Talk as the Work: The Accomplishment of School Administration

Peter C. Gronn

This article provides a case study of administering a school, showing how talk is central to the achievement of control. Analysis of extracts of a transcript of talk by and with the principal shows school administrators trying to direct and control the deployment of personnel in conformity with their wills and intents. A principal and his two immediate subordinates do this with their words in their talk with one another, in the corridor, the principal's office, and in the staff room. The analysis shows that not only do administrators spend much of their time talking and that this talk accomplishes administration, but that talk is used to do the work of tightening and loosening administrative control.•

1

In Australia, "head" and "headmaster" are used in independent schools and follow the English public school usage. "Principal" is the normal term in government schools.

INTRODUCTION

Various writers have suggested means by which administrators administer. Pocock (1973a) showed how tradition both circumscribed and legitimated activity. Weber (1970) wrote about the charismatic leader's mission and power. In a school context, Sir James Darling (1967: 70) referred to "dignity and a corresponding awe" and to the written memorandum or circular as "government by notes and directives" (1967: 65). Finally, there is Halpin's (1960: 85) "language of eyes and hands, of gestures, of time and status symbols." At least one important resource missing from this list is talk. A great proportion of administrative activity consists of talk in interactional settings, yet talk remains a neglected dimension in accounts of leadership and administration (Pondy, 1978). Talk is significant in that it permits speakers to monitor each other by observing one another (Goffman, 1979). Thus, in conversing with staff, "one can watch and suit one's words to the atmosphere" (Darling, 1967: 65).

Control is an aspect of administration for which talk is a key resource, particularly for staff relations, and in schools, talk is a potential instrument of control for both principal and staff. Healey (1978) suggested that although the position of headmaster frequently affords domination, this is only by virtue of the confidence of the council, staff, parents, and pupils, and the influence of the old boys. Similarly, Fletcher (1937: 236) questioned the myth that school heads are autocrats, stating that "in particular his powers are limited by the traditions of the school as well as by the personalities of his staff."[1]

To the extent that administrative control is accomplished by talk, school personnel become enmeshed in language games. This article presents a case study of a principal and his vice-principal grappling with staff allocation and deployment for the ensuing year. It shows that the two leading administrators use words to cloak their power. Transcribed extracts are included in the text to indicate the nature of the interaction. The sections that follow discuss the background to the investigation of talk in administration, the method used in obtaining the data for the case study, the setting of the study, the dimensions of control evident in the talk, and the way talk achieves control.

BACKGROUND

Eight recent studies that describe school administration have followed books by Mintzberg (1973) and by Wolcott (1973).

Inspired by the central question of the Mintzberg study (1973: 1), "What do managers do?," these eight accounts (O'Dempsey, 1976; Peterson, 1976; Duignan, 1980; Friesen and Duignan, 1980; Willis, 1980; Martin and Willower, 1981; Sproull, 1981; Thomas, Willis, and Phillips, 1981) point to the same frenzied and interrupted work routines experienced by Mintzberg's five chief executives. Furthermore, as Mintzberg (1973: 38) wrote, "Virtually every empirical study of management time allocation draws attention to the great proportion of time spent in verbal communication . . . [and] my own findings bear this out." The same picture emerges in the school studies (Wolcott, 1973; O'Dempsey, 1976; Willis, 1980).

Elsewhere (Gronn, 1982) it has been argued that these eight studies, and indeed the Mintzberg approach known as "structured observation," show serious deficiencies and leave a number of questions unanswered. Six of the eight accounts indicate that between two thirds and three quarters of the total working time of a principal or superintendent is spent talking, yet none of these studies examines the interactants' words. Talk is presented as simple behavior, not worthy of analysis as a form of social action. Nowhere is there any hint that the interactants' talk accomplishes administration.

Two earlier diary-based accounts point to this reliance on the spoken word. In a study of the interaction of four executives, Burns (1954) wrote that they spent 80 percent of the total recorded time (890 hours) in conversation, including telephone conversation. In a study of 66 middle managers, Horne and Lupton (1965) observed that half of the time of all the managers was spent in their own offices talking.

Another weakness of structured observational accounts is that they have focused attention solely on the top person, emphasizing only one party in what is an interactional activity (e.g., Mintzberg, 1973). Burns' account not only highlighted the group basis of managerial work and the centrality of talk within the group, but also showed what the four interactants took each other's talk to be about, or how they perceived it. For example Burns (1954: 95) stated.:

Half the time, what the manager thought he was giving as instructions or decisions was being treated as information or advice. This result may be regarded as an aspect of status protection. The tendency for the three senior staff to treat instructions from the head of department as information or advice amounts to a rejection of the subordination implied in being instructed to take this or that action.

What all the structured observation studies do reveal is that talk *is* the work, i.e., it consumes most of an administrator's time and energy. The next step is to make clear the circumstances under which talk *does* the work, that is, to show how talk is the resource that school personnel use to get others to act (Austin, 1978). To see talk in such terms is to view it as an instrument or tool (Hodgkinson, 1978: 204) for performing actions like influencing, persuading, manipulating, and so on. That words perform actions (Austin, 1978) can be seen in the following example: "The bottle's half empty" versus "The bottle's half full" (Blakar, 1979: 111). Blakar comments that "there is good reason to assume that the two expressions may well have quite different effects on the atmosphere." Expanding this example to "The bottle's *already* half empty" versus "The bottle's *still*

half full'' (original emphasis), Blakar points out the different effect that each utterance could have on a party. The next example shows what happens when there is an interplay of differing definitions of the situation, and is an actual recorded doctor-patient exchange (Coulthard and Ashby, 1975: 174):

Doctor: How many *attacks* have you had?

Patient: It's the first one . . . one.

Doctor: You've only had one in all?

Patient: Well as far as I know there's not been one this severe like.

Doctor: Yeah, and when do you get *these*?

Patient: It came on very suddenly last Wednesday.

If it is true, as Austin (1978: 6–7) claims, that "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something," then two questions must be asked of administrative control that is evident in interaction. First, what is the nature of the control accomplished by the words of the administrator and those he administers? Second, how do the words accomplish that control? The rest of this article addresses these two questions.

METHOD

Research on samples of participants' talk had been collected in school council settings (Gronn, 1979, 1981b) and had indicated how school principals and parents used their words to pursue their interests and to achieve their particular ends, so that an investigation of what principals and teachers did with their words and how they did this seemed warranted. Accordingly, in December 1980, the talk of a school principal and everyone with whom he spoke over two school days was received by an unobtrusive radio microphone attached to the principal's lapel and was transmitted to a tape recorder housed in a small outbuilding separate from the main school building (Soskin and John, 1963: 230–231). Typed transcriptions of these recordings yielded in excess of 300 pages of scripts. From these, a segment that took place in three locations (the corridor, the principal's office and the staff room) on the afternoon of the second day was chosen for detailed analysis. Total recording time of this segment was 30 minutes. The author was present as an observer in the corridor and in the staff room. The typist's draft transcription of this 30-minute segment was refined to produce a final transcript of 12 pages (Gronn, 1981a: Appendix). Selections from this final transcript are reproduced in this article. Each part of the interaction is discussed in the order of its occurrence.

The transcript presentation in this article is conventional in form and conforms closely to the pattern used by Clegg (1975). Transcript production and presentation, quite apart from the question of its interpretation, has occasioned a good deal of recent discussion. The presentation here has benefitted particularly from the arguments of Kress (1979), Ochs (1979) and Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). The number of symbols in the transcript has been deliberately minimized to ensure readability. Only limited evidence of stress, intonation, and nonverbal communication has been provided. Essentially, Ochs' (1979) injunction against strictly standard orthography

has been adhered to in order to capture roughly how a lexical item was pronounced.

The following transcription symbols have been used:

		Overlapping talk from the first to the last slash. Utterances begin with an upper case letter and end with a full stop.
. . .	A pause of one second or less within an utterance.
(1,1)	A pause of more than one second within an utterance or between turns, the numeral indicating the length of the pause.
* * * * *	A deletion.
[ ]	An explanatory insertion.
italics	A word or part of a word emphasized by a speaker.
?	A question, marked by a rise in pitch.
!	An exclamation

SETTING

Prior information about the school setting had been given by the principal who was a former student of the author and who agreed to be recorded for this investigation. The only contact with the school prior to the recording days took place when the author met the whole staff and explained the nature and purposes of the research. Assurance was given orally that only pseudonyms would be used when referring to the school or individuals in any published work. Staff were told that they could have the radio microphone turned off when talking to the principal. To the author's knowledge, this happened only once.

The staff and their positions follow:

Alf Bennett:	principal	Keith Lamb:	grade 2
Cecily Donald:	librarian	Merrill Nash:	grade 3
Ellen Finch.	remedial teacher	Oliver Peters.	grade 4
Grace Harvey.	prep. year	Quentin Rogers:	grade 5
Ida Jones:	grade 1	Steven Trigg:	vice-principal, grade 6

The school was a small state primary (i.e., elementary) school in the eastern suburb of Park, Melbourne, 12 miles from the city center. Park is a semi-rural area on the fringe of the city. Real estate subdivisions have recently replaced orchards, market gardens, and poultry farms. Burgeoning housing growth is beginning to swell enrollments. The primary school had an enrollment of just under 200 children at the time of the study.

All staff were on first-name terms with the principal and with each other. The smallness of the school meant that Bennett was very visible to the staff and constantly engaged in face-to-face interaction with all of them, whereas in a larger school (e.g., with a staff of 100) this frequency and intimacy of relationships would be missing.

The choice of teachers for different grades is an annual end-of-year concern of teachers and principals. It is of particular significance in terms of personal careers for individual teachers and, if not handled carefully by principals, can make for disharmony in staff relationships. In December, before the long Australian summer vacation, staffing is also of concern to parents who are often anxious to know who is to be in charge of their children. The recording was made two weeks before the end of the school year, and nobody knew what the staffing was to be. Yet, a number of people were concerned, as was evident from frequent references to their concern in these extracts. This dual concern of teachers and parents was compounded for

Bennett (who was to transfer to another school in the new year), because the final decisions in this case were not his to make. As a servant of the state in a government school, his only power was one of deployment. There were still staff appointments for the next year to be made by state education department officials.

THE PROCESS OF CONTROL

Corridor Work

The first part of the episode is illustrative of Rolland's dictum that "a headmaster's work consists mainly of interruptions to it" (Keith, 1977: 111). Early in the afternoon Bennett was conversing with Trigg outside Trigg's classroom. Bennett was reporting on a meeting he attended over lunch, when Trigg interrupted.

1. **Trigg:** I think one thing that it'd be very dangerous to disc keep discussing at the staff meeting is . . . is . . . classes and grades for next year.
2. **Bennett:** Oh I'm not gonna talk about that.
3. **Trigg:** I would I would just/
4. **Bennett:** /I'm not I haven't got it down.
5. **Trigg:** It's down [on the agenda].
6. **Bennett:** It's down is it?
7. **Trigg:** Hang on . . . um (2.5) it was put down Merrill [Nash] put it down.
8. **Bennett:** Mm.
9. **Trigg:** And I think that um (1.4) it's better to be forgotten about all all that needs to be said is it's still unde*cid*ed.
10. **Bennett:** Mm.
11. **Trigg:** You can say (3.5) I've got grade 6.
12. **Bennett:** Mm.
13. **Trigg:** Keith's got grade 2 Merrill's got grade 3 Grace has got prep they're the ones that we know for definite at the/
14. **Bennett:** /We know yeah/
15. **Trigg:** /at the present time.
16. **Bennett:** That's right yeah.
17. **Trigg:** And leave it at that.
18. **Bennett:** Leave it at that yeah till we know.
19. **Trigg:** And don't discuss any further cos it's not/
20. **Bennett:** /Except that they could oh they could question me.
21. **Trigg:** Well they can question you but I would.
22. **Bennett:** Just say well I'm sorry but/
23. **Trigg:** /I'd say that there's nothing has been nothing definite.

Bennett agrees substantially with Trigg's assessment of the situation but queries his use of "pressure."

49. **Trigg:** Well I for one you know am not prepared to discuss it and I don't think we ought to discuss it (1.3) I think there's too much can get you that goes on in too much pressure.
50. **Bennett:** Yeah.
51. **Trigg:** After all.
52. **Bennett:** They can't apply pressure if there's nothing (1.3) *there* for it to be applied to.

Bennett believes that all that could be done about the staffing situation has been done.

69. **Trigg:** You as principal or you and me and Keith as vice principals in the place ought to talk about these kinds of things and come up with a workable situation so that.

70. **Bennett:** Well we have/

71. **Trigg:** /We don't we don't have all these sort of things.

72. **Bennett:** We've tried we've tried to work it out we worked out the best that we can we can't work it out much more.

73. **Trigg:** See I think this little miss [Nash] is trying to put a lot of pressure on.

Eventually he agrees that there might be something in what Trigg says.

103. **Trigg:** Be very careful you know.

104. **Bennett:** Very interesting what you find out when you're about to go. (laughs) [Bennett is to transfer to a new school]

105. **Trigg:** Oh no I think you've known that a along.

106. **Bennett:** Yeah but I didn't realize that/

107. **Trigg:** /But you know these are the things that are starting to roll again and I think it's a pretty dangerous situation/

108. **Bennett:** /Do you want to have a discussion with Keith about it now so we know our stance or can you and Keith answer this situation when we have the staff meeting?

109. **Trigg:** Aw we'll get Keith and have a five minute talk.

110. **Bennett:** Aw well let's go down because we're gotta be prepared for it (2.1) [They begin walking] ah I think . . . I mean if she's *****

The first point to note is the significance of architecture and territory in these exchanges. Corridors are crucial territories in most schools. Classrooms and offices open off them, so that a good deal of organizational work is done in corridors. There is constant movement between classes and at breaks, messages are transmitted from offices to teachers, and people always mingle and gather informally. It is common for a principal to put his or her head around a teacher's door to have a chat. The teacher leaves the class and comes over, and both individuals straddle the doorway between a bit of the school and the school as a whole. This may be the principal's respite from the telephone, but it is crucial to administering a school. Teachers and principals both know that what might appear as "prowling" (Darling, 1967: 64) is also a way of the principal showing the staff that he or she is around and keeping in touch with the pulse of the school.

In using the corridor in this way, the principal gets caught up in the staff's concerns. Being narrow and long, corridors seem to force individuals to gaze, smile at or greet one another as they go past. Such encounters afford the staff access to a principal that they might not have if he or she were ensconced in an office with the door shut. And although the corridor, a public thoroughfare, affords no guarantee of privacy, there is sufficient background noise for talk to be indistinct, so that any insecurity generated by being seen talking is tempered by the knowledge that others often cannot hear what is being said. Consequently, the corridor is the place where greetings are exchanged, contacts are made, initial forays are undertaken into a topic, and where arrangements are made to pursue the matter in quieter, more private surroundings. It is only later on, as part

of the office work, that a topic can be deliberated on and examined more fully.

How is this administering? Where is the control? Just as children, in a sense, bring up their parents, and so are the active agents while the adults are those acted upon, so Bennett is the object rather than the subject of the relationship with Trigg. The concerns of the moment are Trigg's. The flow of events and their terms have been determined for, rather than by, Bennett. He adjusts to a definition of the situation that he did not author. He has been persuaded ("Do you want to have a discussion with Keith about it now . . . ?") if not to perceive the situation from within the same threat frame as Trigg, then at least to be warned to reexamine the matter ("so we know our stance," "we're gotta be prepared for it"). This incident illustrates Hodgkinson's (1978: 81) comment that "one man's power is another man's impotence if the latter must forego his will on behalf of the former."

Contrary, then, to the image of the administrator in much of the management literature as directing, commanding, planning, etc., as if administering is a unilateral and unidimensional action directed at a set of employees, here is an administrator seemingly being controlled rather than being in control.

Another architectural feature that contributed to Bennett's informal relations with the staff and the staff's familiarity with each other was that all staff but one had to pass Bennett's door to enter the staff room and leave the building. There was no possibility that the aura and distance that many administrators enjoy could develop in such circumstances. These factors are evident in the talk, for there is, on the one hand, a kind of chumminess in the way the staff speak and, on the other, an insistence and persistence in manner (especially with Trigg), which would be less likely to manifest itself with a more remote principal.

Office Work

The second exchange lasted about 17 minutes. A marked shift beings to take place in the relative positions of Trigg and Bennett during what is a lengthy but pivotal interlude between the corridor and staff room talk. Bennett begins to assume control over the situation, whereas Trigg lets his initiative slip away. Bennett tells Lamb about Trigg's concern.

111. **Bennett:** [to Lamb] (sotto voce) I'll just have a (1.3) little very small talk about staffing for next year because it's down on the agenda for today and (1.2) ah [they walk to Bennett's office] Steven thinks we should have a united front on what we're (laughingly) going to say (10.5) (sotto voce) Steven's got the feeling Merrill's going to bring up wants with the demand as to (1.1) you know what the staffing situation should be well (3.2) all we can tell her is what we know (1.1) and that is the . . . the fixed (2.2) positions for next year which (1.7) at the moment would be Grace (2.3) and yourself (2.7) and Merrill (2.2) and Steven . . . because Quentin hasn't indicated yet that she's going to ah resign or stay (1.1) Ellen Finch hasn't indicated whether she's going to resign or stay (1.6) [Trigg enters] and . . . we've just got the one appointment coming in which is the girl Veal.

There are glimpses of Bennett's inner mental state evident in that already, before Trigg joins Bennett and Lamb, Bennett has laughed off Trigg's feeling (111) by parodying him "Steven thinks we should have a united front on what we're (laughingly)

going to say." The three of them begin to talk about the subject at length in Bennett's office.

112. **Trigg:** I saw the list that.

113. **Bennett:** There it is there/

114. **Trigg:** /It was put down grades and rooms for next year. (1.2)

115. **Bennett:** Yeah I want to I want to sort the grades and rooms/

116. **Trigg:** /I think it's a bit dangerous to keep talking about it and talking about it and talking about it personally.

117. **Bennett:** Well see I've shut up about it I haven't said but they're talking about it. (1.5)

118. **Lamb:** Well I spose everybody wants to know what they're doing . . . but.

119. **Bennett:** Yeah.

120. **Lamb:** We really can't say at the moment can we?

121. **Bennett:** Well all we know/

122. **Lamb:** /We/

123. **Bennett:** /we/

124. **Lamb:** /put up a number of um . . . alternatives.

125. **Trigg:** Well we *tried* that and we came up against a *blank wall*.

126. **Bennett:** If we put up alternatives it still doesn't help them because er they can't decide the issues you know it's between Steven you and me to decide in the end.

127. **Lamb:** No what I mean by alternatives alternatives according to whatever set of circumstances arise as whether Steven's offered the job or whether we get another principal.

128. **Bennett:** I think they *know* this don't they we all all we can do is is retell them what we've told them before (exasperation) (1.1) and see we don't know until next February er we may not know till next February as to who's going to be principal here.

They discuss all kinds of possible grade arrangements. Trigg continues to refer to "pressure."

183. **Trigg:** But there's already been moves (1.2) of pressure being brought on . . . Alf . . . about a certain person [Ellen Finch] taking grade 5.

184. **Lamb:** Yeah.

185. **Bennett:** By.

186. **Trigg:** By parents/

187. **Bennett:** /by parents/

188. **Lamb:** /Yeah yeah I know you told me.

189. **Trigg:** Now um (10.0) [they are interrupted by the bell monitors] I don't bow to that sort of pressure. * * * * *

Bennett here admits that he has been approached by parents.

243. **Trigg:** If the you know someone's gonna keep pushing.

244. **Bennett:** Well they're got nowhere to push Steven there's nothing to push about.

245. **Trigg:** If there's nothing to push well we've gotta be organized ourselves so we know what's going but we don't know what's going/

246. **Bennett:** /No/

247. **Trigg:** /so there's no (1.1) I think it's dangerous to keep talking about it that's all.

248. **Bennett:** Hm but it's being talked about here it's not being talked about/

249. **Trigg:** /Oh no/

250. **Bennett:** /by us/

251. **Trigg:** Yeah but that particular person [Merrill Nash] is well known for getting/
252. **Bennett:** /For talking/
253. **Trigg:** /parental pressure.
254. **Bennett:** Is she? (1.5) *****
255. **Trigg:** You know she's always talking to parents and very good friends with parents. (1.4)
256. **Bennett:** That's right how friendly is she with Wilma Young [a parent]?
257. **Trigg:** Very friendly/
258. **Bennett:** /Ya see/
259. **Trigg:** /they play tennis I think.
260. **Bennett:** Well Wilma Young was one who came in to discuss Ellen Finch and her mates.
261. **Trigg:** Yeah well she Wilma Young wouldn't have known who was going to take the grade 5 unless she was spec spec specifically told.
262. **Bennett:** Yeah yeah.
263. **Trigg:** Now I haven't told anyone because I haven't a clue.
264. **Bennett:** No it's come from outside/
265. **Trigg:** /We've discussed about it/
266. **Bennett:** /because I was absolutely sur*prised* when she walked in here and wanted to know who was going to take grade 5.
267. **Trigg:** The School Council have talked about it.
268. **Bennett:** They talked about it *after*wards.
269. **Trigg:** But they but they don't know who's actually going to take it.
270. **Bennett:** No.
271. **Trigg:** And they made the same comment that we've just said (1.6) thut if . . . Ellen takes the grade 5 you're going to get pressure from parents.
272. **Bennett:** The word deputation was tossed around. (laughs)

Trigg is then called away on a message.

296. **Bennett:** But anyway well look . . . ah . . . I think we're right we know what we're gonna say there's only a few positions permanent (3.0) permanent classes so.

To this point Bennett has shrugged off "deputation" (272). Later on (316), he responds to the reported threat, "she said we'll go as high as we can," in a similar fashion. He has become impatient with Trigg and it shows on three occasions (117, 244, and 248). Lamb gives Bennett one other opportunity to vent his irritation (128).

In this first half of the office session quite different positions are taken compared with those in the corridor. Bennett, Trigg, and Lamb adopt dual postures, arbitrating the merits of their colleagues' interests while advancing interests of their own. They shift back and forth between articulating their own career concerns and talk for or on behalf of others. This movement is evident in changes in pronoun usage from "I" and "you" to "we" and "us" as opposed to "them" and "they." After Trigg leaves (296), Bennett explains the parents' interest to Lamb.

314. **Bennett:** See yud have two unhappy teachers yud ave Una Veal in grade 5 you know eating her heart out because she wants to be in 1 . . . yud ave Ellen Finch in 1 wanting to be in 5 (1.6) now wh I ga I think we've got to take a risk somewhere here and I think poss we may have to put up with the parents' anger over Ellen Finch being back in grade 5 (1.8) but I think it's for us to decide and I think Ellen's gotta realize thut

ya know it'll be absolute *chaos* if she goes on confinement leave and if she's pregnant now and I don't know whether she is I think she should confide in us that she is pregnant   but I don't know whether she would . . maybe she isn't maybe she's not gonna have any more children and maybe she would say to us well mind your own damn business. (laughs)

315. **Lamb:** Yeah

316. **Bennett:** But see Wilma Young came in from that Parents' Club meeting with Amy Brown [another parent] and a couple of other vers of others and uh demanded to know where Ellen Finch was going next year and I said grade 5 and she said well if she does there's gonna be a deputation to stop it you know well er if she she said we'll go as high as we can (6.6) (laughs) and now er g well guess the other thing is to . . . you know if we don't do that Ellen *Finch*'s gotta go in grade 1 and Quent's gotta go in grade 5 or she could go to grade 2 (1 2) and Id see if Ida stays she could go to 5 (1.6) there's about ten thousand alternatives at the moment.

The changed power status of the talkers evident in these stretches of talk derives from the shift in territory from the corridor to the privacy of the principal's office. No one person owns the corridor; all share territorial, i.e., proprietorial rights; however, while the principal moves around the whole site at will, the office is his personal domain, which allows privacy and which gives rise to the exchange of confidences. Intimate details of real lives and suppositions about career plans (see, especially, 314) together with data on enrollments (cited in 340), form an administrative knowledge stock.

The relative distribution of this knowledge proves crucial in shifting control from Trigg to Bennett. If there is anything to substantiate Trigg's case, it will come out in the confidentiality of this room. Bennett has put Trigg to the test (244, 248, 250) and his story has begun to look thin. The critical remark is 256 where Bennett brings his own knowledge and experience to bear (this is subsequently explicated in 316, after Trigg has left the room). For the first time Bennett has countered Trigg's facts with his own (267 and 268). Bennett continues to be unconcerned about the parents' interest.

340. **Bennett:** No it's not see we lost 20 [pupils] between July and December (1.2) so um (1.1) but a you know well we've tossed around the alternatives but we've got the answers for them [at the staff meeting] I don't I don't know I don't really see much pressure coming from there at all I think that it's just inquisitiveness and everybody's asking those questions aren't they yeah the parents are all asking too you see.

341. **Lamb:** Yeah.

342. **Bennett:** But um/

343. **Lamb:** /Just can't can't give any answers at the moment.

344. **Bennett:** Well see [an ex-staff member] always said that the parents have a lot to say in this school and this is one thing she's found over the years the parents are interested ah I wouldn't sa well they're quizzical without being sticky beaks . . . but they're just *int*erested to know what's going on the school's small enough for them to be interested . . . yet up at [neighboring school] they wouldn't hear a thing because the school's big enough to keep them away but here (1.3) it's sort of ideal situation for parents to be interested and also they're going through parent-teacher interviews at the moment . . . and they're asking information before next year comes along.

This backstage maneuvering (Goffman, 1976b: 114) ends with Bennett making manifest to Lamb his operating assumptions as

a principal. In essence the norm at Park for parents is "to know what's going on the school's small enough for them to be interested," and the current events fit this norm.

Staff Meeting Work

Staff meetings normally take place at the end of the day when classes have been dismissed. They are supposed to be an occasion when principals outline an agenda of topics and speak first on each item. It is a time when teachers relax, expecting to listen to the principal addressing them, and is not normally seen as an opportunity for discussion or debate. The convention, rather, is that staff will react or respond to the principal's remarks. This is a time for letting off steam, by griping, joking, and showing one's impatience if the meeting drags on. Moreover, such meetings are held in the staff room, the "laughter arena" (Woods, 1979: 211). Principals have to work doubly hard at keeping the meeting going by stifling interruptions and side chatter and by putting in their own thoughts and comments. One headmaster, A. H. Wood (1976: 260), disliked staff meetings and stated that "managing a staff meeting called for more tact and skill than any church meetings over which I have presided. I generally steered contentious issues away from an immediate decision and often resolved the matter afterwards." In Bennett's case there was nothing exceptional in his mentioning staffing, as such, nor in talking about it as he did with "the position is still unclear" (345).

In the staff meeting, Bennett began by stating the staffing position as he saw it:

345. **Bennett:** Um the other thing is grades and rooms for next year (2.3) (sighs) (1.5) the position is still unclear . . . now all we can say . . . at the moment is that Grace has got preps (3.0) grade 1 is not clear grade 2 at the moment will be Keith Lamb (1.2) grade 3 is Merrill Nash (1.5) grade 4 (1.1) is Quentin Rodgers (3.0) grade 5 is not clear and grade 6 is Steven (1.6) now (2.4) if Steven gets the position as principal next year (1.8) he'll come outta grade 6 (1.5) Keith could go into grade 6 (1.2) which would leave grade 2 vacant (1 7) if Steven doesn't get it he stays in grade 6 (1.8) and (1.5) this is how we are at the moment now (2.2) uh (2.8) we could put . . . Una Veal in grade 1 and we can put um Ellen in grade 5 (2.0) Cecily stays as librarian (1.1) ah it all depends . . . on who gets the principal's job as to what's gonna happen with the staffing.

346. **Trigg:** But Ida could also stay.

347. **Bennett:** Id I'm sorry Ida/

348. **Trigg:** /It depends on numbers.

349. **Bennett:** Ida could stay it depends on numbers.

350. **Trigg:** She's got a position unspecified but she/

351. **Peters:** /But she cud be she cud be if you get the principal's job.

352. **Trigg:** Yeah but ya know she might still stay so that's a different thing again.

353. **Someone:** Ida could be principal.

354. **Donald:** That's right Ida could be principal.

355. **Bennett:** (laughs) Well see it's/ (general laughter)

356. **Harvey:** /Ida can't hear you.

357. **Peters:** That is a completely different principle.

358. **Bennett:** Now if Ida stays/

359. **Donald:** /That'd be alright Ida/

360. **Bennett:** /right, if we/

361. **Donald:** /we'd follow Ida's directions.

362. **Bennett:** /if we hold our (general laughter) (2.3) come on . . . if we hold our numbers we have as we have a withdrawal or remedial teacher you know the position available if we hold our numbers if we don't Ida goes (3.1) right so that these are our options.

Bennett ends the discussion with a brief summary of his opening statement.

456. **Bennett:** Well there's our options (2.6) now the only people who are fixed are the ones I told you . . . the prep the 2 . . . the the 3 and the 4 (3.1) it's all we can tell you so if parents ask you at parent-teacher interviews you really don't know you really (2.0) unless you're in those grades.

The staff meeting tossed the topic round for seven minutes. What the transcripts disclose is standard, unspectacular, and mundane, and replicated in hundreds of staff rooms across the state school system. An administrator has directed his staff to see part of the organizational world in his terms. He has defined the situation and they are expected to fall into line with that view.

ANALYSIS OF CONTROL

The way to appreciate how control is brought about is to examine how each recipient reacts to an immediately preceding speaker. From Goffman's (1976a: 280) distinction between "response" (category) and "reply" (instance of the category), the following subtypes of replies can be distinguished.

i. **talk** *to*: an utterance directed to the immediately preceding utterance, or if there are three interactants, the immediately preceding utterance but one.

ii. **talk** *at*: an utterance not spoken in direct reference to the immediately preceding utterance.

iii. **talk** *with*: an utterance emitted while someone is already speaking and in supportive reference to what is being said.

iv. **talk** *over*: an utterance emitted while someone is already speaking, but not always in reference to what is being said.

v. **talk** *instead of*: an interrupting utterance, replacing the utterance being emitted, which gives the speaker the floor.

vi. **talk** *again*: an utterance that repeats a speaker's words while he or she is speaking or after the initial speaker has finished.

vii. **talk** *for*: utterance spoken on behalf of others who may not be present.

In addition, there are two distinct levels of control talk evident in the extracts: talk *of* control and talk *about* control. The talk *of* control is about being *an* authority on the matter of staffing. This is mostly face-to-face talk, but occasionally the speakers shift their alignment and the talk becomes face-by-face (Spiegelberg, 1973: 134). Talk *about* control is about being *in* authority. This talk is disputation about authoritative action as such, rather than disputation on the particular topic in hand which is what the talk *of* comprises (Pocock, 1973b, 1981).

Talk *of* Control

Forester's (1980) distinction between listening and hearing is used to subdivide the first six reply types into two categories of attentiveness. When replying *to* (i), *with* (iii), or repeating (*again,* vi) an immediately prior utterance, a next-in-turn speaker may be described as listening. The replies are being called forth by what he or she has just taken in. But when replying *at* (ii), *over*

(iv), or *instead of* (v), the next-in-turn speaker is more concerned with dictating rather than being dictated to. The transcribed extracts show that Bennett adopted a listening posture in the corridor, the office, and the staff room. His replies *to, with,* and *again* outnumber the corresponding replies for Trigg and out-number his own *at, over,* and *instead of* replies.

The prime mover in the corridor sequence is Trigg with his advice (1). Subsequent utterances are oriented to this one. But for this utterance the subsequent interactions in the office and staff room would not have taken place exactly in the form they did. Trigg's later utterances reiterate his initial concern or are offered in defense of it. Bennett is prepared to listen to the advice, querying the grounds or justification for it and attempt-ing only minor amendments to the reading of the situation he is given, but, as is learned later on, he makes up his own mind and does not take the advice. How are the shifts in these two postures, adviser and advisee brought about?

Bennett's first reply to Trigg is to affirm that he will not talk about the matter to staff (2). He is surprised (6) that Nash intends to raise it. Trigg reiterates his initial advice (9) and provides possible replies (9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19) that Bennett might use. Then Bennett interposes with a supposition (20) which, while it does not reformulate the topic of the talk, obliges Trigg to frame a different set of replies (21, 23). With only one exception (20), Bennett's utterances in the initial part of the conversation are brought forth by the immediately preceding ones of Trigg, yet, in only three instances (5, 7, 21) are Trigg's choice of words direct replies to what Bennett has said. Trigg is talking *at* Bennett, while Bennett is talking *to* Trigg.

Then, Bennett puts forward an emphatic denial (52), which disputes Trigg's framing of the topic. Up to this point no dire consequences or threats have been implied in Trigg's advice to keep quiet about staffing. He has simply used the adjective "dangerous" (1) and the noun "pressure" (49) to which Bennett is objecting. The denial compels Trigg to explicate his use of "pressure." Trigg outlines an instance of it (73). Confident that his point is made, Trigg exhorts Bennett to be careful (103) and clinches everything he has said to that point by alluding once more to danger (107). They agree to formulate a position (109, 110).

After the first 23 utterances Bennett continues to talk *to* rather than *at* Trigg (except for 52), and although Trigg frequently still talks *at* Bennett (49, 69, 73, 103, 107), his later utterances are directed *to* Bennett. Bennett talks *with* Trigg on one occasion (14). They occasionally interrupt each other and get the floor. Thus, Bennett talks *instead of* Trigg three times (4, 20, 108) and Trigg three times *instead of* Bennett (23, 71, 107). These are minor breaches in an otherwise largely conciliatory stretch of talk.

Trigg attempts to claim his facts as *the* facts of the matter throughout all the talk in the office (including that not quoted here). Of 11 utterances in which he does this, only two are "talk to" replies, four are "instead of" replies and four are "talk at" replies. By contrast Bennett's facts tend to be reports of information to which he is privy. Furthermore, of the 185 utterances between the opening (111) and Trigg's departure (296) about one half are "talk to" replies (the majority are

Trigg's), with Bennett talking *over* Trigg and Trigg interrupting Bennett on about a dozen occasions in each case.

From Trigg's departure to the end of the office sequence (296–344) Lamb and Bennett talk mainly *to* each other. During these utterances Bennett's initial reassertion of his own position (296) is temporarily ignored. By elaborating on his grounds for it, he tries to get Lamb to support his summary of the situation (314 and 316). Bennett finally returns to his initial point (as at 296) in utterance 340, opposing Trigg's framing of the topic in terms of parent pressure and suggesting instead parents' "inquisitiveness." There follow two utterances by Bennett at the staff meeting directed *at* preceding speakers (355 and 358) and only two instances of *instead of* utterances (375, 393). His ten other utterances (excluding occasions in which he uses "we") are "talk to" replies.

The face-to-face talk *of* control examined here shows Bennett and Trigg vying, with divergent definitions of the situation, for the status of being an authority. Authority here (in this case, on staffing) "is possessed by virtue of demonstrated knowledge, skill or expertise concerning a subject matter or activity" (Flathman, 1980: 16). Both speak, stake a claim to know, and have an equal claim to be authoritative. However, only one person can formally speak as *in* authority in a school; that is the principal, the most senior person. Flathman (1980: 17, original emphasis) writes:

In authority is a property of rules and offices created by rules. Individuals possess it by virtue of holding an office in an organization. . . . Although we say that persons in such positions have authority, the authority they have is not their own in the sense of belonging to them as a piece of property or in the more plausible sense of being in virtue of their personal attributes. Rather, the authority belongs to the office they occupy and does nothing to set them as persons above anyone else.

Throughout the extracts Bennett and Trigg (and Lamb) employ utterances couched in "talk for" terms. The first-person plural pronoun "we" is mostly used, but occasionally "our" is used. This appears to be *in* authority talk; that is, not we who know best, but we who ought to decide. While a superior (Bennett) and a subordinate (Trigg) do use "we," which implies an equality of status, closer analysis reveals this to be what Spiegelberg (1973: 133) calls the "we" of an in-group of "mutually understanding partners."

Trigg's first use of "we" is in the corridor (13). He uses it three other times (49, 71, 109) and then four times in the office with Bennett and Lamb (125, 245, 265, 271). He uses "we" to refer to either himself and Bennett, or to himself, Bennett, and Lamb. This is the "we of co-presence" (Spiegelberg, 1973: 132). Such a use of "we," as a form of social address with those present, says Spiegelberg (1973: 133), "tries to make them (a) listen and (b) realize that they are appealed to as partners." Significantly, Trigg does not use "we" in front of the whole staff. Trigg's (and Lamb's) use of "we" is presumptuous. He takes it upon himself to talk face-by-face with Bennett only when out of general earshot.

Bennett uses "we" in all three locations: there are seven times in the corridor (14, 18, 70, 72, 108, 110, 111), nine times in the office (121, 123, 126, 128, 248-250, 296, 314, 316, 340) and

four times at the staff meeting (four times in 345, once in 360, seven times in 362 and twice in 456). Cutting across his use of "we" in a co-presence sense is his use of "we" to refer to the staff as a whole (final use in 111, fourth use in 128, and first use in 340), Spiegelberg's (1973) "absentee we."

Bennett does not dispute Trigg's use of "we." Trigg's "we know" (13) is immediately repeated by Bennett (14). He is talking with Trigg. The school year is to end in a fortnight, and the staff all know that Bennett will not return in the new year, as is clear when he describes himself as "about to go" (104). Trigg, as next most senior person, may be principal (127). This uncertainty about the incumbency explains why Bennett is prepared to talk (108) either in terms of "our stance" (at the staff meeting) or to give Trigg an option of his own. He says "can you and Keith [Lamb] answer this situation?" (108). While still formally in authority, he is both winding down for the year and easing himself out of the school, so that he has nothing personal to lose in letting Trigg and Lamb do the talking. However, Trigg does not want the opportunity he is offered (108), and he prefers the security of "we [three]" in his reply (109).

Talk *about* Control

In the instances just discussed the speakers flirt with or *presume* to speak collaboratively about *in* authority; however, there are two instances prior to the staff meeting where the speakers try to *formulate* who can speak in such a way. Once, in the corridor, Trigg says (69, emphasis added) "You as principal or you and me and Keith as vice-principals in the place *ought to talk about* these kinds of things and come up with a workable solution . . . ." Then, in the office, Bennett says (126, emphasis added), "If *we* put up alternatives it still doesn't help *them* because er *they can't decide* the issues . . . it's between Steven you and me *to decide in the end*."

The most extensive attempt to formulate who can talk as *in* authority comes at the staff meeting. There, to "come up with" (69) and who "it's between" (126) are transformed into who "it's up to" to make a decision about class size and the "right" of the new principal:

366. **Jones:** Yes did Mrs. Alan come up and see you about enrolling Ian?

367. **Bennett:** Yeah she did and I didn't rea even know there was a young Alan what's our numbers Ida at the moment for preps was it 29? (general laughter) (laughs) sorry Grace sorry Grace (general laughter) (4.1) [He has asked the wrong teacher] Grace what are our numbers for next year do y with th 29?

368. **Harvey:** No.

369. **Bennett:** Thirty?

370. **Harvey:** I told you yesterday if that other little girl stays it's 30 and then there'll be (1.0)

371. **Donald:** Ian.

372. **Harvey:** Thirty-one.

373. **Bennett:** Well it's up to you to decide whether you want 31 or whether you/

374. **Harvey:** /No it isn't/

375. **Bennett:** /yes it is or whether you want some of those preps taken out into the grade 1 and have a composite prep and 1.

376. **Trigg:** That that's not fair on Grace it's not up to her.

377. **Harvey:** It's not up to *me*.

378. **Bennett:** Well . . . what's the staff think about it?

379. **Trigg:** It's not up to the staff it's up to the principals.

380. **Bennett:** Well I may not be here next year so it could be the principal who's coming in February next year to decide it.

381. **Donald:** At the moment you're the you are this year aren't you but you're the principal at the moment.

382. **Trigg:** Yeah but that does that's not mandatory.

Lamb supports Bennett in this.

387. **Lamb:** /Alf can make suggestions as to what happens next year but it'll be up to whoever has the principal's job/

388. **Harvey:** /I've got a few leaving I'm sure there's only about 23 going up.

389. **Bennett:** What's that?

390. **Lamb:** I'm saying you could make suggestions/

391. **Bennett:** /Yeah I can make suggestions/

392. **Lamb:** /as to what you feel it should be next year but as soon as someone comes in who's principal they have the/

393. **Bennett:** /Right to decide/

394. **Lamb:** /right to rearrange the school the way they want it.

Gibb (1961: 144) suggested that "speech which is used to control the listener evokes resistance." Bennett precipitates (373) resistance from Harvey (374, 377) and then from Trigg (376) with his insistence (375) on Harvey deciding about grade numbers. Next, Trigg says (379) it's "up to" the current and future incumbents (i.e., the principals), one of whom, of course, may be Trigg (127) if no appointment is made from outside to replace Bennett. Donald and Lamb speak in support of Bennett (381, 387, 390, 392, 394), offering counter-resistance to Trigg. Donald's words (381) "at the moment" point up the administrative interregnum that the school has entered. These words mean that Bennett's *in* authority formally holds good but will only do so for another fortnight. When Trigg says "that's not mandatory" (382), in reply to Donald, he is indicating that whatever Bennett says has only the effective or de facto force of suggestion or recommendation, since a newcomer in the new year will decide de jure anyway. Thus, they have formulated *who* can speak and for *how long.* In following up with "suggestions" (387, 390) Lamb has formulated *how* that same person can speak.

DISCUSSION

Some observations are now appropriate about the interactions together as an exercise in control.

Being *in* Control

First, there appear to be grounds for arguing that Trigg has used his words to control Bennett. In the corridor he forced Bennett to think and talk about staffing. However, Trigg failed to persuade Bennett to refrain from raising the topic at the staff meeting (as he initially sought to do (1, 49, 107). Trigg then tried to confine the scope of any discussion (9, 13, 23) by having Bennett commit himself to as few definite grade arrangements as possible. That he failed in this endeavor as well is evident from a comparison of these suggestions with the detailed arrangements given by Bennett in his opening remarks in the

staff room (345). While "the position is still unclear" (345), things are more "definite," as Bennett says, than Trigg was prepared to concede.

This leads to the suggestion that Bennett was in control and less passive than he appeared to be. Up to the point at which Bennett begins to reveal the gounds for his position (256), he has allowed Trigg to elaborate his point of view. Darling (1978: 84) made a pertinent observation that expresses how Bennett was controlling Trigg. He said "Never answer an outburst with argument. Let the protester blow himself out and only when he has finished and can say no more, reply." Up to utterance 20 Bennett has been caught unprepared, but from then on he tries to draw Trigg out (50, 52, 72, and especially 244, 248, 250, 252, 254). While he might appear to be acceding to Trigg's formulation and framing of the topic he is gaining time for his later actions. In other words he is granting Trigg a hearing and trying to listen. Forester (1980: 222) makes the important point that:

We hear with our ears, but we listen with our eyes and bodies as well, we see gestures, expressions, postures — bodies speak and we listen and understand, but hearing is much more narrow . . . there is more to listening than meets the eardrum, far more than the hearing of words. Listening to what someone says can be as dependent on our knowing *them* as upon our hearing of their *words* . . . . In listening we pay attention not to the sound of the person, but to the person of the sound . . . .

Bennett's action throughout this episode is in keeping with Weick's (1978: 52) plea for the docile, protean leader and his statement that "to control a thing you have to listen to it." A "plastic-spined" leader is, in Weick's (1978: 58) terminology, loosely coupled to his or her environment; however, being loosely coupled suggests an inner mental attentiveness, a tight coupling to the words of a fellow interactant.

Talk and Control

Words do the work because each participant has a subjective understanding of school life that is made manifest in speech. If some degree of inter-subjectivity is to be attained, they must to some extent share meaning and engage in sense making (Ball, 1972). Talk becomes necessary and is powerful in two senses: first, talk does things for the speaker, making known his or her version of something to others that must be attended to; second, talk gets others to do things, not only to take note or account of what is said, but to be influenced by what is said. Pocock (1973a: 79) pointed out that "in the absence of automatic compliance with norms, words must increasingly be used," but teachers as professional or semi-professional persons, do not always automatically comply or defer to administrators.

The reasons for this derive from the characteristics of the classroom, the environment of pedagogy, and the characteristics of teaching. While organizationally teachers are subordinates, vis-à-vis pupils they are superordinates. Managing classrooms means controlling people. As Denscombe (1980: 290) suggests:

The closed classroom, indeed, exacerbates a concern with classroom control and, under certain circumstances can lead to a situation where teachers become pre-occupied with issues of control.

To facilitate children's learning, teachers structure tasks. Time is a scarce resource and constrains the tasks (Denscombe,

1980). Classrooms are structurally tight in the structurally loose school (Weick, 1976; Denscombe, 1980). Teacher talk is used to achieve and maintain pupil control. Classrooms are talk-saturated environments in which teachers, as speakers, direct pupils, as hearers or listeners. The typical three-part talk pattern to a lesson is initiation (teacher), reply (pupil), and evaluation (teacher) (Mehan, 1978).

Most school principals are promoted through the ranks of the teaching service before becoming principals. Prospective principals assimilate these techniques of classroom talk and control as part of their administrative socialization. Two points suggest themselves. First, teachers often carry their classroom superordinancy over into their relationships with their administrative superiors. They try to use words to get them to do things, just as they have learned to do with children. Trigg is a good example. Second, as a consequence, teachers who become administrators have to adjust to having teachers attempt to control them. This means listening to staff speaking as authorities before replying authoritatively. They have to listen, like Bennett, and be verbally parsimonious in exercising their control by making their own words count and knowing when to make them count. A principal has to learn, during his or her career, to initially tighten the grip, as a teacher, then to slacken and loosen the grip (or coupling, to use Weick's term) but never to lose one's grip.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Kariel (1981: 727) has recently advocated the search for new perspectives on organizations that give status to the features of organized life that have been labeled pathological. Similarly, Weick (1978: 60) has urged researchers "to spend more time watching leaders 'on line' " in the belief that "some of the least important realities about leaders are being accorded some of the largest [amounts of] attention." He goes on (1978: 60):

We have to put ourselves in a better position to watch leaders make do, let it pass, improvise, make inferences, scramble, and all the other things that leaders do during their *days between* more visible moments of glory.

This case study portrays a leader on line and it is in regard to Weick's recent work on the coupling of human action and intention in organizations that it is significant. Since the mid-1970s, Weick (1974b: 357, 426– 427) has tried to dereify the language of organizational relationships. In his programmatic paper on schools as loosely coupled systems, Weick (1976: 11) wrote that "it becomes crucial for the organization to have tight control over who does the work and on whom." He continued by saying (1976: 12) that "members of educational organizations should be most explicit and certain when they are discussing issues related to certification for definition and regulation of teachers, pupils, topics, space, and resources." The actors in this case study are addressing Weick's (1976: 11) very question "Who does the work?" The issues then become: Is this an instance of "tight" coupling?; How tight is "tight"?; and What makes for tightness?

The school principal is a visible administrator, and as P. W. Jackson (1977: 427– 428) indicated: "Attention was automatically bestowed upon me as a function of my new status. It went

with the territory." Moreover, "it was there all the time, wherever I went within the school buildings and their environs." Even as time went on the "self-conscious feeling of being on stage, as it were, almost all of the time," never went away. Visibility, in turn, means vulnerability and that means interruptions. Weick (1974a: 498) wrote:

A manager may make the poorest decisions either when he is interrupted early in an act or late in an act. It is not yet clear which way the relationship goes, but either way it has a direct bearing on organizational theory and behavior.

Bennett's case suggests that the flow of events initiated by an interruption is: an initial period in which the administrator is caught off guard, followed by an accommodatory interlude in which sense making is facilitated by listening, and finally a phase of progessive retrieval prior to the issuance of a suitably chosen authoritative utterance.

In contrast to teaching, which takes place in a classroom, is organized into lessons, includes a range of standard pedagogical activities and observes set rituals and codes, administration in a school can take place anywhere. It is time consuming; it observes no set time schedule; and follows no set order or format; for it can arise out of a chance meeting and can include matters that might be routine, spontaneous, trivial, planned, or highly eventful. The school principal is a drifter moving in and out of different locations and areas and in and out of relationships and encounters. The apparent haphazardness and the improvisation that the transcripts in this case study reveal show school administration to be antithetical to the obsession with order often put forth in the writings of scientific management theorists.

This extemporaneity and improvision is evident in the two interactions prior to the staff meeting and Bennett's announcement of the position (345). All three speakers display hesitancy and inner uncertainty in their talk. There is a great deal of backtracking and talking the topic round in order to sort out or work out a possible set of arrangements within the constraints faced. Following Goffman's (1976b) dramaturgical frame, these two encounters are like rehearsals, and in learning their scripts, the actors are exploring what their roles entail. A good deal of looseness belies the appearance of tightness.

However, it is words that make for overall tightness. The best way to capture the full impact of this is to make use of Weick's (1979: 64) sense-making recipe, made up of the components, knowing, thinking, seeing and saying, that is: "How can I know what I think till I see what I say?" Weick (1979) suggests shuffling the components. Bennett's case suggests two shuffles and a slight variation of the components. In the first, listening replaces seeing and gives: How can I [the administrator] know what I think till I *listen* to what they [staff] say? In the second, doing replaces thinking and gives: How can I [the administrator] know what I've *done* till I've seen what I've said?

This case study consists of "strips of everyday, actual doings involving flesh-and-blood individuals in face-to-face dealings with one another" (Goffman, 1975: 563). In three sets of interactions it has been shown that talk does the work. No attempt has been made to go beyond each setting because, as Garfinkel (1967: viii) argues, the formal properties of settings

"obtain their guarantees from no other source and in no other way." If, however, Weick's recipe is to be taken literally, namely that persons can only know and interpret what they have done a posteriori (Weick, 1979), then some means of allowing them to inspect their own actions, reflectively and retrospectively, seems called for. Scrutiny of action performed could be facilitated were it possible to later *see* (in written transcript form) and to *listen* (by replaying a tape recording) to what has been *said*. Such a proposal is beyond the confines of the present article, but a preliminary attempt is documented in Gronn (1981b). Nevertheless, an inspection would show that while "administrative power is the ability of the administrator to have his will and get his way" (Hodgkinson, 1978: 81), the power to control must be worked at linguistically and worked at never-endingly as an ongoing everyday activity.

REFERENCES

Austin, John L.
1978 How to do Things with Words, 2d edition. J. O. Urmson and M. Sbisà, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ball, Donald W.
1972 " 'The Definition of the Situation': Some theoretical and methodological consequences of taking W. I. Thomas seriously." Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour, 2: 61–92.

Blakar, Rolv M.
1979 "Language as a means of social power: Theoretical-empirical explorations of language and language use embedded in a social matrix." In R. Rommetveit and R. M. Blakar (eds.), Studies of Language, Thought and Verbal Communication: 109–146. New York: Academic Press.

Burns, Tom
1954 "The directions of activity and communication in a departmental executive group." Human Relations, 7: 73–97.

Clegg, Stewart
1975 Power, Rule and Domination. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Coulthard, Malcolm, and Margaret Ashby
1975 "Talking with the doctor." Journal of Communication, 25: 140–147.

Darling, Sir James
1967 "On headmastering." In B. W. Hone and P. J. McKeown (eds.), The Independent School: Papers Presented to the Headmasters Conference: 61–71. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Darling, James R.
1978 Richly Rewarding. Melbourne: Hill of Content.

Denscombe, Martyn
1980 "The work context of teaching: An analytic framework for the study of teachers in classrooms." British Journal of the Sociology of Education, 1: 279–292.

Duignan, Patrick
1980 "Administrative behaviour of school superintendents: A descriptive study." Journal of Educational Administration, 18: 5–26.

Flathman, Richard E.
1980 The Practice of Political Authority: Authority and the Authoritative. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fletcher, Frank
1937 After Many Days: A Schoolmaster's Memories. London: Robert Hale and Coy

Forester, John
1980 "Listening: The social policy of everyday life (critical theory and hermeneutics in practice)." Social Praxis, 7: 219–232.

Friesen, David, and Patrick Duignan
1980 "How superintendents spend their working time." Canadian Administrator, 19(5): 1–5.

Garfinkel, Harold
1967 Studies in Ethnomethodology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gibb, Jack R.
1961 "Defensive communication." Journal of Communication, 11: 141–148.

Goffman, Erving
1975 Frame Analysis. London: Penguin Books.

1976a "Replies and responses." Language in Society, 5: 257–313.
1976b The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
1979 "Footing." Semiotica, 25: 1–29.

Gronn, Peter C.
1979 "The politics of school management: A comparative study of three school councils." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, Australia.
1981a "Accomplishing the doing of school administration: Talk as the work." Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Communication Association, Sydney.
1981b "A school council at work: The micro-organization of school politics." In A. R. Welch (ed.), The Politics of Educational Change: 43–55. Armidale, Australia: Centre for Social and Cultural Studies in Education, University of New England.
1982 "Neo-Taylorism in educational administration?" Educational Administration Quarterly, 18(4) (forthcoming).

Halpin, Andrew W.
1960 "Muted language." School Review, 38: 85–104.

Healey, Colin
1978 "Scotch College, Melbourne, 1964–1975." In S. Murray-Smith (ed.), Melbourne Studies in Education 1978: 67–106. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Hodgkinson, Christopher
1978 Towards a Philosophy of Administration. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Horne, J. H., and Tom Lupton
1965 "The work activities of 'middle' managers — An exploratory study." Journal of Management Studies, 2: 14–33.

Jackson, Philip W.
1977 "Lonely at the top: Observations on the 'genesis' of administrative isolation." School Review, 85: 425–432.

Kariel, Henry S.
1981 "Perceiving administrative reality." Journal of Politics, 43: 720–736.

Keith, Bertram, R.
1977 The Lives of Frank Rolland. Adelaide, Australia: Rigby.

Kress, Gunther
1979 "The social values of speech and writing." In R. Fowler, B. Hodge, G. Kress, and T. Trew (eds.), Language and Control: 46–62. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Martin, William J., and Donald J. Willower
1981 "The managerial behavior of high school principals." Educational Administration Quarterly, 17: 69–90.

Mehan, Hugh
1978 "Structuring school structure." Harvard Educational Review, 48: 32–64.

Mintzberg, Henry
1973 The Nature of Managerial Work. New York: Harper and Row.

Ochs, Elinor
1979 "Transcription as theory." In E. Ochs and B. B. Schieffelin (eds.), Developmental Pragmatics: 43–72. New York: Academic Press.

O'Dempsey, Keith
1976 "Time analysis of activities, work patterns and roles of high school principals." Administrator's Bulletin, 7(8): 1–4.

Peterson, Kent
1976 "The principal's tasks." Administrator's Notebook, 26(8): 1–4.

Pocock, J. G. A.
1973a Politics, Language and Time. London: Methuen.
1973b "Verbalizing a political act: Towards a politics of speech." Political Theory, 1: 27–45.
1981 "The reconstruction of discourse: Towards the historiography of political thought." Modern Language Notes, 96: 959–980.

Pondy, Louis
1978 "Leadership is a language game." In M. W. McCall, Jr. and M. M. Lombardo (eds.), Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?: 87–99. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sacks, Harvey, Emmanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson
1974 "A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation." Language, 50: 696–735.

Soskin, William F., and Vera P. John
1963 "The study of spontaneous talk." In R. G. Barker (ed.), The Stream of Behavior: 228–287. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Spiegelberg, Herbert
1973 "On the right to say 'we': A linguistic and phenomenological analysis." In G. Psathas (ed.), Phenomenological Sociology: Issues and Applications: 129–156. New York: Wiley.

Sproull, Lee S.
1981 "Managing educational programs: A micro-behavioral analysis." Human Organization, 40: 113–122.

Thomas, A. Ross, Quentin Willis, and David Phillips
1981 "Observational studies of Australian school administrators: Methodological issues." Australian Journal of Education, 25: 55–72.

Weber, Max
1970 From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Weick, Karl E.
1974a "Amendments to organizational theorizing." Academy of Management Journal, 17: 487–502.
1974b "Middle range theories of social systems." Behavioral Science, 19: 357–367, 426–427.
1976 "Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems." Administrative Science Quarterly, 21: 1–19.
1978 "The spines of leaders." In M. W. McCall Jr. and M. M. Lombardo (eds.), Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?: 37–61. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
1979 "Cognitive processes in organizations." In B. M. Staw (ed.), Research in Organizational Behavior: 41–74. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Willis, Quentin
1980 "The work activity of school principals: An observational study." Journal of Educational Administration, 18: 27–54.

Wolcott, Harry
1973 The Man in the Principal's Office. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Wood, A. Harold
1976 "Methodist Ladies College, Melbourne, 1939–66: A personal memoir." In S. Murray-Smith (ed.), Melbourne Studies in Education 1976: 255–276. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Woods, Peter
1979 The Divided School. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.