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Conversation-analytic data session as a pedagogical institution

Melisa Stevanovic & Elina Weiste

Abstract

We draw on interaction-oriented focus group research and conversation analysis to study the conversation-analytic data session as a pedagogical institution. Drawing on focus group interviews among conversation-analytic experts and novices, we considered (1) the degree of sharedness of different normative orientations among the conversation analysts regarding the data session and (2) possible differences in how novice and expert conversation analysts orient, perceive and evaluate data-session normativity. We found both the experts and novices to engage in a delicate act of balancing between two normative ideals—that everyone should contribute to the joint analysis and that everyone who contributes to the joint analysis should be constructive. The experts displayed a strong consensus that all data-session participants' contributions should be treated equally—given that all of them are competent language users. The novices, then again, emphasized the different levels of experience between the data-session participants and sought for recognition of their own lower competence in relation to that of the experts. It thus seems that the collaborative, democratic practices, which are seen as empowering by the experts, invoke anxiety in the novices. Making this tension visible can enable the development of conversation-analytic data sessions from the pedagogical perspective.

Keywords

conversation analysis; data session; focus-group interview; higher education; research praxis

1 Introduction

For a large majority of today's Western universities, a capability to carry out independent research is a prerequisite for graduate students in social sciences to earn their degree. Even if studies in research methodology are included in most social-scientific graduate school programs, there is still a dearth of research on how exactly research methods should be taught in the social sciences (Garner et al., 2009). Research methods teachers often simply teach the way they were taught: they comply with the normative paradigm where “the teacher is all knowing and the student is an empty vessel waiting to be filled” (Strayhorn, 2009, p. 120). Such teaching strategies hardly empower students to participate in their own learning processes and have been associated with less than adequate learning results (Strayhorn, 2009).

One important characteristic of successful teaching of research methods in social sciences is a balance between *learning about* and *learning how to do* research (Strayhorn, 2009). As Dewey (1939) emphasized, action and knowledge, theory and practice, are inseparable human activities. However, one frequent problem in research methods teaching is that students are led to believe that theory-driven research questions dictate the methodological choices. Thus, the students are not prepared to deal with practical considerations in varying contexts and with

regard to emergent research problems (Preissle & Roulston, 2009). Practical engagement in authentic research activities is thus integral for an elaborated understanding of theoretical issues in the midst of empirical work. The question here is about an iterative process, which not only fosters the development of empirical research skills, but also facilitates a deeper grasp of theoretical issues.

How can theory and practice then be combined in research methods teaching? From this point of view, many researchers have highlighted the importance of a more comprehensive socialization of students into a “culture of research” (Eisenhart & DeHaan, 2005, p. 7). The possibility to become immersed in a group of researchers conducting authentic research activities has been suggested to offer students opportunities to demonstrate and develop creative and innovative scholarship, as they learn to reflect on how theories, methods, and research questions interact in a mutually defining fashion (Preissle & Roulston, 2009). In addition, being part of a community of researchers increases the students’ feelings of connectedness and a sense of belongingness, which also facilitate learning (Battistich et al., 2004; Lizzio et al., 2007; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The effective learning of research methods thus requires students’ participation in what a number of researchers (see e.g., Roth, 2009) have referred to as *research praxis*. In his well-known workshop on reflexive sociology, Pierre Bourdieu (1992) stated that the acquisition of research practices necessitates that the students experience them in practical operation, as realized in the face of actual scientific choices and dilemmas.

Face-to-face interactions are a crucial part of socialization into a research praxis; it is difficult to learn a research practice without face-to-face interactions with more experienced researchers simply based on methods descriptions (Roth, 2009, p. 113). Indeed, several ethnographic studies have reported on accomplished scientists who have managed to reproduce a particular experiment or procedure based on protocols and published articles only when visiting another laboratory where the relevant practices have already been successfully enacted (Collins, 2001). Such findings are illuminating in that they point to the absurdity of the assumption that graduate students could acquire certain researcher skills just by themselves—given that even established scientists often fail to do so.

1.1 The case of conversation analysis

In this empirical study, we will consider students’ socialization into a research praxis in a specific context: conversation analysis (CA). CA is a qualitative data analysis method that emerged as an alternative to experimental social psychology and sociological theorizing on human social action. The first conversation-analytic studies (e.g., Sacks et al., 1974; Sacks, 1984; Schegloff, 1968; 1979; Schegloff et al., 1977) showed that conversations are well-organized even in their finest level of detail, and all CA research ever since has basically been about explicating that organization. In CA, researchers use video and audio recordings of naturally-occurring conversational interactions as their data—something that they can scrutinize over and over again, also with colleagues (Heath et al., 2010). Such collaborative data analysis takes typically place in the so-called *data sessions*, which consist of conversation analysts—ranging from professors to undergraduate students—coming together to discuss some pieces of data. In this paper, our aim is to increase understanding of the data session as a site of socialization into conversation-analytic research practices by considering the ways in which novice and expert conversation analysts talk about these sessions in focus group interviews.

Data sessions have a somewhat stable overall structure. At the beginning of the session the person who has brought the piece of data to be analyzed gives others some basic information about its context and setting. Thereafter, the participants listen and/or look at the data segment

for several times, scrutinizing (and sometimes critically evaluating) the detailed transcripts made from the data segment. This is followed by a 10-minute period of silence, during which each participant studies the transcript and writes down analytic observations on the participants' conduct in the data. What happens next, however, constitutes the actual thrust of the data session: discussion. The discussion phase starts by each data-session participant in turn presenting one analytic observation. Since it is only after this "round" that an open discussion is launched, the participants are expected to keep their initial contributions relatively short.

The goals of working in the context of data sessions have not been explicitly specified within the CA community. Yet, certain objectives come across as apparent. One such goal is to increase the validity and reliability of CA research (cf. Peräkylä, 1997). While the interpretation of interactional data is not possible without researchers also making use of their own intuitions of what the interactants in the data are up to, working in a data session gives the researchers an opportunity to subject their analytic insights to other researcher's criticisms already at an early stage of their research and thus, as it were, to test their own intuitions against those of others'. Another apparent goal is a social one. No matter whether they take place weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, these regularly held events work as a glue within the community of conversation-analytic researchers. Data sessions even contain features of what Durkheim (2001 [1912]) called the "collective effervescence" of religious rituals in that they involve a group of individuals participating in the same action, sharing the same focus of attention, and enjoying a high degree of collective emotional excitement (as new intellectual insights emerge). Arguably, it is through such moments during the data sessions that the community of conversation-analytic researchers comes into being.

CA data sessions have not been explicitly developed to meet the needs of research methods teaching. In other words, while there are many guides to doctoral education, focusing on procedures associated with the analysis of interactional data analysis (Heath et al., 2010; McHoul & Rapley, 2001; Silverman, 2011; Wetherell et al., 2001), the *raison d'être* of the CA data session is not a pedagogical one. Yet, given that data sessions constitute a central locus of socializing new members into the CA community, the pedagogical aspects of data sessions cannot be ignored. Most importantly, becoming a CA researcher necessitates the acquisition of skills to notice phenomena from the interactional data that are of potential interest to other researchers in this domain of inquiry. While in many disciplines, such skills may at least partially be gained through coursework and independent reading, such learning is more difficult in conversation analysis, where the analysis typically starts with nothing particular in mind (Hoey & Kendrick, in press). Data sessions provide a site for "learning by doing" (Dewey, 1966) and for "model learning" (Badura, 1977), which are crucial pedagogical practices in gaining understanding of the kinds of interactional phenomena that are worth CA investigation.

As in any community, acting competently within the CA community necessitates a great deal of "silent knowledge" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Polanyi, 2002 [1958]) and understanding of "epistemic practices" (Kelly, 2008). In the case of conversation analysis, these competences have much to do with how interactional phenomena should be talked about in data sessions (e.g., Antaki et al., 2008; Tutt & Hindmarsh, 2011). In their study on interactions during CA data sessions, Antaki and colleagues (2008) showed that, for example, moral evaluations of the conduct of the interactants in the data made by the data-session participants were oriented to as accountable. Instead, data sessions are committed to some kind of dispassionate objectivity, aiming to unravel the orderliness of interaction in an "unmotivated" way (see Sacks, 1992, p. 175). Thus, to stray from disinterestedness is likely to attract criticism. Notably, however, Antaki and colleagues (2008) showed that dubious morally-laden comments were not handled with rebuttals or challenges in a mundane idiom, but they were treated as institutionally corrigible. These comments were "analyzed away" (Antaki et al., 2008, p. 26).

In this paper, we examine the perceptions and normative expectations of CA researchers as to how data sessions are and should be conducted. Unlike in the studies on data-session interaction conducted thus far (Antaki et al., 2008; Harris et al., 2012; Tutt & Hindmarsh, 2011), where the researchers have described the sequential unfolding of interaction *during* the data sessions, our research is about the ways in which CA researchers talk *about* the data sessions. Our aims are:

- (1) to assess the degree of sharedness of different kinds of normative orientations among the members of the CA research community, and
- (2) to unravel possible differences in the ways in which novices and experts in this particular field of inquiry orient, perceive and evaluate data-session normativity.

We assume that the answers to these questions can increase overall understanding of data session as a social institution and thus ultimately help us evaluate its potential as a pedagogical institution.

2 Method

2.1 Research subjects

To investigate the orientations of CA researchers to data-session normativity, we will draw on two video-recorded focus group interviews as data. The interviews were conducted for two 4-member groups—experts and novices—at Finnish university in the autumn 2016. The expert group consisted of professors and university lecturers with a long record of CA publications and years (or decades) of experience conducting and participating in CA data sessions. The novice group, then again, included undergraduate and graduate students working on their first CA research project. The research subjects were recruited to the study by the two authors on the basis of each subject filling the predefined criteria of either an expert or a novice.

2.2 Materials

The focus group interviews were conducted by the two authors as moderators and the interviews lasted about 1.5 hours. To elicit maximally spontaneous and minimally interview-led talk around and about our topic of interest, we used a form of focus group interview technique where we played segments from a previously audio-recorded data session to the research subjects, asking them to reflect freely on what they heard. The segments were selected in hope that listening to them would generate voluntary talk on data-session normativity—more specifically, on:

- (1) the overall organization of talk during the data sessions,
- (2) the acceptable and non-acceptable content of analytic observations,
- (3) the granularity of matters relevance and interest,
- (4) the ways in which other's analytic observations should be treated, and
- (5) the pedagogical aspects of activities in the data sessions.

To facilitate open discussion on the basis of observations made from the audio-recorded data-session interaction segments, we made sure none of the members of our focus groups had participated in the particular data session recorded. We also changed the pitch of the data-

session participants' voices so that they would appear anonymous to the members of our focus groups.

To our satisfaction, the members in both of our focus groups generated talk on the topics we hoped they would engage in. Although each time after listening to a new audio-recording that we presented to them, the members produced the next turns somewhat hesitantly, as if probing their relevance for our research agenda, very soon they seemed to relax and produce free-spirited talk in the form stories, complaints, assessments, evaluations, moral judgments, and the like. At the occurrences of conversational lapses, we intervened with additional questions of clarification.

2.3 Methodological approach

Focus groups have played an important role in several research traditions, such as business and marketing research (Goldman & McDonald, 1987), communication studies (Albrecht et al., 1993), education (Flores & Alonzo, 1995), community development (Hughes & DuMont, 2002), and health research (Barbour, 2005; Stevens, 1996). Although focus group data have frequently been analyzed primarily with reference to the content of group members' talk, focus groups offer the researcher also an opportunity to observe how members of the group interact with one another (Morgan, 1996; 2010; Wilkinson, 1998). Interaction between different group members can help a researcher, for example, "to explore the arguments people use against each other, identify the factors which influence individuals to change their minds and document how facts and stories operate in practice—what ideological work they do" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 117). Moreover, as has been demonstrated in many empirical studies, (see e.g., Myers, 1998; 2006; Puchta & Potter, 1999; 2004), focus group interview is also a convenient site for studying general patterns in the ways in which group members talk to each other and to the moderator(s) (Morgan, 2012, p. 163). Importantly, as pointed out by Morgan (2010, p. 718), there is an "inherent connection between the substantive content of 'what' a person says and the interactive dynamics of 'how' he or she says those things," and for certain research questions—such as ours—this gap needs to be bridged.

In our approach to focus group interview, we will draw on a combination of interaction-oriented focus group research (Agar & MacDonald, 1995; Albrecht et al., 2003; Duggleby, 2005; Frith & Kitzinger, 1998; Grønkjær et al., 2011; Morgan, 2010; Smithson, 2000; Wetherell & Edley, 1997) and CA (Clift, 2016; Heritage, 1984; Psathas, 1995; Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell, 2010; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). In other words, we will operate at a middle level between the substance of conversation and its interactional dynamics, where our analysis is linked both to the content of the group members' talk and to the interactional dynamics of that talk (see e.g., Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003), while, in the overall framing of the paper, the former takes precedence over the latter. Drawing on the symbolic interactionist tradition (Mead, 1934), we will consider interaction from the point of view of the shared meanings that are created and negotiated by the group members during the course of their interaction. As illustrated through Cooley's (1909) famous analogy of the "looking-glass self," individuals find the meanings of their own actions in the reactions of others. It is also important to recognize that Mead (1934) treated interaction as inseparable from the broader social context, which extended beyond a given face-to-face encounter, many aspects of thought being a form of interaction that occurs within "the little theater of the mind."

In practice, our approach to focus group interviews revolves around three questions, which we consider to be informative about the degree of sharedness of normative orientations and expectation within each focus group:

- (1) Are there certain expressions and viewpoints that immediately mobilize an assertion of group consensus (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 109)? What are these expressions and viewpoints substantially about?
- (2) Are there certain expressions and viewpoints that are preceded and followed by explanations and accounts, which demonstrate a need to justify one's views in front of the other group members (see e.g., Antaki, 1994)? What are these expressions and viewpoints substantially about?
- (3) Are there certain expressions and viewpoints censored either explicitly through dominant expressions of moral contempt or implicitly by receiving one's views with silence and indifference (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 110; Stevens, 1996, p. 172). What are these expressions and viewpoints substantially about?

2.4 Analysis

Our analytic process started with a detailed verbatim transcription of our focus group interview data, where we were careful to include, not only talk, but the ways in which one group member's talk was received by others on a moment-to-moment basis, whether turn transitions were accompanied with overlap or silence, and whether the group member engaged in salient nonverbal behavior in terms of gaze direction, gestures and facial expressions (for the conventional CA transcription symbols, see Schegloff, 2007, p. 265–269 and Appendix 1).

Next, we examined the data transcripts to get a general impression of the types of talk that the group members in our data had engaged in. We observed the group members to have engaged in a lot of talk about their personal experiences in CA data sessions and thus started to differentiate between the different forms that such tellings had taken. These forms included: (1) ostensibly neutral descriptions of practices, (2) stories with an “affective stance” (Stivers, 2008), (3) personal judgments of practices, and (4) generic normative evaluations of practices.

During the subsequent rounds of analysis, we also considered the accessibility of the experience told, the valence of the telling, and the reception of the telling by other group members. Here, we first worked in a data-driven way, probing our initial categories against every new instance of data. Later, we tested our intersubjective grasp of those categories that we had jointly agreed upon by double-coding some pieces of data. Frequently, this led to further specifications and definitions of our analytic categories.

Finally, we started to unravel the wider interactional dynamics of the expert group discussion, on one hand, and that of the novice group discussion, on the other, identifying fine differences in the expert and novice group members' collaboratively displayed orientations to data-session normativity. The data extracts presented in this paper are selected on the basis of their capacity to demonstrate these differences. During this analytic round, we focused particularly on those moments of interaction where the group members displayed responsiveness (or a lack of thereof) to each other's interactional contributions and not to our interview questions. This allowed us to make more reliable conclusions about the views that “genuinely” prevailed in each of the two groups.

3 Results

In this paper, we will present the results of our analysis in three sections. First, we will discuss how the members of our two focus groups oriented to a need of every data-session participant

to produce an analytic contribution during a session. Second, we will consider the reverse side of the coin: how analytic contributions are—and should be—received by other data-session participants. Finally, we examine the normative orientations in the ways in which expert and novice CA researchers talked about the (possible existence of a) status hierarchy between the data-session participants. In each section, we pursue both of our overall research aims—that is, we (1) assess the degree of sharedness of different kinds of normative orientations among the members of the CA research community, and (2) unravel possible differences in the ways in which novices and experts in this particular field of inquiry orient, perceive and evaluate data-session normativity. In so doing, we seek to increase understanding of data session as a social institution and thus ultimately help us evaluate its potential as a pedagogical institution.

3.1 Participants' analytic contributions

As all conversations, also data-session discussions presuppose their participants' capacity to take turns and contribute to the creative exchange of thoughts and ideas. However, the extent to which “taking a turn” equals “making a CA contribution” is an open question, and the pressure that this equation should hold can make active participation in the data-session discussion rather challenging. In both of our focus groups, this topic was associated with a relatively high level of consensus. Yet, content-wise, the groups agreed on slightly different points.

The members of the expert group emphasized the capacity of every language user to contribute equally to the production of analysis. According to their view, every competent member of society has something to say and should thus feel free to take a turn during a CA data session. Analysis is not an individual endeavor but something that emerges from joint discussion. Notably, however, what is not perfectly clear in the talk of the experts is the matter, whether these views should be taken as a description of how data sessions normally *do* work or of how they *should* work. Such ambiguity is present also in Extract 1, which starts with Mai describing her “impression” of one always being able to say something during a data session (line 1–2). The turn is designed to be recognizable as agreement with previous turns with similar content (note the turn-initial *niin* ‘yea’ and the clitic particle *-kin* ‘also’).

Extract 1 (Expert interview 36:20)

- 01 Mai: *niin mullakin on sellanen mielikuva että aina pystyy*
yea also I have the kind of impression that one can always
02 *[jotain sanomaan vaik olis semmonen,*
[say something even if it would be a sort of,
03 Ani: *[niih (0.1) joo et mä en ymmärrä tota kohtaa[miks toi*
[yea (0.1) yea like I don't understand that place [why does(s)he
04 Teo: *[mmm mmm*
05 Ani: *sanoo tossa noin [ja sit muut voi tarttuu siihen ja sanoo*
say there like that [and then others can pick on that and say
06 Kaj: *[mmm.*
07 Ani: *et mä ymmärsin tai että mäkin kiinnitin huomiota*
that I understood or that I also paid attention (to that)
08 *mut sit jos joku ensimmäinen rummuttaa jonkun hienon*
but then if someone as first drums out some great
09 *analyysin niin kylhä se vetää jauhot jokaiselta suusta.*
analysis then surely it causes everybody to clam up.
10 Teo: *mmm mm.*
11 Ani: *et se ei oo tän idea.*
but it is not the idea of this.

12 Kaj: ja sit niinku tavallaan mulle tulee tost mieleen se
and then it occurs to me from that that even if the
 13 vaikka se ensimmäinen havainto minkä joku sanoo ääneen
first observation that someone says aloud
 14 oiskin joku sellanen vähän fragmentaarinen [tai semmonen
would be that sort of a bit fragmentary or [that kind of
 15 Ani: [Mmm.
 16 Kaj: niin sit siit saattaa seurata hyvää [keskustelua tai,
it might still lead to a good [discussion or,
 17 Teo: [Mmm mmm.
 18 Ani: nimenomaan.
absolutely.

((14 lines removed, during which Maj talks about the ways in which listening to other participants makes one's own thoughts clearer.))

32 Mai: siitä on semmonen olo et kun muut puhuu niin
it feels like when the others speak you understand it
 34 jotenki tajuu paremmin mitä ite on ollu ajattelemassa.
better yourself that what were you thinking about.
 35 Kaj: mmm.
 36 Mai: [et se on kuitenkin semmonen aika kollektiivinen myös se
[that it's nevertheless also quite collective that
 37 Teo: [mmm.
 38 Mai: se niinkun merkityksen rakentaminen siinä.
that erm construction of the meaning in it.

Mai's description (lines 1–2) is followed by Ani agreeing with Mai. Ani also substantiates her agreement by pointing out that an adequate turn during a data session could consist of a person's statement of non-understanding of the details of the interaction to be analyzed (lines 3) and by noting that such confessional statements could be picked up by others (lines 5, 7). Also Teo and Kaj respond, but only minimally (lines 4, 6). Thereafter, Ani moves on to push forward an idea of equality between data-session contributions by different participants: no one should "drum out some great analysis" (lines 8–9) because such behavior leaves others with nothing to say. Teo agrees (line 10) and Ani carries on to emphasize that such conduct is not what the data session is about (line 11). In this way, Ani in effect complains about the behavior of some anonymous data-session participants who exert a destructive influence on the institution as a whole. In so doing, Ani also displays an orientation to the possibility that taking a turn could be problematic for some participants in certain circumstances. Somewhat paradoxically, such problems are suggested to occur when someone does not properly monitor the adequacy of his or her turn and produces a contribution that is "too" great.

Ani's complaining line of action is not carried on by the others. Instead, the other group members proceed by describing the positive aspects of everyone contributing to the analysis. Kaj comes in and frames his thoughts as having occurred to him on the basis of Ani's prior talk. Kaj presents a similar type of idea than Ani did in her previous turn: even if someone's first analytic observation during a data session would be fragmentary, others can build on that, and it can nevertheless lead to a good discussion (lines 12–16). After Teo and Ani have expressed their strong agreement with Kaj's point (lines 17–18), Mai talks about the ways in which listening to other participants can make one's own thoughts become clearer. Teo and Kaj agree with Mai (lines 35, 37), and she continues to emphasize the collaborative construction of meaning in the data session. Hence, while there is a strong agreement among the expert group members as to how data sessions ideally are, they circumvent the notion of possible hindrances to the realization of that ideal. In the talk of the experts, it is almost as if the ideal world were already there.

The members of the novice group, in contrast, talked a lot about the anxiety that they had experienced when having faced the obligation to contribute to the joint data-session discussion for the first time. The experience of having nothing to say and still having to say something during the first discussion round was more or less overwhelming and the members of the novices group shared stories of how they managed the situation. In the extract below, the novices point out to that the leaders of the data sessions could do more to ease the anxiety of those that have not attended a CA data session before. The extract starts by Kia suggesting that it could be helpful if the novices would be instructed more at the beginning of the sessions of how things are generally done in the data sessions (lines 1–4).

Extract 2 (Novice interview 1:20:23)

- 01 Kia: ja voiskohan siin antaa sit jos on noviiseja paikalla niin
and could it be that if there are some novices present
 02 antaa enemmän ohjeita siihen e-ennen vaikka (1.0) no siis
could someone give more instructions be-before (1.0) well
 03 kertoo ihan alkuun että tääl toimitaan
tell at the very beginning that how does things work
 04 niin et ensin me katotaan tätä aineistoo,
that first we look at this data,
 05 Tua: mmm.
 06 Mia: mmm.
 07 Eli: mun mielestä Terttu aika usein [sanoo et se on tosi kiva
I think that Terttu [tells quite often that it's really nice
 08 Kia: [se kyl se sanoo se on hyvä
[she says indeed it's good
 09 mut sit kans siin ennen ku tehään muistiinpanoja sillei et
but also then before we make some notes so that
 10 @nyt tehään muistiinpanoja ja voitte kirjottaa@
@now we make some notes and you can write down@
 11 Tea: ihan mitä tulee mieleen.
whatever comes to mind.
 12 Kia: ihan mikä vaan ninku huomio mitä teil on tullu mieleen tai
whatever observation that has come to your mind or
 13 joku ninku mikä teit kiinnostaa tai voi,
what are you interested in or one could,
 14 Tea: Mm.
 15 Kia: tai saatte herrajestas voisko sanoo että voi myös kysyy
or oh my god could it be said that one can also ask
 16 jonkun kysymyksen.
a question.
 17 Tea: niih.
yeah.
 18 Mia: mm-m. ((nods))
 19 Kia: sehä vois ninku fmadaltaa [kynnystä kysyä(h) kysymyksiäf
it could flower [the threshold to ask(h) questionsf
 20 Tea: [mut ehkä nii,
[but maybe yeah,
 21 Kia: koska sehän ois hyödyllistä [jos sit vois olla sillee et
because it would be helpful [if one could be like
 22 Tea: [mm.
 23 Kia: mä en ymmärrä et miks (0.2) miks tää vaikka vastaa näin.
I don't understand that why (2.0) why he/she answers like this.
 24 Tea: mmm.
 25 Mia: joo sehän oiski jos ninku sanottais [tosiaan ääneen se että
yea that would indeed be something if it would be [said aloud that
 26 Kia: [nii.
[yes.

27 Mia: tääl on ihan sallittua kysyä.
it's perfectly permitted here to ask questions.

Kia's suggestion (lines 1–4) is agreed with by Tua and Mia, while Eli defends their current data-session leader, Terttu, who in Eli's opinion usually does instruct novices properly at the beginning of each data session (line 7). Eli also evaluates such instructions positively, as 'really nice' (line 7). Kia agrees and also gives a pro forma positive evaluation of Terttu's conduct ('it's good,' line 8), but goes on to add that some further instructions could also be given later during the session, for example, at the point at which the participants usually start making notes of their analytic observations (lines 9–10). Tea completes Kia's suggestion by adding that one could write down 'whatever that comes to your mind' (line 11; on the collaborative production of turns, see Lerner 2002). Kia continues by specifying the norm that had been emphasized also in the group of the experts: a contribution to the joint analysis could 'whatever observation' or something that one just finds 'interesting' (lines 12–13). Right after this Kia, however, deviates from that general idea and suggests that data-session participants could also be instructed to ask questions and contribute to the joint discussion in this way (lines 15–16). By framing her idea with a strongly articulated *herrajestas* 'oh my god' Kia orients to the unexpectedness of the idea—that is, asking questions is not something that data-session participants would normally dare to do. Tea and Mia immediately agree (lines 17–18) with Kia and Kia goes on explaining how this sort of instruction could indeed 'lower the threshold of asking questions'—something that would be very beneficial from the point of view of one's learning (lines 19–23). Mia enthusiastically agrees with Kia's suggestion by adding that it 'would be indeed something' if something like that would be said explicitly in the data session (lines 25, 27).

In the way as demonstrated in Extract 2, the novices display an orientation to a normative expectation that data sessions call for analytic contributions from all of its participants. Even if an analytic contribution may in principle be "anything," this does not hold for questions by which a participant could position him- or herself as unknowledgeable in the matter at hand and thus circumvent his or her obligation to try to contribute. In pointing out to the problematicity of such a norm, the novices in effect expressed willingness to reject the notion of *a priori* equal competence of all data-session participants that experts emphasized. The novices strongly agreed that the recognition of their lower competence would make their participation in the joint discussion easier; such recognition would entail more instruction and an explicit permission to openly play out their lack of competence (cf. Waring 2001; 2002b). In this regard, the expert group was quite different: the experts strongly agreed that all contributions should be viewed as equal. Everybody participates in the construction of joint analysis and all contributions are equally needed. In their world, having nothing to contribute is a state of affairs that does not exist and experiences thereof need not to be acknowledged. Thus, what the novices described as an anxiety-invoking arrangement was depicted as something empowering by the experts.

3.2 Responses to analytic contributions

As has become obvious above, it is an explicit norm and ideal of the CA data session to welcome all kinds of analytic contributions from its participants—no matter how fragmentary such contributions might sometimes be. However, the mere making of analytic contributions is not enough for a fruitful academic discussion, but some "substantive reciprocity" (Waring 2002a) of the analytic contributions by other participants is also needed. It nonetheless appears that not all analytic contributions are received in similar ways. The dissimilar treatment of different types of data-session contributions has already been described in earlier research on

CA data-session interaction (Antaki et al., 2008), and the matter was also acknowledged by the members of both of our focus groups. However, both the experts and the novices seemed to have difficulties carrying out a smooth discussion around this topic. It seemed to be particularly tedious and troublesome to discuss the matter from the “negative” point of view, with reference to the possibility that someone’s analytic contribution would *not* be received in an adequate way. It seemed to be easier for the participants to take the opposite, “positive,” point of view, and highlight the importance of other’s encouraging responses to their data-session experiences. In both groups, the topic was thus associated with less than the highest level of consensus, while, content-wise, the discussions among the experts and the novices revolved around slightly different points.

The expert group members stressed the importance of discretion and consideration in the reception of others’ analytic contributions. This happens also in Extract 3, which starts by Ani describing her own negative experiences in CA data sessions (lines 1–7).

Extract 3 (Expert interview 37:38)

- 01 Ani: must tuntuu et mä ainaki on saanu silleen takkiini
I think that at least I’ve been battered
 02 et jo- (.) joku suunnilleen huutaa et
that so- (.) someone like shouts that
 03 ei noin tai .hh (.) ei se noin mee.
not like that or .hh (.) it doesn’t go like that.
 04 (0.5)
 05 Ani: et
that
 06 (0.4) ((Ani shakes her head.))
 07 Ani: et se kuulostaa kauheen pa[halta.]
that it sounds really b[ad.]
 08 Mai: [°mm°,]
 09 (0.2)
 10 Kaj: m[m,]
 11 Ani: [et]tä tota, (0.5) antaa sen sit mennä.
[th]at erm, (0.5) let it go ((waves her arms))
 12 (.)
 13 Ani: et jos joku, (0.4) .hh sanoo jotain tyhmää niin ei siihen
that if someone, (0.4) .hh says something stupid you don’t
 14 tartte puuttua.
have to intervene in it.
 15 (0.5)
 16 Ani: silleen et että tällanen ninku kilpailumentaliteetti
that this sort of erm competitive mentality it’s
 17 kilpailuahan sekin on et sanoo ne kolme pointtia heti.
competition as well if someone says those three points right away.
 18 (0.5)
 19 Ani: että tä- tää ei oo kilpailua kun tää on ninku yhteistyötä.
that th- this is not competition this is like collaboration.
 20 Mai: mm,
 21 Kaj: mm,

In lines 1–3, Ani describes a past experience a data session where her analytic contributions had invoked negative commentary and even yelling from others. Thereafter, Ani expresses a negative stance towards this type of behavior: she pauses her talk, shakes her head, and produces a negative evaluation of it (‘it sounds really bad’, line 7). At this point Mai and Kaj provide only minimal acknowledgement of Ani’s telling (*mm*, lines 8, 10). In the face of a lack of more substantial response, Ani continues her telling by suggesting that even if someone

would say ‘something stupid,’ there is no need to intervene but just to ‘let it go’ (line 11–14). In other words, no one should be directly confronted for his or her irrelevant or erroneous analytic contributions. A more appropriate way to treat such contributions would be simply to ignore them. After a short silence (line 19), Ani still continues her description: she complains about the ‘competitive mentality’ that could prevail in the data session and involve participants saying all their analytic points right away (lines 16–17). This complaint is also met with silence. It is only after Ani states that data sessions are not about competition but about ‘collaboration’ (line 19) that others join to express their (still rather minimal) agreement with Ani’s views (*mm*, lines 20–21).

Compared to Extract 1, in which the experts strongly agreed about the collaborative nature of the data session, Ani’s description in Extract 3 is only weakly received by others. This lack of substantially agreeing reciprocity may be partly due to the personal tone in Ani’s description: at the beginning of the extract, the ‘stupid’ person was Ani herself. Even if Ani later shifted her perspective away from the first person to the third person, ‘someone’ (who says something stupid), agreement with Ani’s views could still have been problematic in that it also could have entailed agreement with Ani’s initial self-deprecatory presupposition (cf. Pomerantz, 1984). Another reason for the lack of response in Extract 3 could be simply be the difficulty of the topic: given the previously expressed strong and explicit emphasis on data-session interaction as a locus of collaboration, it could be problematic or even destructive to start to talk about data-session interaction in a negatively-valenced critical way. Even Ani’s telling in itself was paradoxical in this regard: Ani complained about the content of the interactional contributions by some data-session participants while simultaneously advocating the view that no one’s contributions should be openly criticized. Indeed, as became apparent at the end of Extract 3, Ani’s telling elicited a response adequate enough to bring the sequence to a close only after she shortly deviated from her previous line of criticism (line 19).

In the expert group, the focal point of criticism was the matter of some data-session participants openly expressing their disagreement with other participants during the data session. In the novice group, in contrast, the question was about the matter of data-session participants sometimes ignoring each other’s analytic contributions. This perspective to the issue is demonstrated in Extract 4 taken from the novice interview. Just previously, Kia has explained that those data sessions that she has attended to have certainly contained silences also after her analytic contributions but that this has not invoked ‘any really thorough sentiments’ in her. According to Satu, her coolness in the face of other data-session participants’ silence could be due to her seeing that the others are nevertheless nodding and/or looking thoughtfully at their transcripts. At this point, Tua steps in, pointing out that what would be much more dreadful than the behavior described by Kia would be the scenario of total ignorance, where ‘nobody would pay any attention’ to one’s contribution (lines 1–2).

Extract 4 (Novice interview 30:18)

- 01 Tua: jos ois <täysin hiljaista> eikä kukaan #ninku
 if there would be <totally silent> and #nobody
 02 kiinnittäis mitää huomioo# ni ois se s*it* vähän ninku,
 would pay any attention# it would be a bit,
 03 Kia: nii,
 yes,
 04 (.)
 05 Kia: ehkä se vois olla vähän joo *frankkaa juuf* [heh
 maybe it would be a bit *harsh* [heh
 06 Tua: [f*niif* heh
 [f*yes* heh
 07 (.)

08 Tua: mut ei, (0.2) ei mun mielest sellasta ninku (.) tapahdu.
but no, (0.2) I don't think that it really (.) happens.

09 Kia: ei.
no.

10 (6.0)

11 Eli: ehkä siin kierroksen aikana välil just just joka
maybe occasionally during the round

12 aiheutuu siitä et kaikkien on pakko sanoo jotain ni
when everyone have to say something

13 välil just tuntuu että, (0.4) et se mitä ite sanoo
it occasionally feels like, (0.4) that what you say yourself

14 nii et kukaan ei ninku kato kukaan ei nyökytä
nobody looks (at you) nobody nods

15 ku kaikki miettii sitä omaa
because everybody is just thinking about one's own

16 Kia: mm

17 Eli: seuraavaa juttuaan ni sit siin tulee ehkä välillä
next thing so maybe it becomes occasionally

18 semmonen ninku, (0.7) heh et k(h)etään ei k(h)iinnosta.*f*
*that kind of, (0.7) heh that nobody really care(h)s.*f**

19 Kia: [mm,]

20 Tua: [nii,]
[yes,]

21 Mia: [nii] ja sit toisinpäin myös jotenki sillai et jos mä nään
[yes] and other way around that if I see that

22 et joku (.) Terttu siellä ninku [nyö]kyttelee ja [hymyilee]
someone (.) like Terttu is [nod]ding and [smiling]

23 Eli: [nii,] [j(h)oo.]
[yes,] [yea(h).]

24 Mia: ni mä oon ihan sillai et j_{es} heh ((kaikki yhtyvät nauruun))
then I'm like yes heh ((shared laughter))

Kia agrees with Tua's view, pointing out laughingly that the scenario described by Tua would indeed feel 'a bit harsh' (lines 3–5). Subsequently, Tua affiliates with Kia's amused stance (line 6) and then emphasizes that the question here is really clearly only a hypothetical scenario: nothing like that really happens (line 8)—something that Kia soon agrees with (line 9). In these ways, Kia and Tua collaboratively construct and display an orientation to a norm in the light of which any possible complaint about the lack of response by other data-session participants would appear as erroneous. From this point of view, what happens next is worth particular attention: after a relatively long silence (line 10), Eli states that CA data sessions indeed involve moment of total ignorance, attributing, however, its cause to the participants' anxiety with their impending obligation themselves to contribute to the analysis (lines 11–15, 17–18). In other words, because everyone is so concentrated on themselves, they do not have resources to care about what others say.

Although Eli's description involves a negative affective stance, she treats its expression as interactionally problematic: Eli downgrades her negative evaluation with modifiers 'maybe' (line 11) and 'occasionally' (lines 11, 13, 17), produces the most emotional part of her turn with a delay (line 18), and laughs while describing her negative feelings (line 18) (Pomerantz, 1984; Potter & Hepburn, 2010). While Kia and Tua minimally agree with Eli (lines 19–20), Mia resorts to the same strategy to facilitate group consensus as Ani did in Extract 3: she moves the discussion from the area of negative affect to the one of positive affect. In lines 21, 22, and 24 Mia refers to the greatly positive experiences and feelings related to those scenarios where others, such as a professor named *Terttu*, are nodding and smiling in response to one's analytic contribution. Eli agrees and all members of the novice group join in the shared laughter (line 24).

Hence, while the CA data sessions call for analytic contributions from all of its participants, however, as demonstrated in Extracts 3 and 4, the reception of such contributions is a matter of some problematicity. Both groups acknowledged the existence of problems in this area but also displayed an orientation to a norm not to talk openly about them. In both groups, one could observe that, when talking about this issue, a shift from a negative affect to a more positive affect was associated with an increase in the level of expressed consensus among the group members. As for their content, the discussions in the expert and the novice groups revolved around slightly different points. From the point of view of the experts, ignorance was perceived as a vehicle of discretion and consideration in the reception of others' less-than-adequate analytic contributions, and it was contrasted with open disagreement. From the point of view of the novices, in contrast, ignorance was the *worst* possible treatment that an analytic contribution could encounter, and it was contrasted with encouraging instant feedback—nodding and smiling. While the experts emphasized the lack of the need of the data-session participants to compete with each other as a defense for ignorance strategy, for the novices, in contrast, the interactional validation of one's analytic contributions by other data-session participants seemed to be really important. It seems like the notion of 'collaboration,' which so fundamentally steers the experts' views on data-session normativity, cannot be grasped fully by the novices, who seek to get their competence as potential collaborators recognized before anything else.

3.3 Status hierarchy between the data-session participants

The analysis of Extract 1–4 has already shed light on the dilemmas of democracy, equity, and equality in the CA data session. As has been pointed out in the study by Harris and colleagues (2012), the official institutional arrangement of the data session allows for the fluidity between the roles of teacher and learner, expert and novice. Within a single session, a participant may display his or her skills as an analyst and, at the same time, display that he or she has gained understanding of something new. While such freedom can be empowering in that it makes it possible—and may indeed invoke the expectation—that in principle anyone could act as a competent CA researcher, it may also cause frustration when one's displays of competence are not acknowledged as such by other participants. While in the previous section we discussed the instant interactional feedback that one's analytic contributions may (or may not) receive, in this section, we will discuss the more extended ways in which participants may (or may not) recognize each other as competent members of the CA research community. In both of our focus groups, the members acknowledged that there could be problems in this regard. Both experts and novices recalled situations where someone's analytic contribution had been more or less ignored but when another participant had expressed the same idea, it was received with great enthusiasm and admiration. These situation were, however, interpreted in slightly different ways in the two focus groups.

Extract 5 is drawn from the expert focus group interview. Previously, Mai has described the feelings of annoyance and frustration associated with the above-mentioned situations, where one and the same analytic point gets very different treatment depending on who says it. Mai has also suggested such unfair and unjust conduct to be quite common in the CA data sessions. Yet, she has refrained from expressing any definitive conclusions about the reasons for it. Instead, she has made an explicit reference to the difficulty of identifying why something like that happens, which has mobilized a strong agreement from the other members of the expert group. However, at the beginning of Extract 5, Ani gives a first possible explanation for such conduct: she explains that an analytic point could have been so complicated that the other participants could not first understand it, but by the second time their understanding had

evolved so that it was easier for them to grasp it (lines 1–2, 4). Such an account allows one to hold the view that all data-session participants are equal a priori, and, subsequently, Teo strongly agrees with it (line 3).

Extract 5 (Expert interview 1:35:05)

- 01 Ani: ja ihan se että se on voinu olla sen verran vaikee asia
and just that it could've been such a difficult thing
02 [että sitä ei oo rekisteröiny ekalla kerralla.]
[that one hasn't registered it for the first time.]
03 Teo: [nii se voi olla joo. Joo]joo.
[yea that could be yea. In]deed.
04 Ani: et se on tavallaan kypsynyt (.)
so that it has evolved (.)
05 tää ois tämmönen armollinen tulkinta sille
this would be a kind of merciful interpretation for it.
06 Mai: joo ((nyökkää)). Mmm mmm.
yes ((nods)). Mmm mmm.
07 Ani: mut tää on just tätä feminististä kamaa et kyl sitä on
but this is just this feminist stuff that I've got into
08 itteki joutunu kun on sanonu jotain jossakin joukossa ja
that myself as well when I've said something in some
09 sit kuluu kolme minuuttia ni joku mies sanoo saman ja
group and then three minutes pass and some man says the
10 @↑.hhhh OMPAS IHANAA juuri noin@
same thing and @↑.hhhh Oh how WONDERFUL just like that@
11 (0.5)
12 et kyl naisilla on paljo näit kokemuksi ehkä ei enää
women have a lot of these experiences maybe not that
13 nykyään mutta ennen vanhaa kun miehet oli vielä tyhmiä
much today but in the old times when men were so foolish
14 Mai: heh heh heh
15 Ani: @joo@.
@yes@.
16 (2.5)
17 Ani: nii siis ei oo yksinkertaista vastausta tohon varmaankaa.
so there probably isn't any simple answer to that.
18 Mai: mmm.
19 Teo: mmm-m.
20 Mai: mut kyllä mä ajattelin että jos sielä joku guru tai
but I would think that if there is some guru or
21 proffa on mukana niin kyllähän sen ääni aina [niinku
professor involved so certainly his/her voice always [like
22 Teo: [↑Mmm.
23 Mai: tavallaan painaa enemmän et jos se on selkeesti jo-jonkun
in a way weighs more if he clearly supports so-some
24 tulkinnan kannalla niin kyl m-must jotenki tuntuis et se
interpretation I would feel that it would be a bit like
25 on semmonen vähän niinkun yleisesti hyväksytympi tulkinta
.hhh more generally accepted interpretation although
26 vaikka kyl siel varmaan voi olla vaihtoehtosiakin mut
there might be alternative interpretations as well but
27 että jos siis on sillee hyvin semmonen etabloitunut
if he is very that kind of established person with a
28 henkilö jolla on vahva visio siitä että @tää on näin@ ni
strong vision that @this is like this@ then I would think
29 kyllä mä ajattelin et se on (0.2)niinku aika (0.2) mmh
that it's (0.2) that interpretation (0.2) mmh that is
30 merkittävässä osassa sit se tulkinta siinä ryhmässä.

- in a prominent position in that group.*
- 31 Teo: Mm.
- 32 Kaj: Sit jos me ajatellaa- palataan siihen pedagogiseen
 Then if we thin- go back to that pedagogical
 33 *tavoitteeseen niin eiks niin kuulukin olla.*
 goal again then shouldn't it be so.
- 34 Mai: Mmm mm.
- 35 Teo: Mmm mm. Joo.
 Mmm mm. Yes.

In line 5, Ani accomplishes a rather radical shift in her line of action: she frames everything that she has said at the beginning of the extract as an ‘merciful interpretation’ (line 5), which mobilizes Mai’s agreement (line 6). Then, Ani provides another, less merciful, interpretation. She suggests that such unfair conduct could actually be a gender issue: it is the contributions of women that are dismissed by the others, while those of men are received with admiration and encouragement (lines 7–12). Notably, however, Ani’s account is presented and treated as somewhat problematic. It makes use of a range of distancing devices: framing the matter of gender as ‘feminist stuff’ (line 7), joking about men having been foolish in the old times (line 13) and providing a self-ironic *joo* ‘yes’ (line 15). The other female member in the expert group, Mai, laughs (line 14), but the male members remain silent. After a relatively long silence (line 16), Ani restates the previously expressed point about the unexplainability of the given annoying phenomenon and thus somewhat backs off from her gender-related claim.

Next, the experts’ line of discussion involves yet another shift. Starting from line 20, Mai suggest that the phenomenon could also be explained with reference to the status hierarchy. In her account, a contribution of a professor or “guru” will be more generally accepted among the data-session participants than a contribution of someone else (lines 23–30). This view is only minimally acknowledged by Teo (line 31). A more thorough consensus among the experts (see lines 34–35) is only after Kaj totally changes the perspective to the issue and suggest that, from the pedagogical point of view, a status hierarchy is something positive, and not negative (lines 32–33).

Hence, as pointed out in our analysis of Extract 3, also Extract 5 demonstrates how tricky it can be to talk about the instantiations of status hierarchy among the data-session participants, given the strong emphasis on collaboration and democratic forms of participation that otherwise prevails in the context of CA data sessions. One might also think that the notion of status hierarchy and the problems of inequity and inequality associated with it would be particularly difficult to handle in the expert group, which indeed consists of those privileged by the hierarchical arrangement. It is therefore remarkable that, as we will show next, the discussion around the topic of possible inequity and inequality among the data-session participants was a matter of difficulty also in the novice group—even if this could have been for somewhat different reasons.

Extract 6 is drawn from the novice interview. Previously, the novices have emphasized the inherently democratic forms of participation in the CA data sessions. However, they had also experienced situations where their analytic contributions had been ignored, while the same points, when having been expressed by participants higher in the hierarchy, had been praised and respected by others. This has prompted Mia to state that, despite its apparent democratic organization, the CA data session also involves hierarchical presumptions about who can talk, how much and on what. At the beginning of the extract, Tua responds to Mia’s statement by pointing out that there has been a change in the treatment of her own analytic contributions: in the past, they were often ignored, but this was not the case anymore (lines 1–6, 7–8, 10, 18–21).

Extract 6 (Novice interview 1:11:58)

- 01 Tua: krhm krhbm mä oon siin huomannu niiku muutoksen et kyl se
krhm krhbm I've noticed a change that at the beginning
02 alkuun tuntu vähän ninku jopa no ei nyt loukkaavalta mut
it felt a bit even not really insulting but
03 huomas vaan sen että jos oli sanonu ite jotain ninku
I just noticed that if I had said something during
04 kierroksella .hhh omasta mielestäni ihan ninku siis (.) selkeesti
the round .hhh quite clearly I think (.)
05 mut varmaan ei ollu sit *tselkee[sti(h)ɛ*
but it probably wasn't then tcle[ar(h)ɛ
06 Eli: [heh heh
07 Tua: nii sit joku just ninku sano >sen saman asian< niiku
and then someone just said >the same thing<
08 viittaamatta
without referring to me
09 Kia: mm-m. ((nods))
10 Tua: niin sillon on semmonen et @hei mä sanoin just ton@ et
so then I was like @hey I just said that@ that in a way

((lines 11-17 removed, during which the group members talk about the good reference practices of academic writing))

- 18 Tua: mut se on ninku ehkä muuttunu
but maybe it has changed
19 et siin ninku ehkä sit (0.2) joko osaa
that maybe (0.2) I can say things better(h) or
20 sanoo paremmin(h) tai sit on tullu ninku enemmän tutuks
then I've got more acquainted with the others
21 tai jotenki et sit se vaikuttaa.
or somehow it affects.
22 Eli: Ninku ne tuntee ne kaikki professorit tuntee [toisensa
Then you know all those professors know each [others
23 Tua: [Nii.
[Yes.
24 Eli: niin niiden on helpompi myös sitte [että hän ja hän sanoi
so it's easier to say [that he and he said
25 Tua: [Nii. Nii nii, nii.
[Yes. Yes yes indeed.
26 Eli: mutta sitte ninku ehkä sit se *fpohjasak[ka(h) joku sano*
but then all this tscum[(h) someone just said something
27 Tua: [fp(h) ohjasakka(h)ɛ
[ts(h) cum(h)ɛ
28 Eli: jotain tähän liittyenɛ.
relating to thisɛ.
29 Tua: Nii nii.
Yes yes.

Tua's description of the treatment of her analytic contributions in the past involves a negative affective stance. As in the extracts analyzed before, this description is designed cautiously (see e.g., 'it felt a bit, not really insulting, I just noticed,' lines 2–3). Tua also makes a self-sarcastic comment on her ability to express herself clearly (lines 4–5). Also the laugh particles at the end of Tua's turn (line 5) might imply that there is something interactionally difficult in her description (Potter & Hepburn 2010). Despite the difficulty, Tua's experience becomes shared by the other novices: Eli joins in Tua's laughter (line 6) and Kia produces an acknowledgement token *mm-m* and *nods* (line 9). After talking about the good reference practices in academia more generally (lines 11–17, not shown in the transcript) Tua describes the change that she has

experienced in the ways in which her contributions are treated by others—something that could be due to her improved abilities of self-expression or due to the sheer fact that the other participants know her (lines 18–21). Then, building on Tua’s last remark about her increased familiarity among the data-session participants, Eli goes on to explain how the professors know each other’s well and can thus easily refer to each other’s by using their names (lines 32–24). In contrast, this is not the case with novices who are just a nameless crowd to the professors—*pohjasakka* ‘scum’ (line 27), as Eli ironically calls it. Eli’s description is agreed with by others. Tua produces several agreement tokens (*nii* ‘yes,’ lines 33, 35 and 39) and, joining with Eli’s laughter, repeats the ironic label for the crowd of the novices (‘scum,’ line 37).

Similarly to the experts, also novices displayed an orientation to a normative expectation, according to which status hierarchy is not an explicit issue in the context of CA data sessions. Even those experiences that could have been felt as insulting were described with reference to genuinely “merciful” interpretations by which any blame on the participants at a higher level of hierarchy could be circumvented. Such line of action is indeed comprehensible: it might have been truly embarrassing for a novice to pursue an argument about unequal treatment of his or her analytic contributions, because something like that would have presupposed the unconditional excellence of those (mistreated) contributions. Instead, the descriptions of the novices involved retrospective reflections on learning and development, which may be much less face-threatening to the novices (as well as the experts, should they be present in the situation) than the accusations of mistreatment. Such descriptions make publicly visible the steps of growing into a full member of a CA research community. This implies that a CA data-session group may not be a fully democratic arrangement to begin with, but its aim is to develop into one.

4 Discussion and conclusions

In line with previous studies on CA data sessions, also our results using focus group data suggest that participants in the CA data sessions encounter a range of normative expectations towards making and receiving analytic contributions during the sessions. In the focus group interview talk among both the expert and novice CA researchers, there was a strong consensus that every data-session participant is expected to contribute to the joint analysis. At the same time, both experts and novices acknowledged—albeit with some interactional difficulty—that there are also non-collaborative and inadequate practices that certain participants might occasionally engage in. As it appears, a delicate act of balancing is needed to simultaneously maintain these two somewhat opposing normative ideals: (1) everyone should contribute and (2) everyone who contributes should be constructive.

The combination of interaction-oriented focus group research and CA enabled us to link the content of the group members’ talk with its interactional dynamics, which gave us a view on the processes in which meaning is co-constructed in focus group discussion (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003). Particularly, our analysis of the focus-group data gave new insights into the extent to which different types of orientations to data-session normativity are *shared* among the expert CA researchers, on one hand, and among the novice CA researchers, on the other. However, given the relatively limited size of our data, further research is needed to establish the generality of our findings across CA research communities all over the world.

In our data, experts agreed that all data-session participants’ contributions should be treated equally, given that every language user has the same capacity to participate in the construction of joint analysis. This view aligns with that of Harris and colleagues (2012), who stressed the importance of the CA data session as an environment of democratic and collaborative learning. In their analysis of data-session interaction, they saw both the experts and novices to have the

same right to take turns and develop their analyses over multiple turns of talk. A novice could also sometimes make an innovative and eye-opening analytic contribution, which provided a learning experience to all participants and blurred the lines of the traditional roles of expert and novice. In the pedagogical framework, such events embody the principles of *collaborative learning*, where working together results in a greater understanding of the matter at hand than what would have occurred when working alone (e.g., Panitz, 1999). In the CA data sessions, learning should ideally be a collaborative process that takes place as a “byproduct” of the participants being absorbed in an analytic discussion. In such case, learning occurs at a deep level, targeting a thorough understanding of the interactional phenomenon in question.

Interestingly, the novices’ view on the data session as a collaborative learning environment was somewhat different. The novices shared the insight that the data-session participants do *not* have equal competence to contribute to the analysis. They sought for recognition of their lower competence, which could happen, for instance, by experts giving them more detailed instructions on how to make analytic contributions and an explicit permission to ask questions—all things that could make their participation in the data sessions less anxiety-invoking. Thus, the collaborative practice that was described as empowering by the experts was seen as an anxiety-invoking arrangement for the novices. From the pedagogical viewpoint, such anxiety could, of course, be problematic. Although a reasonable amount of anxiety may activate learning, combined with a sense of incompetence, as experienced by novices, it has been shown to have a negative impact on deep-level learning (Pekrun et al., 2002; Postareff et al., 2016). To foster the novices’ sense of competence, the data sessions should thus be a safe and supportive environment for the novices (Postareff et al., 2016). For the novices, this would *not* mean blurring the lines of distinction between experts and novices (Harris et al., 2012), but conversely, giving them an explicit permission to openly play out their lack of competence.

Given the strong normative orientations on collaboration and democratic forms of participation, the matter of a possible status hierarchy among the data-session participants was a source of interactional difficulty in the focus-group discussions of our data. Thus, it seems that there is a tension between the unequal hierarchical practices, which the researchers within the CA community orient to as pedagogical, and the democratic practices (echoing the principles of collaborative learning), which are seen as ideologically dominant. Making the tension between these two pedagogical ideals more explicit and promoting a theoretical discussion around it could ease the level of anxiety around that tension and enable the development of data sessions as pedagogical institutions.

Both groups displayed an orientation to a normative expectation according to which status hierarchy is *not* an explicit issue in the CA data sessions. At the same time, members in both groups could recall unequal and unfair situations in which someone’s contribution had been ignored but then later received with great enthusiasm when presented by some other participant. In the novice descriptions, these situations were accounted for with reference to their own previous incompetences in making appropriate and clearly formulated analytic contributions. From the expert point of view, the status hierarchy apparent in these types of situations was observed as inevitable and, ultimately, also pedagogically beneficial.

How could the CA data session as an institution then be developed to better fulfil its pedagogical potential? Given the results discussed above, one may think of two partially opposing ways of concretely approaching the issue. On one hand, drawing on the notion of “legitimate peripheral participation” by Lave and Wenger (1991), the data-session leaders could do more interactional work to provide the novice participants with the assurance that is also legitimate to remain silent during a session. The expert participants have a key role in demonstrating this legitimacy in practice; they could also now and then pass their turn to speak, in case they have nothing genuinely new to contribute to the analysis. Notably, though, such a freedom of silence should be kept in a careful balance with the attempts to encourage the

novices to become fuller and fuller data-session participants as a function of their growing competence and self-confidence.

On the other hand, one could focus on the need of encouraging feedback expressed by the members of our novice group and consider alternatives to the type of “data-session round” where each participant’s analytic contributions are met with silence. Overall, a lack of affiliation in response to a telling has been found to be stressful for a speaker (see e.g., Peräkylä et al., 2015), and this pattern may well be associated with a lack of recipient feedback in general. Hence, it may be presumed that the expert CA data-session participants, who have mastery over the CA discourse and a year-long experience of how the data sessions normally proceed, may resort to effective practices of emotional self-regulation, which help to reduce the anxiety in the face of a lack recipient feedback. For the novices, the situation may be much harder—a problem that could nevertheless be eased simply by structuring the sessions slightly differently.

Previous studies have shown that the effective learning of research method requires the participation of students in *research praxis*: practical engagement in authentic research activities and practices that socialize students into a culture of research (Eisenhart & DeHaan, 2005; Roth, 2009). Although the CA data session has not been explicitly developed to meet the needs of research methods teaching, it provides an excellent example of how student participation in research praxis could be supported in practice. A deeper understanding of the ways in which experts and novices perceive this sort of practice offers a fruitful basis for further consideration of the roles—and dilemmas—of collaboration and hierarchy in how people learn to do research.

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Appendix 1

Transcription symbols

[]	Overlapping talk
(.)	A pause of less than 0.2 seconds
(0.0)	Pause: silence measured in seconds and tenths of a second
WORD	Talk louder volume than the surrounding talk
.hh	An in breath
hh	An out breath
£word£	Spoken in a smiley voice
@word@	Spoken in an animated voice
#word#	Spoken in a creaky voice
wo(h)rd	Laugh particle inserted within a word
((word))	Transcriber’s comments
<u>word</u>	Accented sound or syllable
-	Abrupt cut-off of preceding sound

<word>	Talk slower than the surrounding talk
↑	Rise in pitch
,	Final level intonation
.	Final falling intonation

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