

Meaning in motion: Sharing the car, sharing the drive

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The inside [of the car] is perhaps almost too trivial, as a space not of state, city, and politics but one of handbags, refreshments, and gossip.

—Laurier et al. (2008: 3)

1. Introduction¹

This special issue is concerned with talk and activity inside cars, with examining the interior of a car as socially rich and meaningful.² News items, in different forms of media, regularly report on the negative impact of passengers on driving, or the use of cell/mobile phones and GPS navigators in cars, or sometimes even unusual behavior inside cars. For example, around the time of writing we encountered, in different countries, the following headlines: “A nagging partner can take your life in traffic,”³ “Mobile phones present in deadly accidents every year,”⁴ “Most lost motorists blame GPS,”⁵ “Car gadgets distract motorists, cause crashes,”⁶ and “It appears women drive better than men.”⁷ The *Telegraph* newspaper in the UK also reported on a newly published guide to motoring manners. The publisher’s representative stated that “we felt that driving is an area where people forget their manners and display aggressive behavior they wouldn’t show in their everyday lives.”⁸ Such headlines and stories almost always encourage the perception of the car interior as a site of exceptional activity and marked emotional behavior, and as a place in which technology use can become problematic and increase the likelihood of accident. By implication, the ways in which people live their ordinary everyday and non-exceptional lives in cars seem less worthy of focus and too trivial to make the news.

Nevertheless, many of us spend a lot of our time in cars. The number of cars on the road has increased tremendously over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and the impact of cars and of automobility has been significant for the environment, for society, and basically for almost any sphere

of life (Dant 2004: 61; Featherstone 2004; Urry 2006: 17–18; Urry 2007: 112). Cars help us to relate to others over distance, and are a practical means for meeting the mundane goals of social life. For some, cars are a professional tool. Due to its quotidian nature, Thrift (2004: 46) argues that driving has almost become invisible to us, “a background to the background.” Still, driving is likely to remain an important form of mobility in the future as well (cf. Featherstone 2004; Urry 2004; Urry 2006: 29). Whatever the future brings in terms of alternatives to oil and fuel, it is likely that similar personal wheeled transportation systems will continue to exist.

Despite all this, there is currently very little research on the nature of everyday social interaction and meaningful activity inside cars. This special issue addresses this situation by focusing on the car as a specific multi-semiotic site, as an environment for meaning-making and for situated and embodied social interaction. The issue offers systematic and detailed analyses of the practices and communicative actions in which people participate while on board a car. The papers here are concerned with both social interaction as the intertwining of multiple modalities of language, the body, and artefacts of the interior material world of the car, as well as with how the car’s movement in time and space through particular external physical surroundings contributes to, or is accomplished by, social interaction. Methodologically, the papers are primarily informed by principles and insights of conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and multimodal interaction analysis (Stivers and Sidnell 2005b).

In this special issue, the car is considered as a “place” or “space” for meaningful and mediated activities (McIlvenny et al. 2009). The papers examine how the physical and spatial configuration of the car, and its possibilities for mobility, can constrain or afford particular interactional practices, social activities, and understandings, and impact upon language and processes of interaction. Compared to telephone conversations and most sites for ordinary interaction, interaction in cars creates particular demands, opportunities, and orientations for its participants, as the car moves through the semiotically rich external environment. Generally, the papers in this special issue consider driving as not merely a requisite competence for accomplishing travel from point A to point B, but as occurring itself as a situated activity that is integrated with ordinary conversation. To take this a step further, as Nevile (this issue) observes, social interaction in cars can have a dual nature: at some moments social interaction may serve the driving activity, and be done “for driving,” while at other moments it occurs merely alongside, or “with driving,” in which case the participants’ in-car social activity can be coordinated with movement and driving.

People regularly drive alone, and this fact has strongly influenced driving and automobility research, both within the cognitive-psychological paradigm and in social sciences. Still, it is also true that people regularly travel together.

A recent study conducted in Britain by the Department of Transport (DfT 2009: 10) reported that in 40% of all car journeys there is more than one person in the car. Another study, conducted by two of the present authors for the Australian national department of transportation (Nevile and Haddington 2010), found that 51% of the ninety or so ordinary car journeys recorded included more than one person, and all of these journeys involved interaction between occupants. On average, around 60% of the time for these journeys was spent conversing. The papers in this special issue are evidence then for the importance of examining the practices of multimodal communication and meaning-making *between* people sharing the car and sharing the drive, i.e., for meaning in motion. In this introduction, we begin with a short review of previous research on driving and automobility. We then discuss the current state in research on social interaction and driving, and the methodological grounding for the collected papers. The last section presents the individual contributions.

2. Background: Individual drivers and the social semiotics of driving and automobility

Most research on driving and automobility follows one of two broad directions: driving safety research; and the social and cultural meanings of automobility and driving. Driving safety research, on the one hand, is mostly dominated by studies conducted within a psychological and cognitive scientific framework (Redshaw 2008: 1). It is this research that is also often widely reported in the media, especially within debates about public conduct and safety, and relevant laws and their enforcement. These studies relate features of the driver, such as cognitive and perceptual abilities, physical or emotional state, personality, level of driving experience or social demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic background), to details of the driving situation and to variation in driving performance (see Lee 2008). For example, this line of research has pursued interesting and important phenomena, such as, how driving is impacted by different forms of distraction (Horrey et al. 2008; Charlton 2009), the effects of alcohol or other substances (Homel 1994; Fergusson et al. 2008) or youth and inexperience (Shope and Bingham 2008). The focus is, however, predominantly on the reasoning, willful, and intentional individual driver (Redshaw 2008: 1; Nevile and Haddington 2010). Data for these studies typically come from driving simulator experiments, questionnaires or from use and accident statistics, interviews, and reported accounts.

In social sciences and human geography, on the other hand, such dominant approaches to driving and drivers have increasingly been critiqued for undermining the cultural and sociological meanings of automobility and driving. Consequently, with the emergence of “mobility studies” (e.g., Cresswell 2006;

Urry 2007; Adey 2010), scholars have begun to study the social, cultural, and ideological meanings and discourses of the car, car cultures, driving cultures, driving practices, automobility, road systems, and traffic systems, as parts of modern life (e.g., Miller 2001; Featherstone 2004; Urry 2007: 112–134; Redshaw 2008; Barker 2009).

Research in this area typically has one of two primary interests. The first is to examine the impact that driving and automobility have on society, the environment and people's activities outside the car. This research generally adopts a macro-perspective to automobility discourses and the cultural and social impact of driving. It argues that automobility has become so strongly embedded in society, even on a global level, that it impacts our ideas, behavior, and beliefs in many ways. Such research also provides important critical commentaries towards automobility in society by deconstructing the taken-for-granted cultural patterns and routines of driving (see, for example, Featherstone 2004; Featherstone et al. 2005; Böhm et al. 2006; Paterson 2007; Redshaw 2006, 2008; Urry 2006, 2007; Conley and Tigar McLaren 2009). Studies have considered not just the troubles and concerns of automobility for the environment, but also on a large scale how cars, traffic, and road systems, through traffic jams, parking problems, overcrowded roads, accidents, injury, and death, shape and change our everyday lives, communities, and society. Although these studies acknowledge that driving, as a form of social conduct, provides freedom and convenience to travel distances in order to enable particular activities (work, take children to school, shop, pursue personal interests and hobbies, etc.), one of the most forceful and critical arguments has been that driving constrains and even coerces the ways in which humans *can* travel and relate to one another. In addition, driving has also been considered to have a disabling impact on children, sight impaired, and people without cars, or even to subordinate other public modes of moving, such as walking and cycling. (e.g., Featherstone 2004; Böhm et al. 2006; Urry 2006, 2007; Redshaw 2008). In short, the car affects how we do and can live.

The second social science research interest has been to open the door and climb inside to consider the car as a dwelling place and a semi-private extension to the home, or a metal cocoon that isolates its occupants from the outside world. For example, Urry (2006: 23) notes that people in the car lose the ability to “perceive local detail, to talk to strangers, to learn of local ways of life, to stop and sense each different place.” In essence, for Urry (2006) inhabiting the car represents a deficiency, something lacking. This research has also foregrounded the importance of understanding driving as an embodied or even a sensuous and emotional activity (Thrift 2004; Hagman 2010). It constructs an image of an integrated driver-car hybrid — “a driving body” — in which the driver connects with the technologies in and of the car, and which enables or constrains experience and social behavior in ways that would not be possible

by the individual elements alone (see e.g., Dant 2004; Sheller 2004; Urry 2006; Thrift 2007; Redshaw 2008). Sheller (2004), for example, discusses how the kinesthetic feeling of the car together with its cultural and social affordances provides for automotive emotions — ranging from frustration and anger to pride, power, and happiness — that are culturally and socially embedded in the familial and sociable practices of car use. Relatedly, Urry (2006: 24, 27) argues that the car interior provides a special kind of mobile environment in which “a certain sociability can occur”; in cars emotions are let loose in forms that would not be tolerated and accepted in other social situations. One important and acknowledged form of sociability is interaction between drivers in the flow of traffic. But the analytic focus tends to be on the negative aspects of these interactional encounters. For example, Redshaw (2008: 22) claims that cars, rather than providing an opportunity for friendly and supportive interaction, encourage negative emotions, such as aggression and negative responses to other drivers’ mistakes, to the extent that roads and streets can be seen as combat zones and sites of road rage (see also Katz 1999).

Such studies have begun to voice the potential importance of studying the social actions and activities that are enabled by the driver-car combination (e.g., Dant 2004; Thrift 2007; Redshaw 2008). Dant (2004: 61), for example, notes how, despite the ubiquity of the car, there is little knowledge of how the driver-car assemblage produces a range of social actions that are associated with the car. These studies have also researched and discussed apparently gendered features and activities of driving: male drivers tend to drive their fast and sporty vehicles to work, while female drivers drive their smaller cars for taking care of various household activities, such as shopping and driving children to schools and hobbies. However, research in social sciences and cultural studies has mainly focused on the ways in which driving and automobility impact society and culture, on a large scale. Many studies, as we have seen above, have raised the importance of studying the ways in which mobility, movement, automobility, driving, and the driver-car assemblage, on the one hand, enable social action and, on the other hand, shape and are shaped by social action. Nevertheless, of the studies that have researched in-car interaction by drawing on empirical data, discussions have largely remained tentative and theoretical (cf. Dant 2004; Thrift 2004, 2007). Much is still left unsaid about the actual everyday and real-life real-time nature of driving, about the ordinary meaningful lived social experience in cars.

The papers in this special issue can therefore contribute to interdisciplinary dialogue between social scientific and psychological driving research. Redshaw (2008: 2), for example, considers some ways in which sociological and cultural research on driving practices could contribute to existing driving safety research. Indeed, preoccupations of psychological-cognitive driving safety research can be explored in new ways, or even be challenged. It seems,

however, that the theoretical and methodological gap is still broad between the traditional driving safety research paradigm and sociological research (cf. Conley and Tigar McLaren 2009). Despite positive attempts at dialogue between these two fields, fruitful discussions seem to have been rare.

Further empirical knowledge is needed of how people organize their talk and embodied activities for social activity in cars, and relative to the contingencies of the driving situation and the physical and spatial layout of the car. By drawing on a specific empirical research methodology that relies on recorded data collected from real-life situations inside the car, the papers of this special issue can add to the important interdisciplinary discussion that surrounds driving, safety, and automobility, and provide food for thought by addressing central issues, raising questions, and perhaps even by providing some answers.

3. Intersubjective and embodied practices of sharing the car and the drive

The path laid down in earlier discussions by, for example Dant (2004), Thrift (2004, 2007), and Urry (2007), leads towards the aims of this issue, but perhaps not as those authors might have anticipated. As we have seen above, social scientific research on driving and automobility has generally focused on the following themes and topics:

1. the large-scale impact of cars, driving, and automobility on culture, society, and social activity;
2. the emotions and affect associated with cars and driving;
3. the individual acting driver, or the driver-car assemblage.

These studies tend to consider just one actor, the driver, and present the driver as a passive individual, like Garfinkel's "judgmental dope" (Garfinkel 1967: 66), who submits to the overwhelming force and power of the automobile society. They also often see the driver as inseparably tied to the car, with the result that this unified driver-car actor seems to have a mind of its own.

This special issue reveals the flipside of driving, the moments of real life in cars, of which little is known (Laurier et al. 2008). We want to enter into the real-time domesticated mobilities and the private confines of the car. The papers present drivers, together with passengers, as social actors who are involved in meaningful dynamic verbal and embodied interaction with one another, with the available resources of the surrounding and passing external semiotic environment, and with the technologies and material features of the car. Car occupants are made visible as *participants* engaged in practices of social action and oriented to events of the immediate and constantly evolving

driving context. They are situated actors who use their immediate interactional and semiotic context to create understandings for experiencing and accomplishing mobility. We are interested in local matters of the “meaning of driving” and “meaning for driving,” as constructed through both the resources provided by mobility and the “secluded sanctuary” of the car interior and by the intersubjective and embodied practices in which in-car participants engage. The papers highlight one domain for meaningful mundane social life, the car, and reveal some ways by which drivers and their passengers make ordinary moments familiar and intelligible to each other.

The issue advances research on the everyday practices of driving as a recent focus of research within or informed by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. The social basis of driving activity has been established in studies that have recorded drivers during real-world driving situations. For example, studies have demonstrated how a driver organizes simultaneously her driving and her work (Laurier 2004), or how a search for a parking place is established (Laurier 2005), or how drivers handle mobile phone calls while driving (Esbjörnsson et al. 2007; Haddington and Rauniomaa 2011). Such studies have also drawn attention to the influence of other cars and changing traffic conditions on the activities inside the car, including the driving activity (Nevile and Haddington 2010; see also e.g., Lynch 1993; Katz 1999).

Some studies have broadened the analytic scope by beginning to examine the role and impact of passenger(s) on the driving activity. Laurier et al. (2008) chart forms of conversation during car journeys and the social units that produce these conversations. They observe, for example, that while ordinary conversations from home or work are regularly transported into the car, this is done with some adjustments (see also Keating and Mirus 2004). When the organization of activities and conversations in the car is examined in detail, it is revealed that passengers have an active role in many driving-related activities. Thus, searching for a parking space can be undertaken collaboratively between the driver and the passenger(s) (Laurier 2005). So too can wayfinding and navigation, which are tasks that occur rather frequently during car journeys. Brown and Laurier (2005) examine how people make use of maps in cars, and discover that this map reading involves the production of joint descriptions of the locations mentioned, plans of the order in which the locations will be visited, and plans of the activities that these locations may involve for the participants. In short, people that share the drive collectively engage in activities that “do navigating” (Brown and Laurier 2008: 30). Alternatively, people often also navigate and negotiate routes and stops on a journey without the help of maps (De Stefani and Mondada 2007; D’Hondt 2009; Haddington and Keisanen 2009; Haddington 2010). D’Hondt (2009) discusses how stops on a journey are identified, communicated, and negotiated in minibuses without electronic signaling systems. In such sequences of interaction, the parties involved

(the driver, the conductor, and the passengers) have to orient to multiple spaces simultaneously, and stopping becomes essentially a collaborative and interactional achievement. In a similar vein, Haddington and Keisanen (2009) and Haddington (2010), examine the multimodal interactional practices involved in route negotiations, which concern the next junction or which are part of broader wayfinding to the final destination. Such route negotiations are shown to be reflexively occasioned by the mobility of the car and its current location, and to consist of sequentially organized actions that include the initiation (request for confirmation, or question about the route), response, and a sequence closing confirmation regarding the chosen route.

As a final introductory comment, an underlying theme in many of these recent studies is the notion of “mobility.” In this respect, the papers of this issue develop an under-researched area of prior research in conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and multimodal interaction, where only now is mobility emerging as a principal focus (Büscher 2006; Haddington et al., in press). Most relevantly here, comparatively few studies have considered the social and meaning-making practices within and for different modes of transportation, either where the participants are themselves moving (e.g., Nevile 2004a, 2009, in press; Arminen et al. 2010), or where participants’ movement is organized by others in control rooms of transportation systems (e.g., Heath and Luff 1992; Harper and Hughes 1993; Goodwin 1996; Suchman 1997; Heath et al. 1999). However, even studies of these settings may be less interested in implications for mobility and instead focus attention mainly to the sequential organization of talk and activities for performing collaborative tasks (e.g., Nevile 2004b, 2005, 2007). The analyses in this special issue thus further our understanding of the complex reciprocal links between the organization of ordinary social activity, embodied conduct and interaction, and the working of transportation as a ubiquitous and fundamental feature of a mobile society. The issue is therefore particularly timely for enabling us to consider the means and circumstances through which one vital form of mobility is experienced and accomplished.

4. The papers

The papers of this issue are informed primarily by the insights and analytical approaches of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (EM/CA), in particular for studying the multimodal nature of social interaction, for example, as represented in a recent collection in this journal (Stivers and Sidnell 2005b). In their analyses, the authors in this special issue address a range of “semiotic modalities” (see Stivers and Sidnell 2005a: 1), including verbal (language), and visuospatial and embodied modalities of gesture, gaze, body postural posi-

tion and movement, facial expression, and available resources (e.g., objects) and features of car as a material setting. The papers therefore draw on the cumulative insights and approaches of over three decades of research on interaction as embodied and occurring relative to its material and spatial surrounds (especially after Goodwin 1981; e.g., see McIlvenny et al. 2009), across a huge range of both everyday and work settings (e.g., courtrooms and police work, classrooms and other sites of instruction, surgery and medical and health consultations, meetings, research fieldwork, control centers, and collaborative professional work).

The papers examine in close detail audio-video recordings of real-time naturally occurring interaction to uncover how participants achieve and make sense of whatever it is they are doing, of what is going on, as they undertake ordinary car journeys. They are interested in the routine, situated, taken-for-granted and unremarkable activities and competencies by which participants accomplish sociality in a particular setting (Schegloff 2006). The papers avoid theoretical descriptions and instead seek to engage with participants' own local (here-and-now) systematic management of interaction as sequentially organized talk and conduct (Schegloff 2007). That is, they show how participants design and time their contributions to be sensitive always to the contingencies of the moment in evolving real-time interaction and activity, and to be recognized and carried off for what they are, for particular practical and social consequences. The authors ground their findings in the understandings and actions that participants themselves display to each other in co-present social interaction. It is the participants' demonstrable conduct itself that forms the basis for the papers' analytical claims.

The primary data for each of the papers for this issue are video/audio recordings of real-life driving journeys, from which the authors have made detailed transcriptions and taken stills. Analyses are informed by ethnographic detail. The recordings have been made across a number of countries (France, Israel, Australia, the UK, Finland, and the USA). The recordings capture people from a rich variety of different nationalities (in addition to the above, people from Norway and Slovenia), and represent individual drivers, families, friends, work colleagues, children, and teenagers. The papers therefore provide a rich selection of studies of everyday life inside the car. Together they begin to reveal something of the working and order of a particular activity site, and even about specific social relations and groupings (such as family, etc.), as they are situated and realized moment-to-moment (Goodwin 2007).

The papers respond to many questions concerning driving and the sociality of the car. For example, what kinds of social activities occur in cars, and how are they carried out in ways particular to this setting? How are the practices, actions, and routines for driving, such as negotiating routes, taking turns, stopping, and starting, conducted relative to social activity occasioned by the

presence of passengers? How do car occupants, as participants of interaction, act jointly and in real-time to create and calibrate their actions to the meaningful and ever-changing surroundings? How do participants orient to and resolve mobility puzzles of where-are-we-now, where-to-now, what-is-here-now, what-is-visible-now, and so on? How do the car and mobility enable, influence or constrain social interaction? How do participants orient to the spatial and material features of the car's interior (e.g., sitting side-by-side or one behind the other), for example, for coordinating the sequential ordering of talk and for establishing speakership and reciprocity? How do participants arrange their bodies and use gesture and other embodied conduct? How do various technological devices, either built into the car (e.g., the car's control system) or brought into the car (e.g., cell/mobile phones), feature in social interaction in cars, and for accomplishing driving? The papers address such questions with a shared interest in the car as a semiotic site, and in how driving is accomplished through the concerted actions of participants. They examine "interaction in cars" as realized in the details of authentic human experience and action.

Each paper of course stands fully alone, but read together there is also an emerging order within the issue. The first papers have a particular interest in driving, and in its accomplishment as a social activity. As the issue progresses, the papers become less directed to matters of driving and more strongly directed to the car as a social setting, a location where people do whatever it is they do to relate to one another, and that makes them for example, a family, a couple, work colleagues, etc. In these later papers, driving moves from the focus of analytic attention just as it is not the focus of attention for the participants. Driving becomes just one thing that happens in cars, that drivers do and in which passengers may or may not become involved.

The first paper by Laurier, Brown, and Lorimer focuses on wayfinding and navigation in cars. The authors argue that research on navigation tends to address issues of cognition, and thus sidelines how everyday navigation is accomplished as part of humans' ordinary lives. They present a case study of a family finding their way in a large British city, and show how navigation activity is understandable only in relation to situated features in the surrounding and rapidly changing external environment. Indeed, as they argue, the understanding of a route or a destination cannot only be treated as a mental representation or a plan, because — as their example shows — wayfinding is coupled with the dynamic features of the environment; often we know the right route only when we arrive at a particular location. Their analysis also shows that, in addition to being an individual process, wayfinding can also be accomplished as a shared activity between the driver and a passenger, and emotive and affective displays can become important aspects of the navigation activity.

Similarly, Haddington investigates everyday navigation as often a social and collaborative activity. However, Haddington focuses specifically on actions

that initiate or make navigation socially relevant for the driver and passengers in the car. Haddington describes the different types of verbal and embodied actions that co-participants understand or draw upon, and their interactional design features, to begin a navigation activity. One of the paper's discussions concerns the important relationship between social action and time. The analysis shows that the design and the temporal placement of the navigational initiation in relation to other talk, actions, and events, are indicative of the in-car participants' understandings of whether a related driving activity is required right now or in the more distant future. Haddington also shows how participants rely on such multimodal resources as gestures and the moving semiotic environment in order to understand a navigational initiation.

Nevile examines social interaction as a source of distraction in driving. He is interested in what interaction *as* distraction actually looks like in the rich and meaningful details of drivers' and passengers' complex joint experience of real-life real-time car journeys. The paper considers a family drive, a father with his three children, to show how moment-to-moment the embodied and locally occasioned participation in interaction can impact specific activities for driving, such as looking and orienting forwards to the road ahead and maintaining hand contact with the steering wheel. In the emerging and contingent course of interaction, what prompts a driver to look away from the road, or to remove a hand from the wheel? Nevile therefore explores the semiotic resources by which drivers make sense of and organize the simultaneous competing demands of interaction and driving, including language and the sequentiality of interaction, and the configuration and deployment of the body in space and relative to the material features and constraints of the car and the objects brought into it.

Keisanen discusses two types of environmentally occasioned noticings in interaction in cars. Noticings in the first group typically concern the scenery or the other traffic and do not have a direct connection to the driving activity. Such observations may be produced both by drivers and passengers. In contrast, noticings in the second group are found to serve the driving activity as they are used to indicate that the current so-far unproblematic course of the drive is observably compromised. Such noticings are typically done by the driver. Keisanen argues that the driver's noticings of trouble are used as displays of accountability and for assuming responsibility for one's actions as the driver. Such noticings are further shown to involve a set of recurrent turn constructional features, which contribute to the emergence of a conversational format for carrying out noticings of journey-related trouble in in-car interaction.

Mondada focuses on the organization of multiple simultaneous activities, here in the context of driving, by examining the drivers' and passengers' finely-tuned co-ordination of attention and participation in the two activities of driving and conversation. Car conversations are characterized by multiactivity.

Mondada discusses the ways in which drivers and passengers use various embodied multimodal resources to converge or diverge in the coordination of the ongoing activities. She shows that the practices of coordination are embedded within the sequential organization of conversation, while at the same time these practices remain sensitive to the changing driving conditions. For example, insertion sequences are found in convergent transitions from focus on conversation to focus on driving related activities, while attention to changing traffic conditions may be used as a resource for dealing with disagreement and constructing divergent orientation.

The paper by Goodwin and Goodwin, in turn, highlights the car as an activity setting. They demonstrate the practices by which visible phenomena beyond the stream of speech are integrated into the unfolding interaction between family members in the car. These practices are examined with respect to in-car textual artifacts (e.g., a school report) and to the features of the passing external environment. The authors examine how participants create activity frames for their noticings and reportings of these phenomena by collaboratively attending to and displaying their stances towards them. Participants draw on various multimodal means, including response cries, address terms, perceptual directives, categorizations and deictic terms, as well as gestures and physical resources. Goodwin and Goodwin throw light on the car as an important setting for building contemporary family life.

Keating and Mirus discuss sign language interaction in cars, and especially the ways in which the drivers and passengers adapt their everyday interaction to fit the constraints and the affordances of the car interior and the mobile technical environment. It is shown how the conventional signing space is adjusted, for example, by shifting the sign space location and parameters, or by creating an entirely new sign space with the rear-view mirror in order to enable interaction between the driver and the back seat passengers. The authors also examine how participants maintain and coordinate signed interaction in cars by discussing some of the ways in which a recipient's attention is gained or otherwise taken into account in recipient design.

Noy's paper closes the circle by, like Laurier, Brown, and Lorimer, providing a case study of how the car is not only the means to carry out everyday chores but a site in which affect and emotions are negotiated between family members and dealt with through dispute and disagreement. Noy considers how family members inhabit the car during a daily school-run. First, Noy shows how the car interior through its particular spatial affordances (side-by-side and front seat versus back seat seating arrangements) impacts the shape of the participants' situated actions. Second, Noy shows how an understanding of the car as a space is created and achieved during the dispute activity.

We believe that the papers of this issue, taken together, are indicative of a new turn for studies of the car as itself a socially rich and meaningful setting,

and of driving as it occurs in situ and within social activity. We encourage readers to consider how the papers might prompt possibilities for new directions for thinking and research. We are delighted to be able to present this collection, and we thank the contributors, the editor of *Semiotica* Marcel Danesi, and the reviewers for the individual papers, for making the issue possible.

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3. <http://www.taloussanomat.fi/liikenne/2010/04/20/nalkuttava-puoliso-voi-vieda-liikenteessa-hengen/20105554/139> (accessed April 20, 2010)
4. <http://www.iltasanomat.fi/ uutiset/kotimaa/uutinen.asp?id=1898998> (accessed April 20, 2010)
5. <http://www.news.com.au/technology/most-lost-motorists-place-blame-on-their-gps-units-study/story-e6frfro0-1225811608945> (accessed June 4, 2010)
6. <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/features/car-gadgets-distract-motorists-cause-crashes/story-e6freoz6-1225848249934> (accessed June 4, 2010)
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