

## **Parent Identity in Action: A Conversational Accomplishment of a Parent Who Knows the Best**

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I work on conversation analysis of interactions in “ko-sodate shien circle” (or, child-raising support circles) in present-day Japan, where mothers of a very young child take him/her and spend time watching her child, sharing their problems with and getting advice from staff members of the circle or other mothers, or just enjoying conversations. These new institutions for young mothers have recently been attracting attention in both sociology of family and the study of child and family welfare/well-being, because of their possible role in decreasing young mothers’ stress and anxiety related to child-care and housework.

This presentation describes a sequence of actions routinely performed in conversations about an infant between its parent and another participant, and demonstrates that it is an action sequence through which a parent (or a caregiver) can establish her/his parent identity. The sequence consists of two paired utterances, occasionally followed by a third, further-response-pursuing utterance, plus a response to the latter. In the first pair part of the sequence, the participant who is not the parent describes the infant’s behavior that can be observed “here and now”. The description invites the parent to account for the behavior in light of her/his knowledge about the infant’s everyday behavior patterns. Therefore the sequence here can be called an “account-inviting sequence”.

This sequence is shown to be based upon an “epistemic gradient” (Heritage 2008) between the parent and the other speaker. Describing the infant’s behavior that is accessible to anyone present marks a lack of intimate knowledge about the infant on the part of the first speaker. In responding in the second pair part, the parent conveys epistemic primacy in relation to her/his infant. Two different types of response can be observed. The first type of the response by the parent accounts for the infant’s behavior based on his/her everyday behavioural patterns, thus presenting evidence for epistemic primacy regarding the infant. The second type only confirms the previous description and does not show any ground for epistemic primacy as a parent. When the latter type of response is given by the parent, the previous speaker can explicitly request such an account. Through engaging in these “account-inviting sequences”, the parent can be seen to be claiming her/his identity as a “responsible” parent “in action”.