consider impertinent. All this, however, is quickly changed after the speaker has used the time reserved.

After Kake has been talking, or more precisely, reading his statement for three minutes, the time signal is given (lines 5-6). This, as such, is a routine procedure (see Arminen, 1998, pp. 141-148). When the time signal starts, Kake was just starting to initiate a new utterance, as the inbreath indicates (4). Subsequently, instead of giving up his turn, Kake competes with the ringing by raising his voice "**IN ORDER THAT UNSTABLE AA members**" (7). This attempt to hold the floor despite the time signal is met with clapping at the middle of Kake's ongoing construction of sentence (7/8). First only some persons clap, but soon many more start a loud burst of clapping (8-9). After the beginning of the clapping, Kake still tries to hold the floor by again increasing his volume "**members would no- not have the chance TO SPEND EACH OTHER'S MONEY**" (7, 10). But when the strong clapping continues, Kake gives up and the applause fades rapidly (9-10).

In this sequential environment clapping is not an affiliative response, but a technique for competing with the current speaker. This disaffiliative nature of the clapping is perspicuous in its orchestration (cf. Atkinson, 1984; Clayman, 1993). The clapping starts after the speaker has raised his voice (7/8), thereby opposing the speaker's displayed intention to continue. Furthermore, the clapping dies off immediately after the speaker has fallen silent. Therefore it was not a favorable responsive applause, but a preventive, discouraging action. We may also notice that the speaker oriented to this nature of the clapping as he tried to overcome the applause with his raised voice instead of accepting it as a supportive gesture. Nevertheless, clapping is a relatively polite and disaffectionate way to challenge a speaker in contrast to potential alternatives such as booing[14]. The fact that clapping was used to discourage the speaker from continuing is in line with, and maintains the nature of the gathering as one in which no affective disapprovals, like booing, are shown. Again the avoidance of affective disapprovals is quintessential for sustaining "a safe haven" in which delicate issues can be discussed safely.

Subsequently, strife follows when the ratified speaker has been silenced with the help of clapping. At that point nobody holds the floor and the preallocated turn order collapses. After the ratified speaker has fallen silent (line 10), but not acknowledged the closing of his turn, the floor is open for interventions. We might think that the chair might come in, and call for order. However, in this case the chair does not come in, which for its part may be related to the chair's perceived role as a servant to the group and not an authority (see tradition two: Anonymous, 1986/1952)[15]. As the chair has not taken the turn and the ratified speaker has fallen

silent, shouting begins (line 11). This is a very unusual happenstance in AA; it is the only case of public controversy in my materials from 12 meetings, a deviant case, in the strict sense of the term[16]. The frame of the meeting breaks down for a while.

At line 11, after Kake has stopped, somebody shouts "**time up**". Kake then requests a right to finish his turn, and appeals to the fact that his turn is the last one of this meeting (12-13)[17]. But he is given straightforward negative answers by three subsequent speakers, of which the last one appeals to the rule that the turns are three minutes each (14-16). Next, some inaudible/hardly audible talk follows (maybe one of the chairpersons says something to Kake, lines 17, 19). Judging from Kake's response (20), he was given the suggestion that the issue should be brought up in the business meeting. Kake refuses this suggestion on the basis of the fact that he is unable to attend the business meetings of the Vuori group (20, 23). At this point, the time signal is given again (21-22). As Kake does not give up, some new members enter into the debate, and this time express conciliatory views (25-26). Kake's right to finish his turn is supported on the basis of the fact that "**otherwise there'll be unnecessary**" (25). The end of the turn is inaudible, presumably an "unnecessary row" is what was meant. Subsequently, somebody still challenges Kake by stating: "**It's your opinion**" (29), which sounds like a belittling of the value of Kake's view. Interestingly, Kake responds with an overt agreement: "**yeah: it is MY view**" (30). This response can be heard as orienting to the AA context, where everybody is expected to express their own views only. After this conciliatory move, Kake is requested to finish his turn for a third time (31). At that point, Kake starts reading, which takes no more than about a half minute. After Kake has done a recognizable closing for his turn (48-49), and marked his closing with thanks, the meeting returns to its normal course. Kake's turn is even responded to with applause, and the chair thanks him (51-52). The meeting then proceeds towards its end.

At the outset, we may notice that conflicts, as rare as they may be, do take place inside the AA meetings. However, we must also pay attention to the specific features of this conflict. First of all, even if a conflict took place, it concerned almost exclusively the speaker's right to exceed the time limit; there was no overt argumentation about the content of his talk. As far as the conflict concerned the maximum length of the turn, it showed the participants' orientation to the format of the gathering. Only one somehow substantial challenge was uttered "**It's your opinion**" (29), but the potential argument was derailed with an overt agreement. Second, very soon after the conflict had burst out, an opinion was stated, and also supported, in which the avoidance of conflicts was presented as a goal itself. Finally, as soon as the problem of speakership was resolved, the strife faded away rapidly. In all, this conflict was managed in a manner that in itself suggests that there is an overwhelming orientation to the avoidance of public disagreements in the Vuori group.

As a whole, AA meetings are a scene where public rows are unusual. The

absence, or strictly speaking, the vagueness and the low frequency of conflicts in AA is reflexively related to the organization of interaction at the meetings. As long as speakers use extended turns in a preallocated order, then even the possibility for open argument is ruled out. Further, as long as each member speaks only on behalf of him/herself no debatable issues come to the surface of meetings. This orientation to the sharing of personal experiences still has some intriguing consequences. Namely, if speakers do not deal with others' experiences, this logically attributes the responsibility for bringing up one's own issues to each individual. The respect for others' integrity allocates the working of the recovery program to the duty of individual members. Consequently, AA as a way of life is a self-directed learning process. This emphasis on individual responsibility also covers meeting behavior. As much as AA meetings are based on a formal organization, they are also based on individual freedom to speak without the interference of other members. This, for its part, relies on the self-direction of each member, and on the members' trust in each other. Members counter each other's turns only on vanishingly rare occasions, but they rely on each other's abilities to learn the proper conduct, and to learn the AA way of life without being given direct advice in the meetings. To conclude, AA in its entirety is a cultural evolutionary process both for members and groups, based on voluntary participation[18].

DISCUSSION

All AA meetings, regardless of their specific type, are interactional achievements where turn-taking is not an exterior condition but a vehicle used for the organization of the whole speech event. The specific institutional form of turn-taking characterizes AA meetings, and many tasks are carried out through the local management of that format. The mechanism of turn-taking becomes organizationally relevant not only for the allocation of speaking time but also for the handling of disruptions. Turn-taking offers a channel through which all the interlocutors of the meeting: the speaker, meeting officials, and the recipients, can jointly adjust the flow of events in relation to the shared purpose of the gathering.

Many ethnographers have also noticed the relevance of turn-taking for AA meetings. Denzin (1987, p. 116) gives an account of an extremely affective meeting (U.S., Midwest) where a relapsed member had displayed heartbroken desperation and burst into helpless crying. Denzin writes, "Each member who spoke after this individual thanked him for coming back. A box of tissues was passed to him as he cried. Members offered him rides to other meetings. His show of emotion was not taken, then, as a sign of the loss of face." Denzin's note tells us not only that the show of emotion was esteemed and respected but also of the way in which it was done. According to Denzin's depiction nobody approached the member, only a box of tissues was passed. Further, the ordinary round of turns took place despite the emotional leakage. The members' sustained orientation to the format of a gathering enables AA meetings to handle flows of emotion and burning desires with-

out uncontrollable escalation. The rules of turn-taking also help to minimize the risk of open conflicts. Johnson (1987, p. 464) gives an account of a meeting in California where a person (Rob) challenged multiaddicted members of the group by claiming that drugs were not a proper topic for AA meetings: "Rob was never challenged, outright, in the meetings . . . Subsequent speakers simply (discussed) their own experiences (with drugs) gently after Rob spoke. Since Rob had had his turn, he could not counter." Indeed, were the AA members always respectful of the meeting format, then no open conflicts would be possible in the meetings.

The practical and organizational relevance of the AA meeting format can also be illuminated with comparisons to the activities carried out before and after the meeting. During these occasions AA members interact mainly with other AA members, but they are not tied to the format of the AA meeting. More mundane concerns are expressed and the special meaning of AA meetings becomes observable in contrast. Moreover, we can claim that the specificity, the *just this-ness* of AA meetings is produced as they are sequentially molded out of their surrounding context. As no recordings of the before and after the meeting activities are available, we must now rely on ethnographic notes in this respect. The following note is based on an observation of a small, intimate open meeting in Helsinki.

> During the meeting the telephone rang. Later the person who had answered the phone commented in his turn that he had done his twelfth step's work by telling the caller that they were having a meeting, and by reminding the caller of this chance. After the meeting the issue was taken up. The caller's name was mentioned (he was a member who had just fallen off the wagon). Another member commented that it was not a surprise; one and a half months was one of the longest periods of sobriety this fellow had ever managed in his numerous attempts. Somebody said: "He's a slipper." Conversation continued. (Field note, Helsinki, April, 1989)

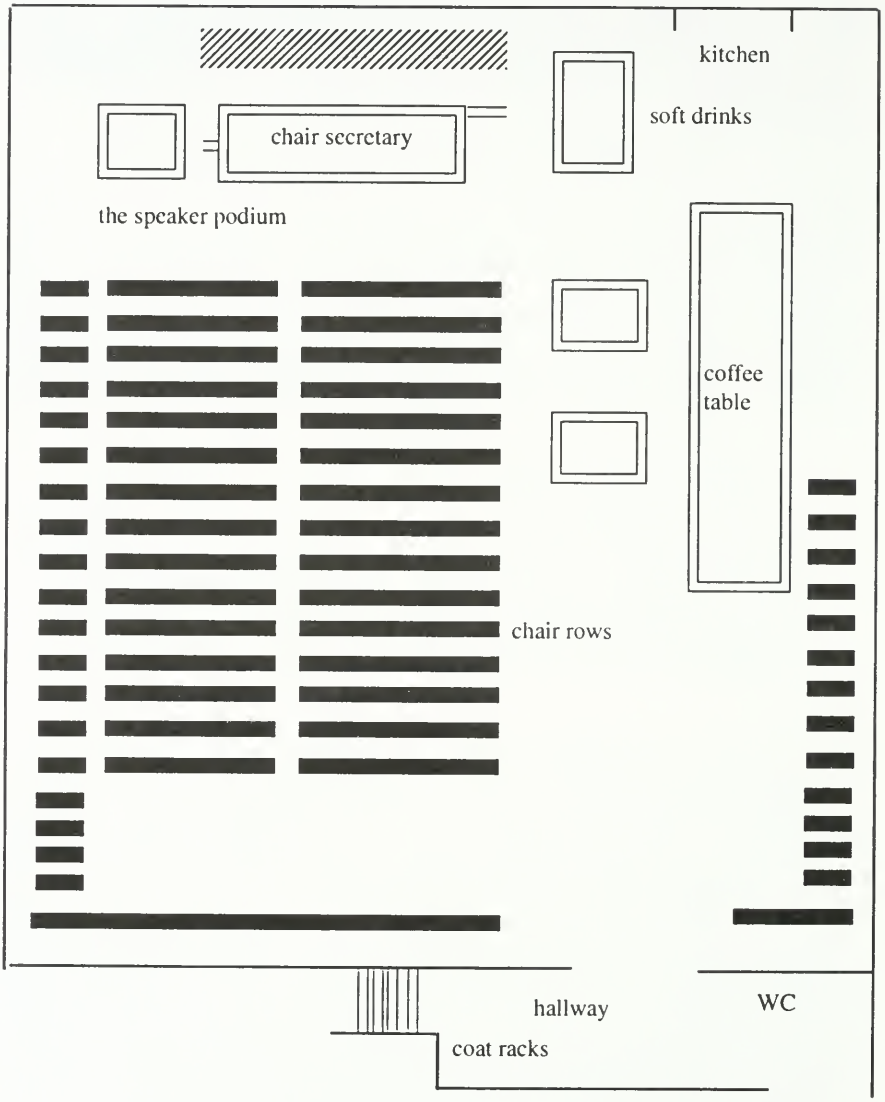
In their meetings AA members are oriented toward a specific institutional order with delimited participation rights. Turn-taking follows a preallocated path and members orient to sharing their experiences. In the note above, the member who had answered the phone oriented to the organization of the meeting by waiting for his turn. Instead of rushing to deliver the news, he formulated the incident from an AA viewpoint by telling of his attempt to carry the message, but he refrained from getting involved in the caller's issues. He avoided bringing up the caller's issues to the surface of the meeting and, thus, secured for his part the ordinary flow of the meeting. But noticeably, before and after the meeting no institutional restrictions are oriented to and ordinary conversation with gossip and everyday moral assessments can take place. In contrast, the meeting with its restrictive format is apt for dealing with delicate personal matters without argument and personality clashes. The system of turn-taking in AA rules out serious conflicts, thereby making meetings suited for sensitive, personal issues. This adjustment is accomplished through specific delimitations of the organization of interaction, of which the specific system for turn-taking is the most fundamental.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: The floor plan of the hall for the Vuori-group open meeting



(adapted from Haavisto 1992: Appendix 3)

Appendix B: Transcription symbols

The speakers' names, and possibly some other details, have been changed in order to secure the anonymity of the persons involved.

Transcription symbols and conventions of conversation analysis are used throughout the extracts (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). The contributions coming from the audience are identified with the speakership symbol A:, i.e., A: [coughing], the chair's with C, and other speakers' with the initial of the speaker's name. Other additional symbols are listed below.

The translation uses two lines, when necessary. The lowest line is an 'idiomatic' translation, and most analyses can be followed with the help of that line only. The line in between is a 'gloss', which is used when the idiomatic translation diverts syntactically from the original speech. The gloss provides the reader a possibility to follow word-by-word the proceeding of the original speech. Interpretations are added if necessary. The extremely long extracts, however, have been usually presented without the gloss.

Extracts have been identified with the following code: [number of recording in corpus][the name of the ratified floor holder][month and year of the recording], i.e., V3Pave0990: Vuori-group meeting #3, in which a turn is allocated to Pave, September 1990.

@ @	animated voice
° °	diminishing voice
# #	shivering voice
rrrr	bell
ttTTtt	applause

NOTES

An earlier version of the paper is a part of the PhD dissertation monograph "Therapeutic Interaction. A Study of Mutual Help in the Meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous" (Helsinki, 1988).

[1]One of the basic divisions in AA is between open and closed meetings. "Closed" meetings are only for AA members, i.e., for those who identify themselves as (recovering) alcoholics - there are no formal membership criteria. "Open" meetings are, in principle, open for everybody. In practice, the meaning of this distinction is variable. Any "closed" meeting may be attended by a visitor if all the participants accept it. Some of the open meetings may practically be closed, i.e., visiting "outsiders" are very rare. For instance, in the Vuori group all the speakers are AA members.

[2]The restrictions posed by the tradition of anonymity generally preclude videorecordings. Naturally, the lack of video recordings is unfortunate, as we cannot make use of gaze and non-verbal gestures. However, some setting features may alleviate this loss. My own observations, and other ethnographic materials (Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 142-152) suggest that intensive eye contact may be avoided in AA meetings. The delicacy of the situation and the respect of the integrity of persons who admit their personal failures, may be partially constructed with the help of cautiousness toward others. The speakerís devotion to autobiographical reflection can occasionally be seen also from a vacant look, as the speakerís eyes, metaphorically speaking, are turned inside. The more or less unconditional ban on video recordings is itself part of this phenomenon through which a spiritual, even a sacred atmosphere is built. Moreover, the large size of the meeting hall and the large number of attendants may additionally weaken the chances for intensive eye contact in the Vuori group (see Appendix A for the floor plan of the Vuori group). The use of audio signals to mark the end of time for each turn demonstrates that not only talk but setting itself is organized aurally.

[3]Transcription conventions and the code, which locates each extract, are explained in Appendix B.

[4]In some areas the identification is followed with a response in chorus: "My name is Jane" - the group in unison: "Hi Jane!" This feature, sometimes taken as emblematic for AA, is not universal. This custom is especially common in the U.S., but in many areas outside the Anglo-Saxon world, like in Finland, it is totally missing (Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 149-150).

[5]It may be worth stating that there are also other activities during meetings that are not discussed here, which can be called sideline activities, such as money collection and serving of refreshments. These activities, as important as they may be for AA and its members, are carried out alongside the meeting; they form the sideline for the gathering. Money collection usually takes place during the discussion, but it may be carried out during any phase of the meeting, and in any case it is not supposed to be a shared target of attention of all the participants. Money collection is naturally of great organizational significance, as each AA group is economically self-supporting (Mäkelä et al., 1996, pp. 85-95). In the Vuori group refreshments are served after the meeting. In some neighborhoods, like that of the Vuori group, homeless occasionally attend meetings for a hot cup of coffee. They are usually let in, and even welcomed, if they are not aggressive and do not smell absulutely disgusting. As graphic and telling as these kind of details might be, I have not tried to cover them systematically in my study.

[6]This selection of topics is relatively representative for the Vuori group in recent years (Haavisto 1992), except that steps are talked about on average in every third meeting. The meetings where steps are discussed are underrepresented in my material. But my sense is that this does not heavily influence my study, as "discussion" is based on "autobiographical footing" in any case.

[7]The specific focus of the study is on the commentary turns, as they provide us access to the creation and maintenance of intersubjective meaning of individual experiences in AA. Most of the following observations apply also to the opening turn as well (for the relationship between the opening turn and the commentary turns, see Arminen, 1998, pp. 179-201).

[8]Irrespective of whether my analysis here is factually true, the fact that many AA members have special AA names demonstrates that for them, there and at that point, the AA identity is a choice, and that that they do have multiple identities, of which the AA identity is but one. Furthermore, this creates an interactional contingency between AA members, who know each other also outside AA. In those occasions, persons have to choose which identity to make relevant, and respectively, which name to use, etc. Through my personal contacts with AA members, I know that this issue is real for them. AA members have different solutions in terms of how wide role distance between AA identity and everyday identity they choose to construct. However, a broader discussion of this issue falls beyond this study.

[9]Noticeably, cultural differences come into play at this stage. The recordings from the U.S. Al-Anon conference (thanks to Bonnie Duran) show that many speakers made wise cracks soon after the opening line. My sense is that this is common in many large open AA meetings in the U.S., but rare in the Vuori group. It is not that the turns of talk in the Vuori group lack humor, but the joking is located at a later point in the turn. These kind of comparisons might increase our understanding of different cultures.

[10]My sense is that in this particular meeting, the chair's summary of the opening speaker's turn was found somewhat problematic by many commentary speakers. They seem to have found it improper, or tactless, that the chair raised the question 'what an AA member is like' (as if an AA member would not be just like anybody else). This case would provide additional material for the theme 'conflicts and coalitions in the meetings,' which I will deal with subsequently. In other meetings, there are not many references to the chair's summary turn, therefore I have concluded that the chair's turns are not ostensively procedurally relevant, even if they undoubtedly form a part of the 'taken-for-granted' interactional texture of these meetings.

[11]Note that the problem here is exactly the opposite of that in political news interviews, in which the interviewer has to avoid expressing personal opinions (if the "neutralistic" paradigm rules). A skillful broadcaster can, however, express all the opinions she wishes as long as they are attributed to somebody other than herself (Clayman, 1992; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991).

[12]We may make use of the notion 'prototypicality.' There seem to be prototypical personal experiences, and then entities that can only loosely speaking be called personal experiences. Noticeably, also the interviewed AA member oriented to the fact that his way of speaking about "political matters as personal problems" was transgressing the boundaries. Generally, members of a culture seem to be very well aware of these distinctions, which are fundamental social facts concerning the social distribution of knowledge.

[13]We may also note that this instance has brought to our attention some organizational details about

AA. A part of the specificity of AA's regular weekly meetings seems to derive from the division of labor between these meetings and the business meetings. Issues, like decisions concerning the uses of profits gained from the collection and many other practical matters are dealt with in the separate business meetings. The separation of business meetings seems to be an organizational precondition for the regular weekly meetings to be concentrated solely on mutual help. The distinctive status of business meetings becomes observable through the fact that participation in these meetings is reserved for group members only, in contrast to normal AA meetings, which either are open to all AA members or to anybody interested (open meetings).

[14]This case is not unique in terms of "clapping." Clapping is recurrently used to discourage a speaker from continuing in cases when a speaker aims at initiating new construction units after the recipients have felt that the turn has become pragmatically completed (Arminen 1998, pp.168-177).

[15]Naturally, a video tape would again be helpful: we do not know whether the chairpersons of the group tried somehow to handle the situation or whether they just let it pass.

[16]A parallel instance was also found in the AA conference recordings (Espoo). There strife broke out on one occasion when some participants were denied the right to take turns. (The organizers of that session had planned it as a "speaker meeting" where no extra turns besides preallocated turns would be allowed; but not everybody seemed to know that). In addition, there are ethnographic notes about a meeting (in a group other than the Vuori group) in which the intoxication of the chair led to an open controversy. Generally, these kind of disruptions are very rare in AA.

[17]Again it is an interesting ethnographic detail that Kake was given the last turn. The odds that it was a mere coincidence are 1/20. Presumably, either he had requested to speak last, or the meeting officials had anticipated a problem and given him the last turn. The latter case would be interesting in that he was given a turn even if a problem was anticipated. My understanding is that AA works in such a way that there is no control over to whom the turns are given. (This already follows from the lack of membership criteria, tradition three, Anonymous 1986/1952.)

[18]Intriguing questions could be posed about how the organization of a speech event is related to the organization of its larger context, i.e., how AA meetings are related to the organization of AA fellowship. We may note that AA lacks centralized organization and thereby is not dependent on any individual group. If some AA group dies off, as sometimes occurs, then those members who want to continue can seek other AA groups or establish new ones. The organization of fellowship allows the emergence of "the rules of discourse" at AA meetings, which are not strongly directive toward an individual member. This lack of normative pressure respectively characterizes AA at a higher organizational level. We may also imagine that the minimization of normative pressure increases the attractiveness of AA, thereby strengthening the fellowship.

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