

Opinionated Discourse:  
Communication and Conflict in  
Calls to a  
'Talk Radio' Show

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## Abstract

This research focuses on interactional processes involved in the management of arguments about public issues in the context of public access 'talk radio' broadcasts. The work has two principal thematic directions. One involves the study of argument itself. Here the concern is to analyse strategies for building oppositions and alignments in disputes over competing versions of reality. The second direction involves the application of an interactionist approach to the discourse of the mass media. Here a main concern is with social forces at work in the discourse which situate the participants on the asymmetrical footings of 'host' and 'caller', and related asymmetrical distributions of resources for initiating, sustaining and terminating disputes.

The study utilises the methodology of conversation analysis. Beginning with a discussion of how this method can be used to analyse argument as a social activity in both conversation and institutional interaction (Ch. 2), we proceed to detailed analyses of the opening sequences of calls (Ch. 3), uses of persuasive language in the presentation of opinions (Ch. 4), modes of sceptical discourse (Ch. 5), the role of interruption in arguments and verbal confrontations (Ch. 6), and the way in which interactional asymmetries and power are involved in the argumentative nature of the closings of calls (Ch. 7). In all these chapters, connections are sought between the ways participants conduct their arguments and constraints imposed by institutional features of the setting.

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\*This research was subsequently published as Hutchby (1991).

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## On Talk and 'Talk Radio'

This is a study of social interaction and the use of language in a particular cultural setting, in which restricted forms of talk are routinely produced. The social setting in question is that of telephone conversations between hosts and callers to a British open line radio phone-in show, a type of broadcast communication that I will refer to, following the policy of its practitioners, as 'talk radio'. On talk radio a kind of discourse<sup>1</sup> is produced which is characterised by the expression and exchange of personal opinions about public issues of various kinds. Typically, callers (members of the public) call in to discuss with the show's host matters on which they hold a strong view, about which they want to complain, or, less frequently, extol. In the data with which we will be concerned, hosts respond to callers' views first by listening to them, then by instituting discussions which, very frequently, become arguments with callers, by expressing scepticism of their views, taking issue with their stances, undermining the rational grounds of cases, and ultimately, taking up positions explicitly counter to those of callers. I will use the term 'opinionated discourse' to refer to these types of tendentious exchange.

The aim of the study is, broadly speaking, to describe and analyse the interactional processes involved in the management of the arguments about public issues that routinely occur on some kinds of talk radio show.<sup>2</sup> This involves us in following two principal thematic directions. One of these concerns the study of argument itself as a social practice. Here the task will be to analyse verbal strategies for building oppositions and alignments in disputes over

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competing versions of reality. As we will see as the work progresses, questions such as these have been the subject of a significant body of recent sociological and sociolinguistic research, on which the present inquiry draws and to which, hopefully, it has something to contribute.

The second thematic direction concerns the application of an interactionist approach to the discourse of 'mass media'. Although this is not a study in 'mass communication' per se, it is, nonetheless, about communication in a mass media setting: communication between members of the public and professional broadcasters which goes out via the radio to be received by an indefinitely large 'overhearing' audience. As I discuss below, mass communication analysts have in the past asked particular kinds of questions about talk radio: for instance, how effectively democratic is it, or in what ways might it function as an element in the shaping of, or else as a reflection of, 'public opinion'? These kinds of questions do not directly concern us here, however. My interest is in analysing the actual forms of talk through which the key activities of broadcast talk radio discourse - such as expressing opinions and arguing about them - are accomplished. But the fact that the discourse in question takes place in the context it does will still be treated as significant in a number of respects throughout the study. For instance, my analyses will seek to trace the social forces at work connected with the asymmetrical participation statuses of 'host' and 'caller', since these footings carry with them asymmetrical distributions of conventionally available resources for initiating, sustaining, and terminating disputes. And the fact that the talk is broadcast, and is known by the participants to be being broadcast, to an overhearing audience, will, at various stages in the following chapters, be seen to have significant consequences for the ways in which utterances designed to perform particular activities (such as 'introducing an issue' or 'undermining a claim's veracity') are constructed by their producers.

The main conceptual and theoretical issues surrounding the articulation of these themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In this first chapter I will lay the necessary groundwork for the rest



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of the study by (a) introducing its theoretical and methodological framework; (b) discussing the stance it adopts towards talk radio as a discourse context; and (c) describing the database with which it deals.

### **Methodological preliminaries**

Underlying the empirical investigations that follow is a particular approach to the relationships between talk, social action, and social context. Basically, I seek to treat talk as a vehicle for social action, as the means by which social organisation in person-to-person interaction is mutually constructed and sustained, and hence as a principal strategic site in which social agents' orientation to and evocation of the social contexts of their interaction can be investigated. This approach derives from the perspective known as conversation analysis (CA). CA is distinguished as a sociological method on two principal dimensions. Firstly, by its basic aim: 'to describe the underlying social organisation - conceived as an institutionalised substratum of rules, procedures and conventions - through which orderly and intelligible social interaction is made possible' (C. Goodwin and Heritage, 1990:283). Secondly, by its idea that that underlying social organisation is not something that has to be reconstructed post hoc out of participants' reports or ethnographers' field notes on social happenings, but that is directly available to observation in the details of naturally occurring interactions (Sacks, 1984).

Accordingly, the analyses throughout the study are based on transcripts of recorded actual calls to a talk radio broadcast; and our objective is the description and analysis of the interactionally accomplished structural organisation of 'opinionated discourse' as it is produced in the setting of the talk radio show. At base we will be concerned with the patterns discernible in procedures, methods, strategies, techniques, devices (terms that will be used more or less interchangeably) that participants in talk radio discourse use to configure the talk we hear as 'opinionated discourse'. I will present

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analyses, for example, of how callers construct an initial opinionated statement at the outset of their calls, and I will show that there are formal patterns to be discerned in the way these statements are constructed (Chapter 4). I will present an analysis of a highly recursive two-part linguistic device used by hosts to express a sceptical stance vis-a-vis callers' remarks, and will show how we can discern ways in which callers use structural features of that device to exhibit a preemptive recognition of the sceptical intent signalled by it (Chapter 5). And I will present an exploration of how hosts and callers in the course of arguments can use the strategy of interruption and attempted interruption to highlight the combative, aggressive, confrontational character of their talk (Chapter 6).

As already remarked, the study attempts to negotiate a conjunction between two dimensions of talk as social action. On the one hand, we are concerned with the form of talk that I have called 'opinionated discourse' itself.<sup>3</sup> That is, we will consider such things as how speakers use language to construct an 'opinion': How is a strip of talk presented as 'opinionated' or contentious, how do speakers design and put forward a defensible case for a strong point of view? And relatedly, what kinds of interactional linguistic resources do speakers use to *argue* about their points of view? So we will be concerned, on one level, with the social activities of *expressing an opinion* and *conducting an argument*.

On a second level, however, we are examining those activities in a particular social setting, that of the talk radio broadcast. On this level we will be concerned with questions of how that institutional context may affect the ways in which opinions are expressed and arguments conducted. How does the format of the 'call' (a term I will use to describe the actual on-air exchange between caller and host<sup>4</sup>) operate to frame and constrain the kinds of activities that can relevantly and appropriately be performed within its bounds?

In brief, we will be concerned with a series of issues centring around a basic theme: How, in conflictual talk on talk radio, do interpersonal conflict and interactional context articulate? I hope to show that we can come to understand these processes precisely by attending to the details of the actual talk found in calls. Beginning

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from the standpoint of what actually happens in verbal conflict in calls, we can trace the contours of how arguments are conducted, and contexts constructed, in and through live practices of person-to-person interaction in the setting of the talk radio show.

### **The focus on talk**

At the heart of this study is a concern with *talk* in the context of broadcast communications. In referring to 'talk', rather than, say, 'language' here, I am following the policy of, among others, Goffman, who pioneered for sociology the study of the 'interaction order' - the structural domain of norms and conventions governing how persons organise their behaviour in each other's copresence (Goffman, 1964, 1983; cf. Kendon, 1990a). Goffman's work was concerned throughout with the symbolic and communicative properties of the nuances of comportment in face-to-face interaction; and the focus he maintained on the semiology of human behaviour in its situated dimensions in social encounters fed through to later work, in which he turned his attention specifically towards the structures of spoken communication, as in *Forms of Talk* (Goffman, 1981a). In this regard it is, as Giddens (1987) points out, significant that Goffman's preferred term here is 'talk' rather than 'language'. The latter represented the subject matter of structural linguistics: an abstract, formal system of signs and rules of grammar (in Saussure's (1986 [1915]) terminology, *la langue*). The former term, on the other hand, pointed towards the situated use of utterance in real-time interactional occasions: what for linguistics was the degenerate, and hence ignored (Chomsky, 1965), domain of *parole* (Saussure, 1986 [1915]). Goffman went in search of the *interactive* dimensions of talk conceived not as a faulty reflection of the linguistic order, but as an intrinsic part of the interaction order: talk as social action.

Goffman was of course not the only (nor indeed the first, by a long chalk) sociologically-minded scholar to turn to the domain of talk as an empirical site in which to investigate micro-features of human social behaviour. Indeed as far back as 1928 the emphasis on

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the synchronic<sup>4</sup> study of language as an abstract formal system adopted within linguistics under the influence of Saussure was being criticised by Volosinov and other members of the 'Bakhtin School' of Russian literary studies (Shukman, 1983; Hirschkop, 1986). As Volosinov argued:

[Language] must be put into a much wider and more inclusive set - *into the unified sphere of organised social communication*. If you wish to observe the process of combustion, you have to put the object into an atmospheric medium. If you want to observe the phenomenon of language, you must put the subjects that produce and listen to the sound, and the sound itself as well, into a social atmosphere. (Volosinov, 1983 [1928]:32; original emphasis)

Later developments in anthropologically and sociologically oriented linguistics were to proceed with empirical investigations which placed speakers and their 'sounds' (or utterances) into the context of the 'unified sphere of organised social communication'.

Important contributions here were made by Labov's work on the influence of social and contextual factors in vernacular speech production (Labov, 1963, 1966, 1969, 1970). Labov's studies of patterns in language variation at the phonological level in relation to different interactional contexts for speech, for instance 'casual' versus 'careful' speech situations (1966, 1970); his investigations of the structure of Black English Vernacular (1969, 1972a); and his work on sociological factors (e.g. social stratification) at work in the evolution of sound structure in a language (1963), all provide a rich source of insight into what a focus on vernacular usage - on talk - can show us of the relationships between language, context, and social activity.

Studies in the framework of the 'ethnography of speaking' (Hymes, 1972a, b; Gumperz and Hymes, 1972) make a further contribution to the analysis of utterance in the social context of organised communication. In this approach the cultural contextualisation of language is made explicit in the focus on

verbal interaction [as] a social process in which utterances are selected in accordance with socially recognised norms and expectations. It follows that linguistic phenomena are

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analysable both within the context of language itself and within the broader context of social behaviour. (Gumperz, 1972:219)

Gumperz' notions of *verbal repertoire* (1972) and *contextualisation cues* (1982) are particularly significant here. Studies of talk centring around these ideas (Gumperz, 1982, 1992a, b) are designed to bring attention to the complex ways in which

any aspect of linguistic behaviour - lexical, prosodic, phonological and syntactic choices together with the use of particular codes, dialects or styles - may function [to indicate] those aspects of the context which are relevant in interpreting what a speaker means. By signalling interpretively significant aspects of the social context, they enable interactants to make inferences about one another's communicative intentions and goals. (Drew and Heritage, 1992b:8)

Using this approach, Gumperz (1982, 1992a) has analysed cross-cultural communications in order to reveal the significance of different 'culture-bound interpretations of contextualisation cues' (1992a:326) in explaining miscommunication between speakers from different ethnic backgrounds.

Further contributions again come from the various schools of 'discourse analysis' that take as their basis the speech act theory developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The speech act approach originated within the philosophy of language, in which the prevailing view saw natural language as a collection of sentences expressing propositions about the world (Baker and Hacker, 1984).<sup>6</sup> Speech act philosophy sought to treat sentences not as propositions but as social actions, which are understandable by virtue of conventional inferential affordances and which have, and are intended to have, particular interactional consequences.<sup>7</sup> In its most influential forms, discourse analysis applies this approach to the study of naturally occurring talk. In a well-known contribution, Labov and Fanshel (1977) analysed a recording of a psychotherapeutic interview in intense detail, searching out the inferential 'rules' that were at work in 'translating' the surface forms of utterances into the underlying speech acts by reference to which interlocutors manage to understand each other and coordinate their activities.

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A similar focus on formalised systems of rules underlying 'well-formed' or coherent discourse is found in the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Stubbs (1976) on discourse in the context of institutional communication (e.g. classrooms, medical consultations: see also Coulthard and Montgomery, 1981). A significant factor in this approach is its focus on speech acts as elements in *sequences* of moves, exchanges, and transactions. As Montgomery (1986a:43) has put it:

The major aim of this work has been to explicate how utterances by successive speakers are coordinated together in the conduct of spoken interaction. In this respect Sinclair and Coulthard's work coincided with, and partly anticipated, a significant shift in interest within linguistics from the syntax and semantics of the sentence to the syntax and pragmatics of the speech event; a shift from the internal constitution of the sentence to the external relations of one utterance with another and their role in constituting a discourse.

That work also coincided with - but postdated - the emergence of conversation analysis, which in turn grew not out of linguistics, but out of a convergence between the branch of sociology known as ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and Goffman's sociology of face-to-face interaction (1964). CA - the theory and method of which are followed in the present inquiry - is, like ethnography of speaking, concerned with drawing links between talk and social structures (Schegloff, 1991); and like discourse analysis it also focuses centrally on the sequential organisation of utterances. Its essentially sociological lineage however has important consequences for the specific analytic approach taken to talk within its terms. As Montgomery formulates it, discussing differences between conversation analysis and discourse analysis (see also Levinson, 1983:286-94):

Discourse analysis is interested in verbal interaction as a manifestation of the linguistic order...Conversation analysis is more concerned with verbal interaction as instances of the *situated social order*. (Montgomery, 1986a:51; my emphasis)

While CA has been a prime mover in the trend away from considering language simply as an abstract formal system, a realm of concern only for linguistics, and towards a focus on talk as a site

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for studying micro-features of social life, and hence of interest to anthropologists (Moerman, 1988; M.H. Goodwin, 1990), social psychologists (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and sociologists (Goffman, 1981a; Button and Lee, 1987), the conversation-analytic approach is perhaps best described not merely as another attempt to see language in its social contexts of use, but as a generic approach to the study of social interaction per se (C. Goodwin and Heritage, 1990). This point can be elaborated on at least two levels: first, as regards CA's focus on talk as social action; and second, in its conceptualisation of the relationship between talk and social context.

#### **Conversation analysis: Action and context<sup>e</sup>**

Conversation analysis seeks to treat talk in and of itself as a structurally organised form of social action (Heritage, 1984a: Ch.8). In this, talk is considered as a principal mode of face-to-face interaction from what is broadly speaking a structuralist sociological standpoint:

The initial and most fundamental assumption of conversation analysis is that all aspects of social action and interaction can be examined in terms of conventionalised or institutionalised structural organisations which analysably inform their production. These organisations are to be treated as structures in their own right which, like other social institutions or conventions, stand independently of the psychological or other characteristics of particular participants. (Heritage, 1989:22)

CA approaches recordings of naturally occurring talk with the aim of (a) describing the structural organisations informing its production, and (b) thereby explicating the methods used by social agents to engage in mutually intelligible courses of action.

The second of these aims indicates that CA's structuralism is tempered by an action perspective in which members of society are seen as knowledgeable agents actively involved in the intersubjective construction and maintenance of their shared social worlds (Garfinkel, 1967).<sup>e</sup> The analytic connection between description of the orderly features of talk and the explication of speakers' methods of

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sense-making' is aptly formulated in an early statement by Schegloff and Sacks:

We have proceeded under the assumption (an assumption borne out by our research) that insofar as the materials we worked with exhibited orderliness, they did so not only for us, indeed not in the first place for us, but for the coparticipants who had produced them. If the materials (records of naturally occurring conversations) were orderly, they were so because they had been methodically produced by members of the society for one another, and it was a feature of the conversations that we treated as data that they were produced so as to allow the display by the coparticipants to each other of their orderliness, and to allow the participants to display to each other their analysis, appreciation, and use of that orderliness. (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973:290)

The complementary emphases within conversation-analytic research on the internal structure or design of turns at talk (C. Goodwin, 1981) and the organisation of sequences of turns at talk (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Sacks et al., 1974) are thus treated as revealing elemental features of social agents' intersubjective 'definitions of the situation' (cf. Goffman, 1974) and the procedural means by which they coordinate activities 'within' (i.e. as part of) those situations (cf. Kendon, 1990a).

This approach to the social action dimensions of talk leads to a particularly dynamic view of context, which works on a number of interrelated levels. In the first place, CA emphasises the fact that, for their producers, utterances are not produced as isolated actions (as is often tacitly assumed by various schools of linguistics) but as actions in an ongoing social context of interaction. Such actions are, moreover, always *doubly contextualised* in the sense that they are both 'context-shaped' and 'context-renewing':

Actions are context-shaped in that they are understood, and produced to be understood, in relation to the context of prior utterances and understandings in which they are embedded and to which they contribute. They are context-renewing because every current action forms the immediate context for a next action and will thus tend to renew (i.e., maintain, alter or adjust) any more generally prevailing sense of context which is the object of the participants' orientations and actions. (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:95)



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Thus, 'context' is treated as 'both the project and product of the participants' own actions' (Drew and Heritage, 1992b:19); and this 'local production' of contexts for action is treated as investigable via a consideration of the ways participants, in their ways of organising their talk, display for one another (and hence for the analyst of their talk) their understanding and sense of 'what is going on here' (Goffman, 1974) at any given moment in interaction (for detailed discussion of this point, see Heritage, 1984a:280-290, and *passim*).

Such a conception of context also informs CA's investigations of the 'wider social contexts' for interaction represented by institutional settings such as courts of law (Atkinson and Drew, 1979), classrooms (McHoul, 1978), medical consultations (Heath, 1986), and television news studios (Heritage et al., 1988).<sup>10</sup> Here, CA makes a decisive break from approaches which view such settings on the model of 'containers' *within* which interaction takes place and which are therefore seen as having more or less of a causally determining influence on the kinds of activities produced inside them (for a critical discussion of such approaches, see Coulter, 1982).

Implicit in the 'container' approach is the view that whatever goes on within some institutional setting can be treated as linked to the kinds of constraints imposed on interaction by the structural features of that setting. CA adopts a principled avoidance of any such assumptions, maintaining that the specialised characteristics of institutional discourse must be treated as systematic products of participants' intersubjective orientations to their activities, projects, strategies and procedures as 'specialised' in those sorts of ways (Schegloff, 1992).

This position involves a recognition that not everything that goes on in institutional discourse may be most appropriately characterisable under the rubric 'institutional'. Clearly many speech activities occur in institutional settings that also occur in other, 'mundane' settings: for instance, greetings, interruptions, corrections, questions, reports, accounts, invitations, orders, farewells. The question that conversation analysts such as Schegloff (1991, 1992) raise is that of how the fact that a particular greeting, say, was

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being exchanged in, say, a doctor's surgery *mattered*, and demonstrably so if at all, to the participants on that occasion. This problem is approached by asking, *What are the ways in which the participants to that exchange displayed to one another their orientation to the specialised or institutional features of the occasion?*

In other words,

analysts who wish to depict the distinctively 'institutional' character of some stretch of talk...must...demonstrate that the participants constructed their conduct over its course - turn by responsive turn - so as to progressively constitute and hence jointly and collaboratively realise the occasion of their talk, together with their own social roles in it, as having some distinctively institutional character. (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:95)

In recent conversation-analytic research on institutional discourse, two principal means by which this task might be discharged have been developed. These means are linked to two basic identifiable 'types' of institutional setting (broadly speaking, to use Agar's (1985:147) definition, occasions on which 'one person - a citizen of a modern nation state - comes into contact with another - a representative of one of its institutions'). Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) term these types, respectively, *formal* and *non-formal* settings. In formal settings - principally, courts of law, classrooms, interviews and ceremonial occasions - the problem of demonstrating the orientation of participants to the specialised character of their talk involves showing how

the institutional character of the interaction is embodied...in its *form* - most notably in turn-taking systems which depart substantially from the way in which turn-taking is managed in conversation and which are perceivedly 'formal' in character. (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:95)

In most such settings these turn-taking systems involve chained series of question-answer sequences, with, generally, questions being asked by institutional representatives and answers being provided by citizens. The fact that interaction is carried on through the recursive use of highly restricted types of turn and forms of turn-

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taking provides a first, basic but essential means of showing that, and how, participants in such settings are collaboratively realising the 'institutional' nature of their discourse:

[I]f it can be shown that the participants in a vernacularly characterised institutional setting such as a courtroom pervasively organise their turn-taking in a way that is distinctive from ordinary conversation, it can be proposed that they are organising their conduct so as to display and realise its 'institutional' character over its course and that they are doing so *recurrently and pervasively*. (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:96)

Or put another way:

Insofar as members of the audience sitting behind the bar never get up and talk but rather whisper to one another in asides, whereas the ones in front of the bar talk in defined and regular ways, by the very form of their conduct they show themselves to be oriented to the particular identities that are legally [and normatively - IH] provided by that setting and show themselves to be oriented to the 'court-in-session' as a context. (Schegloff, 1992:113)<sup>11</sup>

In the second, 'non-formal' type of setting, by contrast, much less uniformity in the patterning of conduct is evident. In environments such as the doctor's surgery (Heath, 1986), the psychiatric interview (Bergmann, 1992), and various other social welfare encounters (Perakyla and Silverman, 1991a; Heritage and Sefi, 1992), official tasks appear to be managed within turn-taking frameworks allowing for considerable variation, improvisation and negotiation in terms of the participation statuses and 'footings' (Goffman, 1981b) adopted by both institutional representatives and citizen-clients. Accordingly, as Heritage and Greatbatch note:

the participants' orientation to the institutional task- or role-based character of their talk will have to be located in a complex of non-recursive interactional practices that may vary in their form and frequency. (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:98)

Among such practices are specialised modes of opening and closing encounters, the overall organisation of task-related sequences of action, specific features of the design of turns within sequences, and

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the ways in which types of information are requested, delivered and received (for detailed discussion on this point, see Drew and Heritage, 1992b:27-53).

These issues underlie the present study in a fundamental way. In the chapters that follow this one, I will argue that talk radio discourse represents, and is analysable as, a 'non-formal' variant of institutional interaction. The question of how participants in exchanges of 'opinionated discourse' on talk radio 'jointly and collaboratively realise the occasion of their talk' through the ways they organise their interlocutions is repeatedly raised in relation to a variety of speaking practices to be found in exchanges between hosts, as 'representatives' of the institution of the talk radio show, and the citizens (callers) whom they encounter. Among these practices are: specific procedures for opening calls (Chapter 3), the request, delivery and reception of 'opinions' on public issues (Chapter 4), modes of aggressively challenging opinions (Chapters 5 and 6), and specialised methods of closing calls (Chapter 7). In analysing the achievement of these practices we will be analysing the connections and relationships between talk and social structure - between the 'micro' features of interaction and the 'macro' features of institutional contexts (Schegloff, 1987a) - as they reveal themselves in the systematic details of talk radio interactions.

In sum, this study draws from and contributes to CA's body of research on institutional discourse. Radio, like television, as elements of the mass media more generally, are important institutions of modern society. In the same way in which conversation analysts have taken the ubiquitous presence of talk in other institutional settings as a source for investigating the ways in which the transactions of those institutions get accomplished, so, I hope to demonstrate, we can investigate broadcast talk with the same aims in mind.<sup>12</sup>

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### **Talking: The business of the talk radio show**

Of radio, the playwright and radical Bertolt Brecht once wrote:

The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network....That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. (Brecht, 1964 [1932]:52)

Radio grew out of the technology of the telephone (as in its turn, television grew out of the technology of radio) (Aronson, 1971; McQuail, 1987:15; Scannell, 1991b:11, note 2); Brecht was intimating the possibilities for a system of public communication - public talk - that would emerge from a coupling of the technologies of radio and the telephone.

Talk radio is based on just such a coupling. On talk radio, private citizens utilise a telephone channel into a public domain of broadcasting, in which they are able to discursively and argumentatively present and defend their opinions of social issues in live, copresent discourse with the show's host. The business of the talk radio show is to broadcast this discourse - this talk - between callers and hosts, into a public arena occupied by 'overhearers': the audience - who also, of course, comprise the pool of 'potential next callers' on which the show's immediate future relies.

Underlying Brecht's vision is a political idea about the uses of radio in the expansion of the 'public sphere', or at least of citizens' access to that sphere (cf. Keane, 1984; for a critical discussion of the concept, see Habermas, 1989). And indeed on one level, the linkage between telephone and radio technologies instantiates an interface between the public realm represented by broadcasting as an element of the mass media, and the private realm of civil society occupied by non-expert, non-elite, 'ordinary' members of the public. Talk radio provides a unique channel between the 'completely separate...places from which broadcasting speaks and in which it is heard' (Scannell, 1991b:3). This channel to some extent inverts the historical tendency in the British and American broadcasting industries to

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attempt...to limit the access of ordinary people, compared to representatives of elite groups. The media have both regulated public access to [broadcast discourse] and critiqued the elite who are represented, while ordinary people were seen as the recipients. (Livingstone and Lunt, 1992:9)

Public access broadcasting thus appears as a tool for extending democracy, by expanding the public sphere to include the voices of the populace alongside, and often in competition with (Livingstone and Lunt, 1992), those of experts and elites.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this has led some researchers to focus on the extent to which talk radio in fact functions as a democratic discourse forum. For instance, both Crittenden (1971) and, more extensively, Verwey (1990) overtly address the 'democratic functions' of talk radio by such methods as attempting to assess the degree to which perspectives on events put forward in talk radio discussions were disseminated within the wider population of the non-participating audience, or examining the varying degrees to which different talk radio shows facilitated open debate between members of the public and professional hosts or 'moderators'.

While these studies aim to analyse talk radio as an element in the democratic discourse of contemporary societies, however, what they both conspicuously lack is any consideration of the actual talk that talk radio shows broadcast. Verwey's (1990) monograph-length study, for instance, contains no examples of words actually spoken, or an exchange actually broadcast, during the shows she studied. Verwey's preferred method is to reduce the words people spoke to coded 'units' - for example, expressions of 'opposition' or 'support' for some proposition - and then quantify the results in order to represent those discursive argumentative positions in terms of statistical tables.

Such an approach indeed tells us something, on a relatively gross level, about certain types of patterns in talk radio discourse: patterns of agreement and disagreement with certain propositions, for instance, or at least patterns of positive and negative viewpoints given airtime by the broadcasters during shows. It leaves completely out of account, however, the underlying question of the actual,

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situated speaking practices by which citizens' opinions on issues are expressed in the public arena of the talk radio show. It works to gloss those expressions of opinion and fit them into categories which themselves reveal nothing about - indeed, systematically obscure - the real-world interactional circumstances in which their producers produced them. In short, it takes the talk of talk radio broadcasts for granted, instead of treating it as a constitutive part of the phenomenon being investigated (see, for discussions of this issue in social science methodology, Sacks, 1963; Garfinkel, 1967; Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970; Zimmerman and Pollner, 1971; Gilbert and Mulkey, 1984; Pollner, 1987; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Moerman, 1988; M.H. Goodwin, 1990).

Other studies seek to pay more attention to the talk out of which public access broadcasts are built. Moss and Higgins (1984), for instance, use transcripts of broadcast exchanges from a variety of talk radio shows in their analysis of the 'discourse properties' of radio talk. Moss and Higgins' approach is to analyse 'the place and function of *voice* and how it is used separately as mediator, controller, activator, of dialogue and interaction in talk and phone-in shows' (1984:356; my emphasis). This requires a focus on actual examples of talk, studied broadly from the perspective of Halliday's (1978) functional grammar. Basing their analysis on Halliday's notions of 'text' - the 'exchange of meanings' in interactional environments (Halliday, 1978:137) - and 'register' - different ways of saying things, whose use is linked to social structural and situational features - Moss and Higgins seek to outline the ways in which 'combinations of discourse elements aid or inhibit text realisation' (1984:358).

Although their approach is much different to the one taken in the present study, Moss and Higgins nonetheless contribute to a shift in analytical attention towards the question of *how* talk radio exchanges are conducted. By looking at the interactions between cultural knowledge and communicative intentions in actual talk radio discourse, they move away from the decontextualised, operational approach to talk radio discourse exemplified by Verwey (1990) to a perspective which emphasises both the expressive dimensions of that

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discourse, and the way in which the medium itself has a 'language' the features of which it is possible to delineate in empirical terms.

From a slightly different perspective, Carbaugh (1988), in a study of discourse on the popular American television debate show *Donahue*, suggests that one kind of significance of the discourse patterns discernible in actual talk produced at the interface of 'private' and 'public' cultural realms created by public access broadcasts is that they can illustrate to us something of the symbolic patterns and cultural meaning structures of mundane discourse in contemporary civil society. 'Just as we have learned about Roman society by studying orations in the Assembly, and Colonial society by studying negotiations in the town hall, so we should learn much about contemporary American society by studying the kind of talk that is heard on "Donahue"' (Carbaugh, 1988:4).

Carbaugh takes an anthropologically oriented approach to the talk of debates on *Donahue*, using it to explore

spoken systems of symbols and symbolic forms that construct cultural views of personhood and speaking [principal symbolic themes of *Donahue* discourse - IH]....Throughout the study I am exploring what could be called *contextual*, rather than intentional, *meaning*. What I have access to are the words that persons are speaking and their common intelligibility within this context. I am writing therefore about the contextual meanings of symbols and symbolic forms, a function of their use in context. (Carbaugh, 1988:7; original emphasis)

Carbaugh thus uses the talk that audience contributors to *Donahue* produce as a trace for the cultural categories and systems of categories that circulate in contemporary American culture as a whole. Actual *Donahue* discourse is dissected to show how it interfaces the 'public' and the 'private', not only in terms of it being the public talk of private citizens, but also in the sense that it illustrates the routine reflection of wider social patterns of reasoning in the speech of individual agents (cf. Billig, 1991; also Montgomery, 1991).

These studies take seriously the fact that what talk radio broadcasts (and their television counterparts) consist of is, above all, talk: more specifically, what Goffman (1981c:171) dubbed 'fresh



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talk', talk that in general does not involve the speaker recalling memorised texts or reading aloud from a text, talk that is more or less 'spontaneous' and, crucially, sensitive to its immediate context of production.<sup>19</sup>

The present inquiry too takes talking seriously as the principal business of the talk radio broadcast. The analytical upshot emerging from that initial standpoint is, however, somewhat different here than in the studies so far mentioned. As against Moss and Higgins, who concentrate on charting 'a number of functions and types of radio talk' and discussing - in a conscious echo of Brecht's idea quoted at the beginning of this section - its 'potential to develop into a powerful oppositional force to mainstream mass technological culture' (1984:357-8); and as against Carbaugh whose aim is to explore 'the nexus of "talk" and American culture, to [unveil] cultural discourses that are used in an American scene and constitute part of what it is like to be a talking American' (1988:187), I approach talk radio talk in this study more basically as the *interactional accomplishment of situated social activities*: most particularly, the social activity of *arguing* about opinions of social affairs that recursively, routinely, takes place in the data I have collected.

The basis for this approach, as already indicated, lies in the perspective of conversation analysis. In contrast to approaches such as Carbaugh's, which in the mode of the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972a, b; Gumperz and Hymes, 1972) begins from a treatment of culture and identity, or Moss and Higgins' which begins from the standpoint of the social functions of grammar and word selection, viewing talk on the model of the construction of a 'text' (Halliday, 1978; Fowler et al., 1979; Kress and Hodge, 1979), CA begins from the standpoint of talk as the medium for the interactional accomplishment of social activities. Conceiving talking as social action, CA views these activities as 'embodied in specific social actions and sequences of social actions' (Drew and Heritage, 1992b:17). To approach the talk produced in some context from the CA point of view means to ask, at base, what kinds of actions occur in that context, and what is the underlying social organisation by which they are linked together in sequences? This is the sense in which the

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'business' of talking in the context of the talk radio show is considered in the chapters to follow.

Before proceeding, in the rest of this chapter I will present some remarks on the source of the data used in the study, and on aspects of the relevant contextual background against which the 'opinionated discourse' of communication and conflict on talk radio may be viewed.

### **Data used in the study**

The data corpus on which this study is based was compiled by randomly recording nine broadcasts of the open line phone-in component of the *Brian Hayes Programme*, originally broadcast daily on LBC Radio (London). The recordings were made between November 1988 and April 1989. The shows themselves were each of two hours in duration, although while the first hour consisted of an open line phone-in, the second hour would contain a personality interview involving a much more restricted phone-in component. Consequently, only the first hour of each show was recorded. The recordings were subsequently transcribed by myself using the Jefferson transcription system (see Appendix A).

On average, each of the nine tapes contains about 12 calls (range: 9-19). The data set thus consists of just over 100 calls altogether. Calls generally run for between one and 1½ minutes: the shortest call in my corpus is 31 seconds in length, while the longest is around six minutes. Not every recorded broadcast is hosted by the show's eponymous personality: in fact, three different hosts appear in the recordings I have. Although these hosts are referred to by their first names by callers, the names of callers themselves, and of places, have been changed in the transcripts in order to protect anonymity.

In addition to the recordings I made and transcribed personally, Emanuel Schegloff provided me with an auxiliary set of data. These data comprise around three hours of transcribed recordings of a New York talk radio show originally broadcast in 1968. The principal use

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made of these auxiliary data was as a comparative test-bed for systematic phenomena observed during analyses of the primary data corpus and reported in the chapters to follow. Occasionally, when an instance from the American data seemed especially pertinent in the context of arguments developed in relation to phenomena in the primary corpus, such an instance was incorporated into the text. Also incorporated in the text at various points are examples of talk taken from other social settings, for instance, conversations between peers and siblings, and psychotherapeutic conversations. These data, again used for comparative purposes, come from a substantial corpus of recorded and transcribed data which conversation analysts have generated over the last 25 or so years.

From the outset, my interest in recording the broadcasts I recorded lay in the organisation of the talk that was actually transmitted on the air, the talk, therefore, that any audience member could hear. I was interested, initially, simply in analysing argument, and argument was something that could be heard routinely on the *Brian Hayes Programme*. I originally considered this data source to have distinct advantages over possible alternatives such as taped family discussions (as used by Schiffrin (1984), Billig (1989) and Vuchinich (1990)). The reason for this was that although the participants were conscious of the fact that their talk was being broadcast to an overhearing audience, I took it that they could not reasonably be said to be conscious of the fact that some particular member of that audience was taping the proceedings in order to engage in sociological analysis of their talk. Essentially, what I captured on my tape was a spate of interaction that was in the profoundest sense possible unaffected by my 'presence' as a researcher. Looked at another way, each of the broadcasts recorded contained talk that would have been produced just the same if I had not turned on the tape recorder that morning. (Indeed I recall listening to some broadcasts on mornings I had not elected to record deeply regretting my decision, since they appeared to me to contain such good examples of argumentative talk!)

However, the decision to simply record and analyse the talk that was broadcast could also be seen to have disadvantages, particularly

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once my interests began to turn towards the issue of how argumentative talk on talk radio articulated with particular features of its institutional context of production, and the interactional asymmetries and constraints arising for the participants from the institutional features of that setting. I could defend, I thought, a decision to rely solely on what I could record from the radio on the basis that (a) the interaction was mediated by telephone, meaning that the participants were not in visual contact with each other, so that no gestural activities which could be affecting the interaction were being missed out of the analysis; and (b) therefore, the turns at talk to which I had access via the radio were precisely the only resources that the participants themselves were relying on to coordinate their interaction. But this position becomes problematic once it is considered that talk radio interaction is in fact mediated by another kind of technological set-up: that of the studio itself. So I began to wonder: What kind of thing might be going on in the studio as it were 'around the boundaries' of calls as broadcast discourse; i.e., what kind of thing happens to callers prior to, and subsequent to, their being on the air in interaction with the host? Never having myself called in or otherwise participated in a talk radio show, I decided it might be useful if I were to gain at least a background ethnographic sense of the 'life' of a talk radio studio at work.

I began to make enquiries, and Laurie Taylor (who while being Professor of Sociology at the University of York, also has many contacts at the BBC) put me in touch with the producer of BBC Radio 4's talk radio show *Call Nick Ross*, who in turn readily agreed to my making a visit to observe the production of a show. While I have to stress that the results of this visit do not bear other than strictly marginally on the analyses presented in the chapters to follow, for instance by acting as the source for passing observations on technical matters in the chapters concerned with the opening and closing of calls (Chapters 3 and 7 respectively), it may be that the observations I was able to make on the 'off-air' processing of calls are of some more general background use and/or interest to the reader. It should also be noted, however, that the programme these

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observations relate to is not the programme from which the primary data base was drawn, although both, of course, represent examples of the particular genre of 'talk radio' shows. This fact may be of special significance if Verwey (1990:6) is right when she asserts that public network talk radio broadcasts (such as *Call Nick Ross*) 'demand a great deal more "gatekeeping" control from their production staff as well as from their moderators' than do commercial network shows (like the *Brian Hayes Programme*).

#### **Some background context for calls**

On *Call Nick Ross*, members of the public who place a call to the show first encounter a switchboard operative. This person's task is, first of all, to take down details of the caller's name and telephone number - since on this show, unlike many other, smaller scale operations, the caller is not placed on a call-waiting system to await their turn to speak on the air, but is told to hang up and wait to be called back from the studio when their turn is imminent. The size of the *Call Nick Ross* operation itself thus represents a significant factor in the off-air processing of calls. While most talk radio shows are broadcast on local radio stations and so draw their candidate callers from a pool of potential listeners that extends only about as far as the boundaries of a city, *Call Nick Ross* is broadcast by the BBC, a national public corporation, and goes out nationwide thus drawing its set of callers from a potential listenership consisting of the national population (although for discussions of the particular 'types' of person who are actually more likely to place a call, see Avery and Ellis, 1979, and Verwey, 1990). The size of this pool of potential callers is reflected in the fact that the show finds it necessary to employ not one but ten initial call-taking switchboard operatives.

A more significant aspect of the initial call-taker's role from our perspective stems from the fact that the operative is not only required to take down basic details of the caller's name and number, but is also required to find out the general gist of what the caller

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intends to say and engage them briefly in talk on that theme. The purpose of this is not so much the traditional gatekeeping one of 'screening' callers for potentially abusive, libellous or seditious contributions, but the more interesting one of trying to ensure that callers can 'make arguments' in relatively spontaneous interaction, that they are not 'just reading' a prepared text. It thus appears that the staff at work on the show themselves orient to the argumentative nature of the kind of discourse which such 'opinion-centred' shows are designed to generate. Working with what might be treated as a lay version of Billig's (1987, 1991) thesis that arguing and thinking are intrinsically linked, call-takers are wary of callers who appear not to be 'thinking', since they are 'just reading'. (The distinction between 'making an argument' and 'just reading' was drawn independently by the show's executive producer in conversation with me.) Furthermore, an orientation to argumentative discourse might be at work here in the additional sense that the host would find it easier to engage in debate a caller who is thinking out his or her position discursively, as against one who is relying on a written text for their presentation (for further consideration of distinctions between 'aloud reading' and 'fresh talk', see Goffman, 1981c, d; for related remarks on 'planned' and 'unplanned' discourse, see Ochs, 1979).

At the end of this initial encounter callers are instructed to hang up and remain close by the phone, to await recall should their turn to speak to the host on air come up before the show's allotted time runs out. The details that have been taken by the call-taker are then passed to a 'second producer' (or producer's assistant) who in turn sketches a precis of the caller's proposed theme in one or two sentences. The precis is passed to the show's producer, who sits at the console and can communicate with the host via the latter's headset; and also to the host, who sits in a small room separated from the production area by a glass partition. In front of him the host has a terminal, on which the precis of upcoming callers' themes are shown (typed in by a studio assistant), and a console of his own, with switches opening up and closing down the numerous lines on which callers will be waiting.

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Obviously, not all callers who place an initial call find themselves ultimately with the opportunity to speak on air. In the *Call Nick Ross* set-up, it is the producer who makes the decision which calls will be aired - although it is the host who decides at which moments in the ongoing course of broadcasts new callers will actually come onto, and be removed from, the air. One kind of question raised here is that of what kind of 'selection procedures' the producer might employ in picking out of the vast number of calls received the ones that will actually be broadcast in a given show. For various reasons this kind of question did not directly concern me during my observations. For one thing I wanted to gain access to the studio as far as possible on 'neutral' grounds, as an essentially unobtrusive observer of the basics of the off-air processing of calls. Hence, partly because the BBC, as a public corporation under contract to but ideally independent from government, is wary as an organisation of possible criticism of its 'bias', I elected in my role as an observer of the work of the studio not to actively pursue questions of screening and weighted selection of callers. Moreover, questions such as these, while clearly relevant for some purposes, were not at all relevant for my overall purpose, which was to analyse talk radio discourse as a form of social interaction, and to discover the traces of participants' orientations to the context of interaction in the details of design and construction of their turns at talk.

Yet during my time in the studio one factor of particular salience in the context of the present study did become evident. It was clear that the producer, who in fact actively discussed with other production staff in the studio the question of which calls might fit into the way the broadcast discourse was going at a given stage, was, like the call-taking staff, orienting to the argumentative nature of the show's discourse by considering potential upcoming callers on the basis of the controversial, 'side-taking' characteristics of their themes: for instance, following a caller who had expressed toadying support for the Royal Family, it might be considered that a relevant upcoming caller might be 'the one who thinks the Royals should be forced to go out and work for a living'.<sup>14</sup>

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It might thus be borne in mind, when reading the following empirical analyses of the 'construction of controversy' in broadcast talk radio talk, that the controversial, argumentative, and opinionated nature of the discourse of calls may not only be a feature of the interactions of callers and hosts themselves, but also a feature oriented to, and at least in some senses, on some occasions, 'constructed' by activities of production staff in the background of the calls that form the substantive analytical focus in this study.

In summary, the mechanics of the off-air processing of calls described in this section are represented schematically in Figure 1:

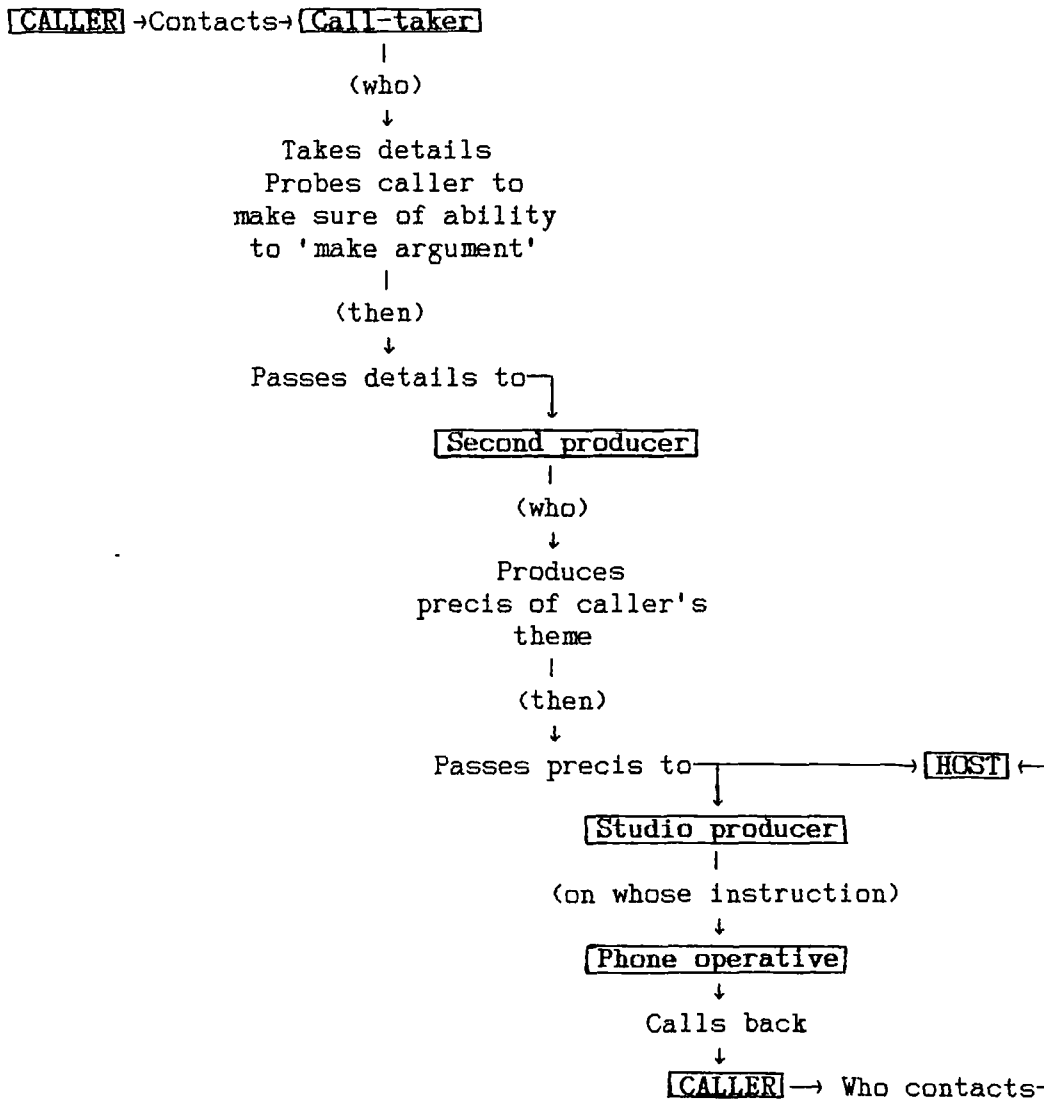


Figure 1. Dynamic model of the off-air processing of calls



**The organisation of the study**

Talk radio broadcasts are principally made up of series of *calls*. In the empirical chapters that follow we are concerned with patterned types of speaking practices that occur in calls. The 'call', that is, represents a basic kind of orienting framework for analysis in this study. Although our attention will be directed centrally towards turns and sequences of turns at talk, and the questions we will be asking have to do mainly with the structural design and corresponding interactional functions of those turns and sequences, nonetheless throughout there will be an underlying concern with how turns and sequences can be seen as fitting within the overall framework of the call (for a similar approach to a different set of data, see Crow, 1986).

Calls have readily identifiable beginnings and endings; and within those 'brackets' (Goffman, 1971) particular, restricted types of activity recursively take place (for an early attempt at characterising activity patterns in calls, see Hutchby, 1991). In all calls, callers begin after exchanging greetings with the host by stating their opinion on some issue, selected by themselves.<sup>15</sup> These opinions or stances on issues act to map out an initial agenda for the discussions which ensue on the topic between host and caller. Such discussions in turn range in tone from relatively amicable debates to really confrontational disputes: in the data I collected, disputes, in varying degrees of confrontation, were the more common and it is the practices of disputing about opinions of public issues that form the principal focus of much of our attention in what follows (for the interested reader, a selection of complete call transcripts is provided in Appendix B).

Chapter 2 extends the introductory section of the work by presenting a general consideration of how conversation analysis can be used to analyse *argument* as a social activity in both conversational (or 'mundane') and institutional interactions. Here, we develop a sequential approach to analysing argument, consider in more detail the comparative approach to institutional interaction adopted

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within the CA perspective (which we introduced briefly in the section on 'Action and context' above), and show how these standpoints can be combined to characterise specialised features of what I am calling the 'opinionated discourse' of talk radio interaction.

Following this general discussion, Chapters 3 to 7 turn to address particular aspects of how communication and conflict within calls is recursively patterned. Chapter 3 begins by considering how the opening exchanges of calls are distinctive in relation to telephone conversation openings in mundane settings, as studied by Schegloff (1979, 1986) and others; and then discusses how the type of opening found in our talk radio data works to situate the participants as, from the outset, in asymmetrical roles, with particular related organisational tasks to discharge, vis-a-vis the issue to be addressed within a call. Chapter 4 shows how the first of those tasks - the caller's task of proffering an opinion and 'projecting an agenda' for the call - is accomplished using specific patterned forms of turn design and 'opinionated' vocabularies.

Chapter 4 also introduces the next routine feature of calls: the host's (often disputatious) *response* to the caller's opinion. Here again, structural asymmetries in the participation statuses of hosts and callers come into play in a significant way. The fact that calls are organised in such a way that callers begin by presenting an opinion, which hosts may then challenge, means that while callers initially 'set the agenda' for their calls, after that point the organisation of calls situates them in a *defensive* position vis-a-vis the host. In Chapters 5 and 6 we focus on this asymmetry and look at related aspects of the ways in which hosts and callers manage arguments about each other's opinions of the issue in question in a call. Chapter 5 discusses a particular verbal format or device that hosts use to manifest their scepticism of callers' claims. By the use of this strategy, it is shown, hosts may undermine the validity of a claim without necessarily addressing themselves to questions of its 'actual' truth or accuracy. In Chapter 6, the phenomenon of 'interruption', which has been the subject of much contentious work in recent discourse studies (Goldberg, 1990; Talbot, 1992), is reevaluated as an argumentative strategy, through the use of which

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hosts and callers, in different ways, pursue their respective lines in arguments and defend their occupancy of the floor.

Chapter 7, finally, considers the specialised ways in which calls are brought to a close. Noting that overwhelmingly, hosts initiate the termination of calls on a unilateral basis, and that calls are closed coterminously with the arguments that have been carried on within them (i.e., there is no separation between the 'end of the argument' and the 'end of the call'), we consider how power in terms of technological as well as interactional asymmetries involved in talk radio encounters translates into the 'power of the last word' that hosts possess in arguments with callers.

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## Talk and the Management of Conflict in Conversation and Institutional Interaction

Recent years have seen a major growth in interest among students of human interaction in the subject of disputatious or argumentative discourse - or in Grimshaw's (1990) term, 'conflict talk'. Conflict as a social process is of course at the root of various longstanding traditions in sociological theory (e.g., Marx and Engels, 1986 [1848]; Simmel, 1955 [1905]; Coser, 1956; Schelling, 1960; Boulding, 1962). But as Grimshaw (1990:2) points out, it is only in the last 20 years or so that a substantive interest in conflict *talk* has grown up among linguists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others. In a major review of the literature on 'language and disputing', Brenneis (1988) lists over 200 recent publications relatively evenly distributed among these disciplines.

Brenneis' review article identifies a number of major areas of interest for researchers on conflict talk. For instance, substantial literatures exist on topics such as disputes among children; disputes in legal settings; and disputes in a variety of non-legal contexts such as intrafamilial, neighbourhood, workplace and other peer-group arguments. The sociological significance of this research on conflict talk is evident in a number of respects. For example, studies of children's argument have cast light on the remarkable degree of competence in handling complex social situations and relationships possessed by children from a very early age. Detailed analyses exist of how developing knowledge of cultural rules is systematically bound up in children's negotiation of interpersonal conflict (Maynard, 1985, 1986). Other studies illuminate the depth of children's practical knowledge of how activity-relevant hierarchies may be built in the

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ongoing course of interaction and how structures of affiliation and disaffiliation are interactionally accomplished (M.H. Goodwin, 1990; C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin, 1990), and of how to manage accusations, justifications and denials within the cultural constraints imposed by considerations of 'face' (M.H. Goodwin, 1979, 1990; Eder, 1990).

The issue of the display of cultural competence in conflict talk has also informed studies of adult argumentation - particularly in various institutional settings such as the law courts (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1992) and in the media (Greatbatch, 1986, 1992; Schegloff, 1988/9). A central concern here has been with how competently managed institutional identities (or 'local roles' - Heritage, 1985) appear to affect individuals' engagement in conflict talk in specialised settings (Mehan, 1990; Philips, 1990; O'Donnell, 1990). Relatedly, researchers have been interested in how the local distribution of institutional identities and role-related speaking practices can affect the outcome of a dispute (Walker, 1985; Conley and O'Barr, 1990, Mehan, 1990). In short, a major theme in studies of conflict talk among adults is the relationship between particular verbal resources and patterns associated with conflict talk and exogenous (and often asymmetric) social identities bound up in the numerous institutional settings in which conflict is routinely talked.

Many of the same issues will be traceable in our discussions in subsequent chapters of how spates of argument are initiated, sustained and terminated in the context of the talk radio show. The theme of the relationship between exogenous social context and verbal resources and patterns involved in conflict talk emerges, for instance, in analyses of the way in which different activities normatively associated with the local roles of caller and host appear to offer asymmetrical access for the participants to different argumentative resources.

In this chapter, however, my aim is to set the scene for those more detailed investigations by, first, outlining how the distinctive approach to the analysis of argument taken by researchers in the conversation-analytic paradigm enables systematic differences in the management of conflict talk in conversation and in various institutional settings to be identified and accounted for; and second,

showing how talk radio, as an institutional setting for conflict talk at the interface of private and public cultural spheres, provides a unique site in these terms for investigating the interactional, linguistic and cultural competencies involved in arguments centred upon the construction and negotiation of competing accounts of social reality.

#### **Approaching argument: Arguments as 'Action-Opposition' sequences**

It is generally recognised that arguments in discourse crucially involve adversative activities such as challenge, contradiction, negation and other forms of opposition (Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981:150-56; Maynard, 1985:3; Coulter, 1990; M.H. Goodwin, 1990:143-189). Thus Eisenberg and Garvey (1981:150) describe what they call 'adversative episodes': 'the interaction which grows out of an opposition to [an antecedent event such as] a request for action, an assertion, or an action....An adversative episode is a sequence which begins with an opposition and ends with a resolution or dissipation of conflict.' Eisenberg and Garvey lay the stress on resolution as a way of terminating disputes in their paper; and while this position has been challenged by research which suggests that arguments both among children in their peer groups (M.H. Goodwin, 1982, 1990:157-58) and among intergenerational family members (Vuchinich, 1990) are in fact more likely to end in varieties of stalemate or standoffs which enable participants to save face and move on to other activities, the overall model of adversative episodes developed by Eisenberg and Garvey is important, as Maynard (1985) suggests, for its focus on the way in which arguments emerge *sequentially* out of oppositions to 'antecedent events' - or in Maynard's (1985:3) term, 'arguable actions'.

In Maynard's (1985) account, any interactional move can in principle be opposed, can be treated as an 'arguable' and hence as the basis for an oppositional move. The relationships between arguable actions and their oppositions can be subjected to systematic analysis. Maynard, working from a conversation-analytic perspective,

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thus conceives of arguments as essentially *sequential* phenomena, occurring as locally managed sequences of turns at talk, with the first move of an argument sequence being the second move in an underlying (Action-Opposition) sequence. The subsequent prosecution of arguments on this account involves parties treating prior Oppositions as themselves Actions in further (Action-Opposition) sequences. In this way arguments can be analysed from the standpoint of sequential analysis as *emergent* phenomena, and the kinds of cultural competencies and linguistic resources relied on by speakers in 'building opposition' can be isolated.

One significance of this approach is that it enables us to investigate how arguments get produced, in the course of ordinary interaction, by participants out of locally discernible resources. Hence we can look, among other things, at what kinds of actions may be treated by persons as arguable and what kinds of normative cultural codes may be relied on in identifying arguable actions (Maynard, 1985, 1986); and similarly, what kinds of interpretive resources can be used by speakers in formulating and reformulating their cointeractants' words and actions in building oppositional moves (M.H. Goodwin, 1990:143-89).

This approach of course does not deny that a speaker can 'look for' an argument, for instance by trying to needle a cointeractant, formulating an utterance in intendedly controversial terms, and so forth. The stress placed by Coulter (1990) on 'declarative assertions' (assertions 'designed to make some *point* to be addressed by...interlocutors' (Coulter, 1990:185)) as a basic element in argument sequences would seem to indicate the potential significance of actions that are formulated or presented as 'arguable' in the first place. However, we can note that though a speaker may be characterised as 'looking for' an argument, through being obviously perverse or contentious, his or her actions may not actually result in the emergence of an argument if, for instance, an interlocutor elects (possibly equally perversely) to ignore or even agree with the 'controversial' assertion, hence neutralising the looked-for dispute.

Similarly, treating arguments as emergent phenomena allows us to account for the commonsensically available fact that apparently

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innocuous statements or actions can be challenged and argued with vehemently. Maynard's (1985, 1986) studies of children's arguments in classroom settings demonstrate that actions as apparently innocent (for their producers) as moving a pencil or mispronouncing the word 'eraser' can be treated as arguable actions and so form the starting point for extended spates of disputatious talk.

The basic point, however, is that approaching arguments as (Action-Opposition) sequences enables us to treat the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction as the basic analytical framework for investigating how conflict talk is managed by participants as intersubjective (and hence also social) activity. In the following sections of this chapter, we will see how disputes are sequentially managed in varying ways in informal conversational contexts and in more formal, institutional settings. Beginning with some observations on how the turn-taking system of conversation (as described by Sacks et al., 1974) operates to allow arguments to be organised in such a way that the specifically oppositional character of argumentative moves can be either highlighted or mitigated, we turn in later sections to look at how various institutionalised constraints come into play to modify the management of disputes in more formal settings such as courtrooms and news interviews. Finally, turning to the talk radio data that form the empirical basis for the rest of this study, we see how the organisation of argument in that setting can be characterised in a way that is 'intermediate' between the conversational and non-conversational cases: in short, how argument on talk radio approximates to a conversational free exchange of opinions while at the same time being in various ways institutionally mediated.

### **Parameters of opposition in conversational disputes**

Research on arguments in conversation shows that they involve the exchange of oppositional turns that are *adjacently positioned* and (at least in two-party interactions) *directly addressed* (C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin, 1987; Coulter, 1990). In their account of the



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conventions relied on by participants in mundane interaction to manage the exchange of turns in conversation (the 'speech-exchange system'), Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) noted that the taking of turns at talking and the types of turns taken (e.g. asking a question, proffering an assessment, etc.) are not predetermined or constrained by conventions or structures exogenous to the interaction (as they are in some 'institutional' settings, as we see below), but are negotiated relatively freely by participants in the context of the interaction. The turn-taking system of conversation thus provides, in the first instance, a framework for the organisation of (Action-Opposition) sequences in which precisely which party is at any given moment identifying another's actions as arguable and so opposing them, and precisely what sort of turn format (e.g., accusation, challenge, question, negation, etc.) is used to do that opposition, are both organised and managed on a local, or endogenous, basis. This framework also crucially provides that the mutually oppositional turns involved may be (a) adjacently placed and (b) directly addressed.

We can begin to see the significance of these features for the emergence and maintenance of arguments in conversation with the help of the following conversational extract. Here two speakers, Al and Stan, are engaged in an argument about marijuana use. Al's assertion that 'Marijuana is very cheap' (first line) is treated as an arguable action by Stan, and he opposes it in the next turn by challenging Al's understanding of what 'very cheap' might mean.

(1) [Adato:7:17-18]

- Al:            Marijuana is very cheap.  
Stan:          Very cheap et fifty cents a joint? en a dollar  
                a joint? is very cheap?  
Al:            You- about a- eh about a third of a joint gets  
                yuh high.  
Stan:          So?  
                (1.0)  
Stan:          The difference is thatchu need'm so much...

Stan initially opposes Al's statement by issuing a challenge to Al's competence in understanding the concept 'very cheap'. Al in turn attempts to counter this challenge by claiming that one does not need

a whole joint to get high. Thus, Stan's implicit position that marijuana is in fact not 'very cheap' because it costs 'fifty cents...en a dollar a joint' is in turn undermined. In other words, Stan's initial Opposition to Al's Action is treated as an arguable Action in its own right by Al, and countered with an Opposition. Subsequently, as we see, Stan responds by treating this counter in turn as an arguable, thus sustaining the argument by means of a yet further (Action-Opposition) sequence.

In this extract, then, the two speakers utilise a basic (Action-Opposition) sequence as a framework in which they build a dispute by taking some feature of an immediately prior turn, whether its evidential basis, its contextual relevance or what it tells about its speaker's judgemental competence, and opposing it in adjacently positioned turns.

A further point to note is that these oppositional moves are constructed so as to *highlight* their oppositional character. The dispute, that is to say, is carried on via the exchange of assertion and counter-assertion, accusation, rebuttal and counter-accusation, in a way that is typically unmitigated (cf. Coulter, 1990): in M.H. Goodwin's (1983) term, Stan and Al engage in opposition that is 'aggravated'. One principal way in which the foregrounding of opposition in these Action-Opposition sequences can be traced is in the nature of the exchange as a series of *challenges* to and *defences* of a particular position (that 'Marijuana is very cheap'), rather than a series of 'disagreements' per se. For instance Stan, in the second turn of the fragment, does not so much disagree with (in the sense of propose an alternative to) as challenge or display scepticism about Al's assertion in the first turn. Correspondingly, Al responds to that in the next turn by *defending* his initial position against the challenge. And Stan's following turn in the sequence, 'So?', is a challenge to the *relevance* of Al's defence, again rather than being strictly speaking a disagreement with it (cf. the comments below, p.47, on what M.H. Goodwin (1990) calls 'disclaimers').'

We can discern in other features of turn-design and further sequential phenomena here some ways in which the dispute takes on its 'aggravated' character. The oppositional turns in extract (1) are

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also 'unmitigated' in the sense that they fail to incorporate any of the characteristic 'mitigating components' available to, and routinely used by, interlocutors in conversation to systematically *deemphasise* opposition in disputes. This point can be drawn out more clearly if we look at the results of research by conversation analysts into some structural properties of 'disagreements' in talk-in-interaction.

Conversation analysts (especially Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987) have developed a characterisation of disagreement as, in general, a 'dispreferred' activity in informal conversation. Pomerantz (1984), in a wide-ranging study of agreements and disagreements in assessment sequences, has identified a systematic patterning in the different design features of turns which embody the alternative actions of agreeing and disagreeing with a prior turn. Essentially, 'agreements' are performed directly, straightforwardly and without undue hesitation; while 'disagreements' tend to be in various ways mitigated, hedged, and/or hesitated over. These design differentials are described in terms of a 'preference' organisation, with agreements representing 'preferred' actions and disagreements being 'dispreferred' (for an illustrative summary of these features, see Schegloff, 1988).

The concept of preference in CA does not refer to the psychological motives of individuals, but rather to structural features of the design of turns at talk which enable interlocutors to draw conventionalised inferences about the actions being performed with those turns.<sup>2</sup> The 'preferred' action can be thought of in this sense as the 'default' interpretation, which leads to actions which agree with, or are conjunctive with, prior actions being performed straightforwardly and contiguously (Sacks, 1987):

(2) [JS:II:28]

Jo:           T's- tsuh beautiful day out isn't it?  
→ Lee:        Yeh it's jus' gorgeous.

(3) [VIYMC:1:2]

Pat:         It's really a clear lake, isn't it?  
→ Les:        It's wonderful.

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'Dispreferred' actions by contrast are designed to convey in various ways that their speaker is departing from the default interpretation. One of the most significant ways in which this is done is by prefacing a dispreferred action with a suitably intoned 'reluctancy marker' (Pomerantz, 1984:72; Bilmes, 1988) such as *Well...* or *Um...*:

(4) [Sacks 1987]

- A: Yuh comin' down early?  
→ B: Well, I got a lot of things to do before getting cleared up tomorrow. I don't know. I w- probably won't be too early.

As Sacks (1987) observes, it seems evident in this example that speaker A wants speaker B to 'come down early' (note the difference with an alternative, 'You're not coming early, are you?', which would suggest that speaker does *not* want recipient to come early). B's response however 'is not only formed up so that the disagreement is as weak as possible' - note the way in which 'I w-', which looks like a start on 'I won't (be too early)', is repaired to take the still weaker form '*probably* won't be too early' - 'but is held off for a great part of the turn' (1987:58).<sup>3</sup>

Another significant way of exhibiting the dispreferred status of an action is by hesitating before producing it. As with the use of reluctance markers, hesitations enable a first speaker to draw the conventional inference that a disagreement is forthcoming. (It's important to note in this context that 'disagreeing' actions do not necessarily involve negations. Particularly in environments following a speaker's self-deprecation or a compliment, a *negation* constitutes the 'preferred' response (Pomerantz, 1978a, 1984:77-95).)

As we see in the following excerpt, this might allow a speaker to attempt to forestall the disagreement, by, for instance, revising a prior assertion.

(5) [SBL:3:1:8]

- Mary: ...fruitcake is not cheap an' that's not an awful lot of fruitcake.  
1→ (1.0)  
2→ Mary: Course it i:s. A little piece goes a long way.  
Claire: Well that's right.

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Mary takes it that the silence at arrow 1 is indicative of an unstated or as-yet-unstated disagreement with her assertion about fruitcake from Claire. At arrow 2, she backs away from this assertion, in effect producing a disagreement with herself: and in the next turn, as we see, Claire expresses her agreement with the revised sentiment - thereby displaying that the 1.0 silence was indeed connected to her disagreement.

The overall effect of this preference organisation in respect of our theme of the management of disputes in conversation is that disputants are thereby provided with structural resources by which to display an orientation to the potentially oppositional properties of disagreement, and to work to *avoid* that opposition, by utilising the preference caveats to systematically deemphasise opposition in turns where disagreement is being done.

This does not mean, of course, that substantive disputes cannot be carried on while interlocutors observe the preference structures of conversation. They can, as we see in excerpt (6) below. As in the production of dispreferred actions in general, the main ways in which speakers deemphasise opposition in dispute sequences such as this include delaying the production of disagreement turns through pausing before speaking, prefacing the disagreement through the use of 'reluctancy markers', and otherwise mitigating the disagreement by hedging, diluting, apologising and accounting for it (Pomerantz, 1984; cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979:56-59; Levinson, 1983:332-345; Drew, 1984; Heritage, 1984a:265-280, 1988; Sacks, 1987).

In the following excerpt, a dispute is carried on over a series of turns in each of which the preference features are used to deemphasise the oppositional nature of the respective turns. Throughout the sequence, Gene disagrees with Maggie's evaluation of the state of his marriage (first turn of the extract). But note the differences with the argument sequence reproduced in extract (1) above. In each exchange, the disagreements are mitigated in various ways: for instance, in the first exchange of the extract, Gene's disagreement with Maggie is (a) sequentially delayed (note the 0.8-second gap that precedes it) and (b) prefaced with a *Yes but*-type

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agreement preface (Pomerantz, 1984:72-75): 'Essentially:: except...' (arrows 1 and 2 respectively).

(6) [Goldberg:II:2:18]

- Maggie: A::n uh::, .hh definitely, fo:r the: fifteen years I:'ve known you, (0.3) yihknow you've rilly bo:th basically honestly gone yer own ways.  
 1→ (0.8)
- 2→ Gene: Essentially:: except we've hadda good relationship et [home yihknow.]  
 Maggie: [.h.hhhhhhhh ]  
 (.)
- Maggie: Ye:s but I mean it's a relationship where: uh yihknow pa:ss the butter dear,hh  
 (0.5)
- Maggie: Yihknow make a piece'a toa]:st dear this type=  
 Gene: [No not really.]  
 Maggie: =of thing.  
 (.)
- Maggie: [.hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh ]  
 Gene: [[We've actually hadda] real health- I think we've hadda very healthy relationship y'know.=  
 Maggie: =.k.hhh Why: b'cuz you haven'knocked each other's tee:th out?  
 3→ (0.7)
- 4→ Gene: Tha:it, a:nd we've::: hadda good communication and uh: the whole- yihknow I think it's been healthy,

We find the same pattern of delay plus agreement-prefaced disagreement at arrows 3 and 4. Gene's disagreement here is found in his assertion, 'I think it's been healthy,' which dissents from the general thrust of Maggie's case, that Gene's marriage is not in a healthy state (note her characterisations of the relationship in terms of the rather cool exchange of banalities: 'pa:ss the butter dear...make a piece'a toa:st dear...' - for some further considerations on this, see Drew, 1992:503-4).

In extract (6), then, while it is evident that the speakers are disagreeing with each other, it is also evident that they are both concerned not to foreground that disagreement by engaging in aggravated opposition. As in (1), the oppositional turns through which the dispute is carried on are adjacently positioned, and also directly addressed (e.g., addressed disputant to disputant, rather than being mediated through some third party); but in addition to

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this, and in contrast to the exchange in (1), the oppositions are in various ways *mitigated*.

Thus, returning to excerpt (1), we can now observe that one major way in which the oppositional character of this dispute is foregrounded is through the systematic absence of the preference features routinely associated with agreement and disagreement in conversation:

(1) [Adato:7:17-18]

- Al:            *Marijuana* is very cheap.  
Stan:          Very cheap et fifty cents a joint? en a dollar  
                a joint? is very cheap?  
Al:            You- about a- eh about a third of a joint gets  
                yuh high.  
Stan:          So?  
                (1.0)  
Stan:          The difference is thatchu need'm so much...

Here, the very absence of any markers of reluctance or mitigation provides a source for the foregrounding of opposition and the upgrading or intensification of conflict between the participants. This in turn represents a major way in which the exchange is provided with its particularly 'argumentative' character. As we remarked earlier, the dispute in this instance is, in M.H. Goodwin's (1983) felicitous term, 'aggravated'.

Some further points about the foregrounding of opposition in conversational disputes can now be made. It is often remarked that children's disputes are much more overtly confrontational and 'argumentative' than are adults'. In her studies of aggravated opposition in children's disputes, Goodwin identifies a variety of strategies through which children build Action-Opposition sequences to foreground their oppositional properties (see especially M.H. Goodwin, 1990:141-225). The significance of this is that, as it turns out, very similar strategies are used by Al and Stan (who are adults) in extract (1) to highlight the argumentative character of their exchange.

For instance, Stan's first challenge ('Very cheap et fifty cents a joint? en a dollar a joint? is very cheap?') uses the same kind of partial repetition coupled with a negative affective reaction to the

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speech being repeated as found in this typical exchange between two girls aged 11 and 12 (cf. M.H. Goodwin, 1990:145-47):

- (7) [M.H. Goodwin 1990]  
(On reaching a city creek.)  
Bea: Y'all gonna walk in it?  
→ Ruby: Walk in it, You know where that water came from? The toilet.

Similarly, Stan's second challenge, 'So?', is the same kind of action as that described in children's argument by M.H. Goodwin (1990:153) as a 'disclaimer': 'an action that denies the relevance of a prior action rather than disagreeing with it':

- (8) [M.H. Goodwin 1990]  
(Billy compares his own school with Bea's.)  
Billy: Better than Shaw.  
→ Bea: So, I don't care about my school anyway.

In relation to this type of opposition, Goodwin notes that 'terms such as..."So" and "I don't care" generally follow utterances interpreted as moves that are attempting to put their recipient in a disadvantageous position' (M.H. Goodwin, 1990:153). This holds for the 'So?' used by Stan in extract (1) in as much as Al's prior utterance, 'about a third of a joint gets yuh high', implies a lack of knowledge on Stan's part as regards the techniques for using marijuana, which of course mirrors Stan's earlier attribution of incompetence to Al in respect of the meaning of the term 'very cheap'.

A still further aspect of the highlighting of opposition in this dispute can be pointed to using the following extract, taken from slightly later in the same conversation.

- (9) [Adato:7:17-18]  
Al: The average marijuana smoker, varies- eh uses marijuana maybe once, a week or once every two wee-ks something like that.  
→ Stan: Yer talkin' off the top a' yer head cuz you don't know anything about it.  
Al: Yeh I know a good deal about it.

Stan's utterance in this sequence overlaps Al's characterisation of 'the average marijuana smoker' and presents an idiomatically



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pejorative characterisation of Al himself: i.e., Al is described as 'talking off the top of (his) head'. The use of pejorative person descriptors and insult terms is a frequent component of opposition turns among children (Labov, 1972c; M.H. Goodwin, 1990:148-50). One thing that these components accomplish is the foregrounding of opposition not only in respect of a position but also in terms of an actor responsible for stating that position. 'Opposition can thus call into question not only what has been said but also the general competence of someone who would produce such talk' (M.H. Goodwin, 1990:149). This is particularly evident in extract (9) as Stan's utterance, 'Yer talkin' off the top a' yer head cuz you don't know anything about it', not only proffers an insult to Al ('talkin' off the top a' yer head') but locates the basis for that pejorative characterisation in Al's (lack of) competence as a commentator on the traits of the average marijuana smoker ('cuz you don't know anything about it').

We might note finally the way in which Al's response to Stan itself preserves the foregrounding of opposition. For instance, he signals his opposition immediately or contiguously through the use of a polarity term ('Yeh' - note that 'Yeh' in this context works as a negation of Stan's negative accusation 'don't know anything about it') in turn-initial position. And again, the substance of his counterclaim, 'I know a good deal about it', is designed directly to oppose the attack on his competence as speaker mounted by Stan. Once more, then, we see how the features of adjacent positioning and direct address, coupled with the absence of preference caveats, enable disputants in conversation to highlight the oppositional character of their arguments.

In sum, we can see that disputes in conversation can be prosecuted in both 'aggravated' and 'mitigated' forms. In both forms the (Action-Opposition) sequence provides a basic framework within which conflict between speakers emerges and is managed. Yet each form involves oppositional turns being formatted in distinctive ways. The basic formats for mitigating disagreements, as identified by Pomerantz (1984), include: (1) Sequential delays (pausing prior to the production of a disagreeing turn); (2) Within-turn delays (prefacing

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the disagreement with reluctance markers such as *Well* or *Um...*); (3) Prefacing the disagreement with an agreement (*Yes, but...*); and (4) Weakening the force of the disagreement (diluting, apologising or accounting for the disagreement). Among the basic formats for aggravated opposition (as identified by M.H. Goodwin, 1990:145-156) are: (1) Outright challenge and correction (the use of assertion/counter-assertion/reassertion chains); (2) Exchange and return sequences (turns involving simple repeat and negation); (3) Disclaimers (*So?, I don't care*, etc.: turns which deny the relevance of a prior assertion); and (4) Format Tying (partial repeats and reversals: turning a prior assertion against itself). It might be noted that while Goodwin has identified these formats in the course of analysing disputes among children, largely similar procedures have been isolated independently in a study of arguments among adults by Coulter (1990).

Whether disputes in conversations take the aggravated or the mitigated form, however, a number of important features of the speech-exchange system for conversation are centrally involved in enabling disputants to manage the kinds of Action-Opposition sequences typically used to build arguments in informal interaction. First, the turn-taking system for conversation allows oppositional moves to be *adjacently positioned*. That is, speakers are able to 'chain' Action-Opposition sequences together, thereby engaging in what can often take the form of recognisably confrontational spates of 'aggravated disagreement'. Second, oppositional moves characteristically are *directly addressed*: that is, producers of arguable actions are treated as personally responsible for those actions, and opposers correspondingly oppose them personally and (depending on how mitigated the disagreement sequence is) more or less directly. A third important point is that, in conversation, which of the participants in a dispute is occupying which argumentational role at any given moment (e.g., accuser/defendant, asserter/challenger, etc.) is a *locally managed matter*. Unlike in many types of institutionally situated disputation (as we see in the next section), speakers are not constrained in terms of the types of actions they produce within a turn, or the type of turn-format (e.g., either a

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question, or an answer) they are required to use to get that action done.

All these features are in turn related to a fourth feature, which we will see is of major significance in accounting for the differences between practices for managing disputes in conversation and in institutional interaction. This is that, in conversation, participants in an argument are not constrained in terms of whether or not they can express a *personal opinion* on the matter under dispute, or the degree of explicitness with which their personal opinions can be expressed. Indeed the exchange of unveiled personal opinions within the framework of Action-Opposition sequences may itself represent at least a partial definition of what argument in conversation *is*. As Coulter (1990:185) puts it: 'An argument, as it arises in conversation, characteristically comprises two or more disputants articulating adversary positions (or "theses") with respect to some topic'.<sup>4</sup> And indeed, in the two main argument segments discussed in this section, the relatively unconstrained exchange of adversary positions on a topic is an evident feature (i.e., in Al and Stan's argument there are unveiled exchanges of opinion about the qualities of marijuana and the characteristics of marijuana users; in Gene and Maggie's dispute each one expresses, albeit in mitigated form, their opinion of the state of Gene's marriage). However, as we will see below, in many forms of institutional disputation, there operate specific constraints on the rights of different participants to express a personal opinion on given matters; and the orientation to these constraints by participants represents a major means by which the 'institutionality' of those forms of discourse is sustained and ongoingly reproduced.

In sum, arguments in conversation can be described as emergent, locally managed disputatious sequences of talk characterised by the relatively unconstrained exchange of opinion, challenge, accusation and counter-accusation, etc., between speakers. In the next section we turn to look at how disputes in various institutional contexts manifest systematic differences from this conversational model on each of the parameters outlined.

**Comparative approaches to the analysis of disputing in institutional contexts**

A number of researchers working within the CA perspective have analysed the sequential management of disputes in various 'institutional' settings such as courtrooms (particularly during cross-examination) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1985), mediation hearings (Garcia, 1991) and broadcast news interviews (Greatbatch, 1992). These analyses have taken a strongly comparative approach to the study of institutional discourse, based on Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) original proposal that mundane conversational turn-taking procedures represent a 'benchmark' against which more formal, institutional or ceremonial forms of talk may be recognised (by members as well as analysts). As Drew and Heritage (1992b:19) put it: 'Explicit within this perspective is the view that other "institutional" forms of interaction will show systematic variations and restrictions on activities and their design relative to ordinary conversation.' And indeed, a basic finding of these studies is that across the contexts mentioned - which represent some of the principal institutionalised sites for the management of conflict through talk in modern Western culture - the interactional organisation of disputing is systematically differentiated from that typical of informal conversation on each of the parameters outlined in the previous section: namely, (i) the sequential positioning of oppositional turns; (ii) the mode of address of oppositional turns; (iii) the negotiation of speaker roles in terms of the type of turn (or turn format) to be used; and (iv) the distribution of rights to express a personal opinion on the matter under dispute.

In the comparative approach, it is the third of these parameters - that of speaker role/turn format - that is at the root of the 'distinctiveness' of disputation in institutional settings. Conversation analysts have repeatedly observed that interaction in legal settings, as well as that which occurs in certain interview contexts, exhibits its formal and nonconversational character principally through its organisation in terms of what Atkinson and Drew (1979) called *turn-type preallocation* (cf. on courtroom

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examination, Drew, 1985, 1992; on news interviews, Clayman, 1987, 1988; Greatbatch, 1986, 1988; and on questions and answers in institutional discourse generally, Drew and Heritage, 1992b). That is, both in courtroom examination, and in news interviews,<sup>5</sup> speakers incumbent in particular institutional roles (counsel/witness, interviewer/interviewee) are normatively restricted to the production of specific, predetermined speech activities. At the grossest level what this means is that one party (counsel/interviewer) is restricted to the activity of asking questions, while the other (witness/interviewee) is restricted to that of answering those questions. The turn-taking procedures in these kinds of contexts thus recognisably differ from those in conversation by virtue of the systematic restrictions they place on options for participation by different speakers.

The question/answer turn-type preallocation format is, however, only a minimal characterisation of the speech-exchange system through which interaction in courtroom examination and broadcast news interviews is managed. As Atkinson and Drew (1979:68-76; cf. Drew, 1992:477; Clayman, 1988, 1992; Buttny, *forth*) point out, any of a range of actions may be done in the turns taken by incumbents of these different institutional roles: but those actions are required to be done in the *format* either of a question or an answer. In other words, 'although the types of turns are preallocated between the participants, the content - and particularly the activities - achieved in those turns are left to be interactionally managed by participants on a local turn-by-turn basis' (Drew, 1992:477).

But at the same time, a further normative constraint operates in both of these settings with respect to the distribution of rights to express a personal opinion on matters under debate. In both settings, those incumbent in the role of 'questioner' (i.e. counsel/interviewer) are not accorded normal rights to take up a stance on their own behalf with respect to an issue during the question-answer session. Rather, their task is to elicit the 'stance' (in the sense of 'account' as well as 'opinion') of the person being questioned, but to do so at least technically without bias or prejudice. This feature is related to the fact that both courtroom and broadcast news discourse are

designed to be attended to principally by overhearing, but non-participating, audiences - the jury (and in a slightly different sense the judge) in a court of law,<sup>6</sup> and the public in broadcast news (Heritage, 1985). For different reasons, in each case the overhearing audience is supposed to draw inferences and make judgements about the one being questioned (or at least to be allowed to do so) without being unduly influenced by the actions and opinions of the questioner. There are, then, in fact, significant normative constraints on the *content* of questioners' turns, in as much as a questioner's turn should not be hearable as putting forward a personal opinion on the matter under discussion; as well as on the format such turns should take, in these institutional contexts.

These constraints have a range of consequences for the organisation of conflictual talk as it arises in these settings.

First, for those occupying the status of 'questioner', the fact that disputatious activities such as issuing challenges or accusations or imputing blame to their interlocutors have to be done within the format of turns minimally recognisable as questions means that various 'embedding' strategies are employed to accomplish on an indirect or implicit level what, in conversation, a speaker may elect to do directly or straightforwardly.<sup>7</sup> Thus for example, in news interviews, as a number of studies have shown (Clayman, 1988, 1992; Pomerantz, 1988/9; Buttny, *frth*), interviewers can produce talk that is critical and challenging towards interviewees by such strategies as embedding critical or evaluative statements within questions, citing 'the facts' in such a way as to point up their contrastive relationship with an interviewee's statement, or attributing opposing points of view to others and offering them for comment. Such strategies, formatted within an overall 'questioning' framework, enable interviewers to put forward critical stances, and solicit accounts from interviewees (Buttny, *frth*), while continuing to adhere to the journalist's norm of neutrality (Clayman, 1988).

In a slightly different vein, Pomerantz (1988/9), in her study of combative interviewing techniques, shows how the common practice in broadcasting of providing 'background features' to lead into interviews with major public figures can be a place in which indirect

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strategies are deployed to 'engender scepticism' in the audience about the credibility of an interviewee. One strategy is that of 'juxtaposing a report of a statement with a report of a contrary actuality...[which] may be used to engender scepticism of the statement-maker's credibility' (1988/9:308). Another is to show 'visual displays of observably weak and/or suspect statements' (1988/9:309); this of course relying on the kinds of behavioural cues conventionally used by members of the culture to make judgements about a statement-maker's credibility. A third device is to present contradictory statements made on different occasions by the same speaker. And a fourth is to 'report a fact that is incongruous with the version of events asserted in a statement' (1988/9:310). By means of these kinds of devices journalists are able to encourage the audience to make particular judgements about an interviewee, but without putting forward those judgements on their own behalf or moving outside the questioning or 'investigative' mode of journalistic discourse.

Another variety of embedding strategies is discussed in Atkinson and Drew's (1979: especially Chs. 4 and 5) study of the 'adversarial' cross-examination procedures of British law courts. In this setting a central task of counsel, as the representative of a 'side' in the case on trial, is to discredit an opponent's position and build support for a client's (see also Drew, 1978, 1990, 1992). Since the only information counsel have to work with in achieving this is that introduced in the testimony of witnesses - which in turn is produced by witnesses in the shape of responses to questions put to them by counsel - then a central way in which counsel may imply a challenge or blame-ascription is by 'manag[ing] the production of descriptions in the question-answer sequences so as to be able...to formulate the upshot of those descriptions in such a way as to propose a judgement about the witness's action' (Atkinson and Drew, 1979:134). As is shown in Drew's (1990, 1992) analyses of the questioning strategies of counsel, this involves them in using many similar kinds of techniques to those identified by Pomerantz (1988/9) in the context of broadcast news interviews.<sup>8</sup>

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These studies also raise further consequences of the question-answer format for the management of disputatious talk in these settings. For instance, speakers incumbent in the role of 'answerer' (i.e., witnesses and interviewees) will of course be sensitive to the impugnant undertones of many of the questions put to them, and will deploy strategies of their own to frame their answers as denials, rebuttals, accounts, and so forth. In short, the communicative processes of *implication* and *inference* are routinely heightened in salience for conflict talk as it occurs in courtroom and news interview contexts (cf. Levinson, 1992).

In this regard, Atkinson and Drew (1979: Ch. 5; cf. Drew, 1992) offer a detailed analysis of how witnesses undergoing cross-examination in court regularly produce defence-type components, justifications, excuses or rebuttals, *prior* to the production of accusations or other impugnant actions on the part of counsel. Accounting for this, they observe that

because of the preallocation system for examination, witnesses cannot be assured of opportunities to give explanations for their actions, given that they have no control over the production of 'why...' questions. Nor may they have the chance to rebut or defend themselves against some charge concerning the inadequacy or inappropriateness of their action, given that counsel may not go on to state the 'charge' overtly but leave hearers to 'draw their conclusions' about the blameworthiness of the witness' actions. Hence witnesses may give answers to 'why' questions apparently prematurely (before they have been asked) so as to ensure that they do get to give their reasons for actions - and thereby possibly rebut anticipated charges - despite whatever intentions counsel may have. (Atkinson and Drew, 1979:187)

Witnesses in short can display an orientation to a 'hidden agenda' property in counsel's questions, that agenda representing an implicit 'position' operating as the indirect but detectable motivation lying behind strategies of questioning.<sup>9</sup>

Further ways in which the specialised speech-exchange systems characteristic of certain forms of institutional discourse impact on the management of disputes have to do with the way in which in some settings, normative constraints operate with the result that oppositional turns taken by disputants may be neither directly



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addressed, nor adjacently positioned. Garcia (1991), in a study of mediation hearings in a small claims court, and Greatbatch (1992) in an analysis of disagreements among interviewees in broadcast news interviews involving a 'panel' of variously affiliated participants, have each described systematic features of the differential organisation of these institutional disputes in comparison with conversation.

In both these cases disagreements are an intrinsic feature of the setting, in the sense that, in Garcia's (1991) study for instance, the official task of the mediator is to hear and arbitrate between the two sides in a dispute which arose in circumstances external to the mediation hearing, the details of which are now being recounted in order that an independent judgement can be passed. In a similar sense, Greatbatch (1992) notes that in panel interviews, interviewees are selected precisely on the basis of their differing standpoints on issues, based for instance on their different party political affiliations. Panel formats thus 'allow interviewers to facilitate combative interaction through the airing of disagreements between the interviewees themselves' (Greatbatch, 1992:272).

However the fact that in both cases there is a specialised distribution of speaker roles operating leads to the disputes taking distinctive forms. In both settings an institutional agent (the arbitrator in Garcia's study, the interviewer in Greatbatch's) is accorded a central 'mediating' role, with two main consequences. First, in both mediation hearings and panel interviews a normative feature of the organisation of turns is that the institutional agent is allocated the task of eliciting, through the use of questions, the position or version of events supported by each antagonist. This means that oppositional turns in a dispute are generally not adjacently positioned, since each side's opportunity to put forward their case follows upon an intervening question from the arbitrator/interviewer.

This has the further consequence that opposing sides in a dispute tend not to address their disagreements directly to each other but instead to address their differing versions of events to the institutional agent as a third party. As Garcia (1991) points out,

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in mediation hearings these features are oriented to as sanctionable norms, in that disputants who shift their mode of discourse into direct person-to-person address will be rebuked by the arbitrator and required to readopt the institutionalised footing of addressing the arbitrator and referring to their codisputant in the third person. In the case of panel interviews, the convention is less stringently followed: interviewers may allow interviewees to address each other directly with oppositional turns for short periods of time, although as Greatbatch (1992) shows, there are various ways in which the interviewer retains overall control of the course of the dispute, and at any point s/he may seek to reestablish the 'mediated' format.

In both of these studies, then, disputatious talk taking place in an institutional setting is additionally differentiated from conversational argument on the parameters of adjacent positioning and direct address of oppositional turns. It is significant to note, finally, that both studies reveal ways in which disputants in these institutional settings escalate their arguments with one another: and these ways involve not simply a movement out of the institutional framework within which oppositional turns are neither adjacently positioned nor directly addressed, but importantly, a shift *into* the more 'conversational' framework in which disagreements are typified by both adjacent positioning, and direct address, of oppositional utterances.

To summarise, in this section I have examined a number of studies couched within the CA perspective which have sought to show some ways in which disputes in institutional settings involve 'specific and significant narrowings and respecifications of the range of options that are operative in conversational interaction' (Heritage, 1989:34). We have seen some of the ways in which systematic differences in the form of conflict talk in institutional settings in comparison to that in conversational interaction emerge from conventional constraints on the organisation of that discourse in terms of the four basic parameters outlined in the previous section: those of turn-order, address mode, local negotiation of

speaker roles, and the distribution of rights to express a personal opinion.

In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to the corpus of talk radio data with which we are centrally concerned in the present study. Beginning again from the standpoint of the four parameters, I try to show that while conflict talk on talk radio exhibits features of institutional discourse, at the same time it manifests many of the features associated with arguments in conversation, thus appearing as a kind of 'intermediate' case in terms of the distinctions outlined in the discussion so far.<sup>10</sup> Before looking at the data, however, it is necessary to make some further comments on the specific sense in which the term 'institutional discourse' is to be comprehended in the case of talk radio.

#### **'Non-formal' institutional interaction**

Most of the studies discussed in the last section dealt with the management of conflict talk in a particular type of institutional setting: one in which interaction is conducted within the constraints imposed by conventionalised, systematically distinctive forms of turn-taking, and related differential distributions of particular rights and obligations between participants - in Atkinson and Drew's (1979) term, 'turn-type preallocation'. As we noted in Chapter 1, this form of institutional interaction has been described by Heritage and Greatbatch (1991; cf. Drew and Heritage, 1992b) as 'formal' institutional discourse, since 'the institutional character of the interaction is embodied first and foremost in its *form* - most notably in turn-taking systems which depart substantially from the way in which turn-taking is managed in conversation and which are perceivedly "formal" in character' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:95; on the 'perceivedly formal' character of institutional talk, cf. Atkinson, 1982).

However, such 'formal' settings are comparatively rare: the category principally incorporates the court in session, the news interview, and some of the more 'traditional' pedagogic environments

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(Sinclair and Couthard, 1975; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979). More common are what Heritage and Greatbatch refer to as 'non-formal' settings for institutional interaction, 'commonly occurring in medical, psychiatric, social service, business and related environments' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:97). In such settings, much less uniformity in the patterning of conduct is evident. The interaction may be directed more or less explicitly towards carrying out 'official' tasks such as diagnosing illness (Heath, 1992), or making decisions about clients' welfare needs (Heritage and Sefi, 1992; Bergmann, 1992), and there may be 'aggregative asymmetries in the patterning of activities between role incumbents (e.g., as between doctors and patients in the asking, and answering, of questions in private consultations...)' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:97). But typically these official tasks and activities are managed within turn-taking frameworks allowing for considerable variation, improvisation and negotiation in terms of the participation status or 'footing' (Goffman, 1981b) adopted by professional and 'lay' participants alike.

The kind of institutional interaction found on talk radio falls under this 'non-formal' heading because, as will become clear later in this and in subsequent chapters, no systematic preallocation of turn-types as between callers and hosts operates ubiquitously to constrain the conduct of interaction as calls proceed. Instead, calls are characterised by a relative freedom of turn-exchange throughout much of their course. In short, interaction between callers and hosts is characterised by the kind of 'quasi-conversational' mode of turn-taking (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:98) currently being identified in a whole variety of non-formal institutional interactions (see especially the set of papers collected in Drew and Heritage, 1992a). As Heritage and Greatbatch (1991:98) succinctly put it: 'When considered in turn-taking terms at least, the boundaries between [non-formal] forms of institutional talk and ordinary conversation can appear permeable and uncertain.'

It is important to recognise the subtlety which Heritage and Greatbatch are building into their use of the term *quasi-conversational* here. What they are arguing is *not* that there are no

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discernible differences between turn-taking procedures in non-formal institutional interaction and in conversation. Rather, the suggestion is that within the terms of the comparative perspective adopted by conversation-analytic research, the 'permeability and uncertainty' of the boundaries between these two general frameworks for interaction often makes those boundaries very difficult to identify in principled analytical terms. The 'aggregative asymmetries' are not provided for on the basis of predetermined (and normatively sanctionable) constraints on participation opportunities for particular speakers, but rather seem to 'emerge' out of patterns of interaction which the participants 'settle into' on the basis of some tacit mutual orientation to specific activities attaching to their particular complementary role incumbencies within the situation.

Thus, Frankel (1984, 1990) for instance, has tried to show how it is that in physician-patient consultations, while there is no institutionally based constraint against patients initiating topically disjunctive questions, overwhelmingly it is the case that topics and questions are initiated by physicians and not by patients. Frankel's analyses show that this asymmetry emerges as a result of a tacitly negotiated state of affairs within the interview by which not only do physicians routinely open up restricted participation opportunities for patients through asking particular types of information-seeking questions, but also patients themselves orient to and reproduce an asymmetrical distribution of participation rights by electing to enter new information onto the floor largely in the form of second components tagged onto responses to physicians' questions, thereby 'ensur[ing] that the additional information, if it is going to be dealt with, will be handled via a physician-initiated obligation package, i.e., question-answer sequence' (Frankel, 1984:164).''

In a similar vein, Heath (1992) shows how in the course of consultations patients tacitly orient to and reproduce an asymmetrical distribution of participation statuses by systematically withholding responses to physicians' announcements of their diagnoses. The announcement of diagnosis in the general practice consultation amounts to an 'informing', passed from the 'expert' standpoint of the physician to the patient, about some aspect of the

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patient's physical condition. And while there is no institutionalised constraint discouraging patients from producing substantive responses to these informings, Heath shows that routinely patients react to the announcement of diagnosis either with silence or else by producing a downward-intoned grunt or *Yeh*. These withholdings of response occur even in cases where 'the doctor provides an opportunity for the patient to respond to the informing by not only delivering the diagnostic information within a distinct utterance or turn at talk, but also by leaving a gap following the medical assessment in which the patient has an extended possibility to reply' (Heath, 1992:240). Heath suggests that through this practice patients tacitly act to sustain the asymmetrical dimensions of physician-patient interactions by ceding control over the course of the encounter to the physician.

Slightly more radically, perhaps, Perakyla (1990) in his investigation of 'quasi-conversational' turn-taking in counselling sessions for AIDS patients and their families, suggests that the emergent asymmetries in turn-taking found in his data can be accounted for on the basis of what he calls a *bricolage* arrangement. The uniformities in turn-taking within the counselling session, whereby counsellors ask questions or produce post-response information statements aimed at clients, and clients restrict themselves to responding to counsellors' questions, are again not based on any institutionalised prespecification of turn-types or turn-order. Rather, Perakyla suggests, such uniformities are built up out of local conversational resources 'on the spot' as 'a locally achieved specification [which] counsellors systematically *work towards*...and that clients at least *comply with*' (Perakyla, 1990:164; original emphasis). In achieving this specification through *bricolage* practices, counsellors and clients can be said to be instantiating, in and through ways of talking, their local identities as 'counsellors' and 'clients'.

We will find that a similar approach can be used to account for the emergence of aggregative asymmetries in the management of Action-Opposition sequences between hosts and callers in the context of the talk radio show. In debates and disputes on talk radio, neither hosts nor callers are formally constrained in the range of

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argumentative actions open to them by any kind of normatively based turn-type or turn-order preallocation system. Hosts' turns for instance may consist of a variety of actions, from questions to blame attributions to outright dismissals of callers' claims. And callers, in turn, may take up a range of local speaking roles, from responding to hosts' questioning challenges, to providing justifications for assertions subjected to scepticism, through to engaging in direct exchange and return sequences by countering hosts' accusations with reciprocal accusations of their own.

Yet there are also ways in which in their production of these types of turns, hosts and callers are mutually situating themselves within a loosely asymmetrical framework of participatory possibilities. In the course of calls an aggregative asymmetry emerges in the way in which hosts tend to produce more initiatory actions such as questions and challenges, and callers act largely in response to these initiatives. One of the questions with which we will be centrally concerned in the chapters that follow is that of how the very structural organisation of calls as interactional encounters provides an initial informal framework within which this kind of asymmetrical distribution of participatory possibilities can easily and rapidly be 'settled into'.

This latter point raises a further issue mentioned by Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) concerning how the 'institutionality' of non-formal institutional encounters may be analysed. Studies of interaction in such settings suggest that 'systematic aspects of the *organisation of sequences*...having to do with such matters as the opening and closing of encounters, [and] with the ways in which information is requested, delivered and received...emerge as facets of the ways in which the "institutionality" of such encounters is managed' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991:98; my emphasis). In this regard, we will find that the 'institutionality' of talk radio discourse also emerges in part from the way in which the necessary accomplishment of various institutional tasks operates to shape the course of the interaction at certain points. For instance, the host, in as much as he indeed acts as the show's 'host', is allotted the official task of 'opening up' the call; and there is a conventional

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procedure through which that is done, in which the host introduces and greets the caller in one turn and the caller, in the next turn, engages in the task of proffering an opinion on his or her chosen topic (projecting an 'agenda' for the call). It turns out that, at this particular stage of the call, normative sanctions can be deployed against the caller if s/he fails to behave appropriately in terms of this conventional opening procedure.

On a slightly different level, it is again overwhelmingly the host who decides at what point the call will be terminated; and also, largely, precisely what will be preserved or packaged as the 'outcome' of the debate or dispute carried on during the call. This regularity becomes especially interesting when we consider that it is not *necessarily* the host who has to take on the task of terminating calls. Conceivably, given the lack of a systematic preallocation of turn-types in talk radio discourse, callers could initiate call closings themselves. The fact that they ordinarily do not do so (in approximately 100 calls making up the data corpus for the study, only one unequivocal case of a caller initiating a call closing has been found) itself may become treatable as an aspect of the 'locally achieved specifications' in which the non-formal asymmetries of talk radio discourse are based (although whether there may in fact be another way of accounting for this regularity is a question I take up in Chapter 7).

With all this in mind, then, we can turn now to a first, relatively general consideration of the ways in which the 'quasi-conversational' interactional mode is operative in the management of spates of conflict talk in the talk radio context.

### **Foregrounding opposition: Aspects of conflict talk on talk radio**

Using our four parameters of opposition in conflict talk we can summarise the 'intermediate' status of talk radio disputation as between conversation and 'formal' institutional interaction along the following lines.



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(1) As in conversation, on talk radio oppositional turns are not only adjacently positioned, but may freely take aggravated or mitigated forms.

The following two extracts illustrate hosts' use of the mitigated form of adjacently positioned opposition. Notice in both cases the use of the mitigating preference feature represented by 'agreement-prefaced' disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984:78): in (10), 'We::ll, yes but...', and in (11) 'Well maybe- maybe it wa::s but...'.  
(10) [H:30.11.88:3:1] (Caller is referring to 'senile' judges.)

Caller: I- I think, .h a ma:n of that a:ge, .h it's obvious 'is brain doesn't function as well, .hh as a man say hal:f 'is age.

→ Host: We::ll, yes but I'm frequently tol::d and I frequently notice, that er some of these, .hh y'know so call:ed er:m slo:w thinking or, .h u-brain defective people, .ph erm:, actually have a great deal of wisdom and er, .h sharp lod- logic and knowledge...[so it isn't necessarily right to accuse them of senility]

(11) [H:30.11.88:5:2] (Caller is complaining about a TV programme about the death of a suspect in police custody.)

Caller: And e:r th- (.) they didn' address the actual .p suh much the actual events o:r what led up to 'em or how many- people wen' in:tuh the shop with 'im whether the man wuz intimida:ted whether 'e tried to es:cape, .hhh and e- i'wuz just an a:nti police- (.) it was a police bashin' exercise (far as I )

→ Host: [Well maybe- maybe it wa::s but I mean frum what you:'ve told me I: must admit I would be a bit erm, .hhh tuh say: the least shocked by::, somebody being killed under those circumstances.

By contrast, in the next two excerpts, hosts and callers engage in exchanges of oppositional turns in which modulating factors are largely absent. In (12), among the ways in which opposition is foregrounded are the repeated use of turn-initial polarity terms, for instance 'No (there isn't)' (arrows 2); and other forms of negation, substitution and inversion such as the host's counter to the caller's initial assertion that 'there's no one voice fuh the blacks in Africa': i.e., 'There's no one voice fuh the whites either' (arrow 1).

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(12) [H:23.1.89:10:31]

- Caller: Look. (0.8) You know yihsel:f that there's nɔ one pa- there's no one voice fuh the blacks in Africa is the:re. (.) .ph<sup>h</sup>
- 1→ Host: [Uer there's nɔ [on:e voice fuh]  
Caller: [i- if the]=
- 1→ Host: =[the white- [There's no one voi]ce fuh the whites=  
Caller: [A: N C, [I beg yuh pa--]  
Host: =either.=  
Caller: =W'there is at the moment, [there's the gover]nment=  
2→ Host: [No there isn't,]  
Caller: =uv South [Africa.  
2→ Host: [No there isn't.
- (0.6)
- Caller: Oh there's nɔ government in South Affrica.  
2→ Host: [Nɔ, there is  
not one voice I'm telling you, .hh that there are  
a lot of parties,  
Caller: [There's opinions in that voice  
diff'rent opinions in the voice but there is one  
authority there...

In (13), the foregrounding of opposition is achieved again in a sequence in which, beginning with the caller's 'But you don't know do you' (arrow 1), caller and host confront one another with reciprocal accusations about the other's lack of knowledge in respect of the issue under dispute: namely, what happened to the money from ticket sales for an exclusive reception in honour of the Princess of Wales on a visit to the USA (arrows 2, 3 and 4):

(13) [H:2.2.89:3:21]

- Host: what do you think it's going to.  
Caller: I've no- 'aven't a clu:e.  
(.)  
Host: E:r, well if you haven't a clu:e, you might-  
Caller: [Ye:h well=  
Host: [you- you might've-]  
Caller: =I mean where d'you [think it's going] to.  
Host: I think it's going to charity.  
1→ Caller: di-But you don't know do you.  
Host: Ehm I'm almost su:re.  
(.)  
Caller: We:ll, [(al-)  
2→ Host: [But you had nɔ idea.  
Caller: Nɔ I- well I [I'm being honest. ]  
Host: [And you came to a] con-=  
3→ Caller: =[You don't] know ei: [ther.  
4→ Host: [You had yi-] [You came to a conclusion

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wuthahdenny- without any idea and without even taking it into consideration.

Here we find an aggravated opposition sequence which develops in a way that is reminiscent of the conversational dispute about the relative merits and demerits of marijuana found in data excerpts (1) and (9), discussed earlier. We might note especially the similarities between the exchanges marked by arrows 2, 3 and 4 in (13) and that found in (9):

(9) [Adato:7:17-18]

- Al:           The average marijuana smoker, varies- eh uses marijuana maybe once, a week or once every two weeks something like that.
- Stan:           └Yer talkin' off the top a' yer head cuz you don't know anything about it.
- Al:            Yeh I know a good deal about it.

In both cases opposition between speakers is marked by the exchange of accusations and counters to accusations of a lack of *knowledge* about the topic under dispute.

In sum, then, it is possible for argument sequences on talk radio, within an adjacent-positioning turn order, to shift relatively freely between mitigated and aggravated opposition formats.

(2) Again, as in conversation, on talk radio oppositional turns characteristically are directly addressed. And while hosts may on occasion use footing shifts in a similar way to interviewers in broadcast news (Clayman, 1992), they may equally freely engage in outright accusation, blame ascription, negation, and so on.

Extract (14) shows the host using the 'professional interviewer's' technique of shifting footing (Clayman, 1992) so as to disclaim sole authorship for a position, by attributing that position to a third party. Here the caller is complaining about the Government's proposal to increase the state pensions allowance. In response to her assertion that 'We [pensioners] 're havin' a very very hard struggle', the host begins to articulate the counter-position that 'some pensioners in fact are doing rather better than they've ever done before'. Notice, however, that he interrupts himself in the

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course of this turn in order to redistribute authorship of this position to 'some people including Nigel Lawson the Cha:ncellor':

(14) [G:26.11.88:2:3]

Caller: We're havin' a very very hard struggle at the present moment.

(0.5)

Host: But what- w- what- what is your reply: tuh the fact that, made by some people including Nigel Lawson the Cha:ncellor, .hh that some pensioners in fact are doing rather better than they've ever done befɔ:re.

(0.3)

Caller: Yes but it's the poorer ones that're feeling the pin:ch,...

The host's use here of a 'formal' strategy for presenting an alternative position, by which opposition between himself and the caller is modulated, can be contrasted with the way in which in the following extract the host foregrounds opposition by, for instance, (a) repeatedly responding to the caller's claims with overt expressions of disbelief ('No I don't believe that' (arrows 1)); and (b) undermining the caller's attempt to justify his claims by reference to his being 'in the trade akchully', with the overtly dismissive 'I don't care what you're in:' (arrow 2).

(15) [H:2.2.89:12:2-3] (Re. dogs fouling public walkways.)

Host: This means that they never go in a diff'rent pla:ce doesn' it.

(0.6)

Caller: .thh Er they might go in: two er three places but, (.) e::r, w-when thee::, (.) u-deposit a er- er large mess, it's usually:

1→ Host: [Mm. .h No I do:in't- I don't believe that,=but you tell me about this- this product? What is it ca:lled and what does it [do?

Caller: [Yes, (.) It is- it is true, .h er: [m:,

1→ Host: [No I don't believe it's true becuz otherwise they'd go duh the same place ev'ry time.=Logic is not on your si:de.

(.)

Caller: (hn) E:r, well I'm in the tra:de ak(h)chully(h-hh)

2→ Host: [ I don't care what you're in:, logi[c is ] not on=

Caller: [Q:h.]

Host: =your si:de.

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Thus another characteristic feature of conflict talk on talk radio is the way in which the host can shift the mode of his discourse between 'formal' and 'informal' registers, the latter mode often involving directly formulated accusations and opposition-foregrounding negations.

(3) All this suggests then that on talk radio, the local negotiation of speaker roles within a spate of conflict talk is far freer than in formal types of institutional interaction. Hosts, as 'institutional agents', are not constrained in the range of argumentative actions open to them by the kind of turn-type preallocation system we discussed in relation to courtroom and news interview interaction. It is not the case, for instance, that disputes over positions on talk radio proceed exclusively by means of chained series of question-answer sequences. Hosts' turns, we have seen, may consist of a variety of actions, from questions to blame attributions to outright dismissals of callers' claims. And callers, in turn, may take up a range of local speaking roles, from responding to hosts' questioning challenges, to providing justifications for assertions subjected to scepticism, through to engaging in direct exchange and return sequences by countering hosts' accusations with reciprocal accusations of their own.

However, within this framework of relative freedom in local speaking roles, there does emerge a form of aggregative asymmetry in respect of the distribution between hosts and callers of Oppositional moves such as challenges to arguable Actions. Although as we have seen (for instance in extract 13) callers may well issue challenges to arguable Actions on the part of hosts, in general within the format of argumentative Action-Opposition sequences found in our data it is far more frequently the case that hosts produce aggressive Opposition moves to Actions construed as arguable on the part of callers, than vice versa. As we will see in more detail in later chapters, there is a particular structural basis for this aggregative asymmetry. In 'open line' broadcasts such as the one from which the current data collection was drawn, it is the caller's task at the beginning of their call to offer an *opinion* on some issue of the day

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(Hutchby, 1991). In other words it is the caller rather than the host who sets the initial agenda for the call. As a result of this, the arguments which ensue tend to be ones in which the host is disagreeing with, or challenging, or rebutting the caller's stated opinion, thus placing the caller in a defensive position.

One upshot of this is that, while the caller indeed sets the *initial* agenda for the call, the host may gain the initiative, and so come to exert a measure of control over the call's agenda, by using particular types of Oppositional moves. For instance, the host is always in a position to argue with the caller by offering challenges to the 'agenda-relatedness' of the caller's assertions in the form of what M.H. Goodwin (1990) termed 'disclaimers': utterances such as *So?* or *What's that got to do with it?* which deny the relevance of an interlocutor's remark.

(16) [H:21.11.88:6:1]

Caller: I: have got three appeals letters here this week. (0.4) All a:skin' fo:r dona:tions. (0.2) .hh Two: frum tho:se that I: always contribute to anywa:y,

Host: Yes?

Caller: .hh But I expect to get a lot mo:re.

→ Host: Sq?

Caller: .h Now the point is there is a limit to ( )

→ Host: [What's that got tuh do- what's that got tuh do with telethons though.

Caller: hh Because telethons...

(17) [H:21.11.88:11:1]

Caller: When you look at e:r the childcare facilities in this country, .hh we're very very low:, (.) e-on the league table in Europe of (.) yihknow if you try tuh get a child into a nursery it's very difficult in this country. .hh An' in fact it's getting worse.=

→ Host: =What's that got tuh do with it.

Caller: .phh Well I think whu- what 'at's gotta d-dq with it is...

In these cases the host, in challenging the connectedness of callers' remarks to the agendas they themselves have introduced at the start of their calls, is able effectively to 'hijack' strategic control over the field of relevancies locally operative for that agenda.

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Another way in which hosts may exert control over the agenda for the call is by selectively 'formulating' (Heritage, 1985) the gist or upshot of callers' remarks. It is a common finding in studies of institutional discourse that 'institutional incumbents (doctors, teachers, interviewers, family social workers, etc.) may strategically direct the talk through such means as their capacity to change topics and their selective formulations, in their "next questions", of the salient points in the prior answers' (Drew and Heritage, 1992b:49; cf. Fisher and Todd, 1983; Davis, 1988). On talk radio, hosts can deploy the strategy of selectively formulating the upshot of callers' claims to usurp control over the agenda for the call.

In the next excerpt, the host uses two strategically linked proposals of upshot to contentiously 'reconstruct' the position being advanced by the caller. The caller has criticised the 'contradictions' inherent in 'telethon' charity events, which, while rhetorically encouraging wider concern with social problems, in fact, the caller claims, promote a passive altruism and exacerbate the 'separateness' between donor and donee.

(18) [H:21.11.88:11:3]

- Caller: But e:r, I- I think we should be wor:king at  
breaking down that separateness I [think] these
- Host: [How?] (.)
- Caller: these telethons actually increase it.
- Host: Well, what you're saying is that charity does.
- Caller: .h Charity do:es, ye[:s I mean- ]
- Host: [Okay we- so you] 're (. ) so  
you're going back tuh that original argument we  
shouldn't have charity.
- Caller: Well, ↑n<sub>o</sub> I um: I wouldn't go that fa:r, what I  
would like to [see is-
- Host: [Well how far are you going then.
- Caller: Well I: would- What I would like tuh see...

At the first arrow we can see the host inferentially elaborating the caller's argument, and proposing that its field of relevance embraces charities in general, and not just telethons as one particular type of charitable endeavour. Although the caller has not so far made any such generalisation himself, he in fact assents to the elaborative proposal of the host in the next turn; and this provides the host, in

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turn, with resources for reformulating the agenda of the caller's argument, and relating it to a position argued for by a prior caller, which the host here describes as 'that original argument we shouldn't have charity'. We see that the caller rejects this further inferential elaboration, with 'no I um: I wouldn't go that far'. But the significant point is that the host, using the fact that the call is at least on one level about what the caller 'thinks' about a given issue, is able to rely on his capacity to then formulate the gist or upshot of the caller's remarks to issue challenges to the caller over the 'underlying' agenda at work in the caller's argument.

Further aspects of this kind of 'struggle' to define the relevance-boundaries of a call's agenda can be seen in the following extract. Here the caller is complaining about the fact that a member of the Royal Family on a visit to the USA is staying in a hotel costing 'a thousand pounds a night', and is then going 'tuh visit homeless peopu:l', a state of affairs which the caller has described as 'obscene'. The host is maintaining that the imputation of hypocrisy here is ill-founded in as much as the Princess' visit is tied in with charitable activities.

(19) [H:2.2.89:3:3]

- Caller: but I still think a thousand pounds a night at a hotel, .hhh and the fact that she's going on tuh visit homeless peopu:l,
- Host: [Where should sh- where should she: be staying in New York.  
(0.2)
- Caller: We:ll u-th- at a cheaper place I don't think the  
→ money- .h WE're paying that money fuh her to stay there an' I: think it's 'obscene.
- Host: Well we're not actually paying  
the the th' money,]
- Caller: [Well who:'s paying for-] it.
- Host: Well thee:: erm I imagine thuh the:r the money  
the Royal Family has .h er is paying for it,  
.h or indeed it may be paid for by somebuddy else  
→ .hh erm but .h yihknow if the: Princess of Wales  
lives in: (.) a palace in this country, w-w-why do  
you think she should not live in something which is  
(.) comparable, .hh when she's visiting New York?
- Caller: Well I should think she could find something  
comparable that- that- or- e-it could be fou:nd for  
her that doesn't cost that money.



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It appears that the caller, in the first arrowed turn, responds to the host's hostile questioning (which has been carried on across a series of exchanges prior to the beginning of the extract) by attempting to 'shift' the relevance-boundaries of her agenda. From the question of the price of the hotel suite, she switches to the perhaps more powerful issue of the ultimate responsibility of the taxpayer for footing the bill: 'WE're paying that money fuh her to stay there'. The host responds by opposing this assertion: 'Well we're nqt actually paying thee...money'; to which the caller in turn responds by herself moving onto the offensive and producing a hostile challenge, 'Well whq:'s paying for it' (second arrow).

At this stage, then, we find that the local roles of 'challenger' and 'defender' of a position have been inverted: the host, from being in 'challenger' role, has been swung around into the role of 'defender' and is being required to account for his position that the taxpayer is *not* ultimately liable for the Princess' hotel bill. However this inversion turns out to be only temporary, for in his next turn the host not only produces a response to the caller's hostile challenge, but subsequently goes on (third arrow) to produce a next challenge-bearing question of his own: 'but .h yihknow if the: Princess of Wales lives in: a palace in this country, w-w-why do you think she should not live in something which is comparable .hh when she's visiting New York?' With this question the host both (a) reestablishes the agenda to which his earlier question, in the second turn of the extract, had been addressed; and (b) resituates the caller as the respondent to the host's challenging initiatives, rather than as herself the initiator of challenge-bearing moves.

Thus the caller may 'resist' the host's assaults on her position by attempting to shift the relevance-boundaries of the call's agenda and, perhaps, switch the locally operative roles of challenger and respondent. But the host in turn works towards reestablishing the state of affairs the caller has tried to overturn. And it might be noted, finally, that not only does the host 'work towards' that reestablishment, but the caller at least 'complies with' this, in as much as she refrains from following up her challenge by coming in again at a relevant point in the host's response, for instance after

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he has said 'or indeed it may be paid for by somebuddy else': that is, *prior* to the production, or at least the completion, of his 'reestablishing' return question.

(4) The fourth parameter is perhaps the most significant for our purposes in analysing the 'opinionated discourse' of talk radio, since it relates to the local distribution of rights to express a personal opinion on the matter under discussion. On this dimension we find that hosts, unlike their counterpart institutional agents in the 'formal' settings discussed earlier, do not appear to orient to a constraint by which they refrain from expressing personal opinions. On the contrary, hosts in the talk radio data corpus routinely express their opinions overtly, and indeed use them to build positions which vie with those of callers on issues under dispute.

This is aptly illustrated by the following example, in which the caller has been complaining about 'people who object' to the apartheid regime in South Africa, but who don't appear, in the caller's view, to have the courage of their convictions:

(20) [H:23.1.89:10:1-2]

- Caller: But yihsee, when you a:sk them the question, would they like- democracy:, erm- (.) universal franchi:se one ma:n one vote, tuhmorrow, (.) '.hhh' (0.2) they a:ll seem tuh shift on their feet they're not su:re. .hhh Becuz of course u-j-'d en:d up in chaos yih cou:ldn' (dq=it) y'd'aff t'ave a
- Host: [Well n-ay a-v-d- a:sk m-]=
- Caller: =tra:nsiti:onal period,]
- 1→ Host: [Ask m- Ask m-]e: that question and see what happen:s.
- Caller: Well I mean I- (.) u-w- I know 'ow perverse you are Bri[an.=All ri:ght,]
- Host: [No=no not pe-] not perverse at a:ll.
- Caller: [A'right I'll a:sk you duh question=↑Would you like tuh see it no:w=today=this a:fternoon.
- 2→ Host: .ph N↑i:Q:.  
(0.8)
- Caller: Ri:ght. [(Now I mean 'at's) ri:ght suh then you-]
- Host: [Na- neh- na- 'nat's not- that's not sh-] No: an' I'll- nI'll tell you why. That's not shifting edgily arou:nd, the- the argument, it's very very simple.=yi-=cuz you can't cha:nge anything overnight, .hhh and it's very f:oolish in
- 3→

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4→ Caller: most cases, tuh dɔ i<sup>t</sup>.  
 [ (You) ca:n with a  
 vɔ t e Brian, ]  
 Host: [Whatchu- notchu-]  
 (.)  
 Host: nNɔ you(d)  
 Caller: [Yes you ca:n with a vɔ:te,  
 (.)  
 Host: Na(d)- you ca:n't,  
 (.)  
 Host: [[eir- yi- ]  
 Caller: [If y'ave a p]lebiscite, ]  
 Host: [Nɔ you]=  
 Caller: =yih c'n ch]a:nge things a:fter the plebiscite.=  
 Host: [c'n ma:ke a-]  
 Caller: =Ca:n't you.]  
 Host: [Y o u c'n:] ma:ke a dec:isio:n, (0.3) but to  
 actually: (0.3) carry that qu:t overnight cannot be  
 dɔ:ne.

Throughout this extract we can observe the host emphasising in different ways the partisan nature of his orientation towards the agenda the caller has introduced. For instance, at arrow 1, the host's instruction to the caller to 'Ask me: that question and see what happens' powerfully conveys that the host intends to take up a particular *position* upon being asked the question. And given that the caller has previously described how 'people who object' to the apartheid regime in South Africa 'shift on their feet' when asked a straight question about whether they would like to see a change to 'democracy...universal franchise one man one vote, tuh~~mor~~row', what the host also conveys here, it seems, is that he is most definitely *not* going to 'shift on his feet' when asked that question. In this way his emphatic 'Nɔ:' (arrow 2) in response to the caller's question can be seen as not only an expression of his personal opinion, but partisan in the additional sense that he thereby engages in *aligning* himself with the category of 'people who object' to the South African regime.

Note as well that although the host's response here is in the negative, there is a sense in which it nonetheless *emphasises* his alignment with the category of objectors to the regime: the emphatic way in which the 'Nɔ:' is enunciated demonstrates that he himself is not, as the caller has implied for other members of the category,

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beset with doubts which cause him to 'shift on his feet', but is fully convinced of the correctness of his own point of view.

That point of view is further explicated in the sequence which follows, where we find the host unpacking the simple 'N:Q:' with which he originally responded to the caller and justifying his stance by stating his opinion on the question in straightforward terms: 'cuz you can't change anything overnight, and it's very foolish in most cases, tuh [try] it.' (arrow 3). Subsequent to this the caller begins to argue with this position (arrow 4), and there begins an argumentative Action-Opposition sequence in which the two antagonists dispute on this basic assertion, in an essentially similar way to the disputants Al and Stan in the conversational extracts discussed earlier.

In sum, then, far from orienting to a constraint by which they refrain from expressing personal opinions, hosts, as the institutional agents in the talk radio context, routinely express their opinions as they engage in dispute with the caller, thus bringing into talk radio arguments the kind of exchanges of unveiled personal positions earlier identified as characteristic of arguments in conversation and often, because of normative constraints on the rights of institutional agents in many settings to express an outright position, missing from disputes in institutional contexts.

In a sense, this fourth parameter is the most significant for the purposes of the present study. For it is this feature of the relatively free exchange of opinion and counter-opinion that enables hosts and callers to engage in the open form of disputation that represents the substantive focus of analytical attention in the chapters which follow. That form of disputation is what I am referring to here as the 'opinionated discourse' of talk radio.

### **Opinionated discourse**

What these brief observations on extracts from the talk radio data are intended to show is something of the way in which conflict talk on talk radio manifests the 'quasi-conversational' forms which

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Heritage and Greatbatch (1991; also Drew and Heritage, 1992b) propose are characteristic of 'non-formal' types of institutional interaction. Within the framework of this chapter's overall emphasis on procedures for managing conflict in conversation and institutional discourse, we have seen how, on talk radio, the organisation of conflict talk manifests features reminiscent both of conversational and more 'formal' institutional varieties of disputation. In conversation, oppositional moves are characteristically adjacently positioned and directly addressed; and speaker roles are locally managed in terms both of turn-type (or format) and turn content. In formal institutional discourse opposition is constrained on various of these parameters. Oppositional turns may be adjacently positioned, for instance, but within that framework speaker roles may be preallocated both in terms of turn-type (whether a turn is formed as a question or an answer) and turn content (whether an utterance may or may not be hearable as expressing a personal opinion). In some cases (e.g. mediation hearings) oppositional turns may not even be directly addressed or adjacently positioned.

Talk radio discourse represents an 'intermediate' case in terms of these categories. It exhibits features of institutional discourse, for instance in the way in which the participants occupy the distinctive paired roles of 'host' and 'caller', and the way in which these roles are associated with specific organisational tasks at particular moments in the course of calls. But at the same time the organisation of turns within dispute sequences exhibits many of the features associated with arguments in informal conversational settings.

Oppositional turns, again, are adjacently positioned, but in addition they may freely take the aggravated or mitigated forms found in conversation. In terms of mode of address, while hosts may use footing shifts in similar ways to interviewers to redistribute authorship for positions expressed, they may equally engage in outright accusation, blame allocation, and so on. Neither, on talk radio, are argumentational roles preallocated in any systematic way, but are open to local negotiation - although this relative freedom appears to have superimposed upon it an institutionalised asymmetry

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which derives from that organisational feature of calls whereby callers' opinions on issues form the initial agenda for each call, which leads to the host issuing more frequent challenges to callers' statements than vice versa. Finally, far from orienting to a constraint by which, as institutional agents, they refrain from expressing personal opinions on matters under discussion during calls, hosts on talk radio openly act as the repositories of opinions on issues in the public sphere - indeed it could be said that a significant aspect of the host's professional ability resides in his capacity to generate, in the course of disputes with callers, personal opinions on *whatever issue* the caller elects to raise as an agenda.

It is these features which lead to the characterisation of talk radio as a cultural locus for 'opinionated' discourse. In shows such as the one from which the data corpus for this study was drawn, it is the caller's task to call in and proffer an opinion on some issue of the day; while the host regularly instigates arguments with the caller by producing sceptical, disputatious or plain truculent ripostes to those opinions. These ripostes involve the host in mobilising his own opinions on whatever issue is under debate. The entertainment value of such broadcasts thus seems to rest largely on the host's capacity to generate *controversy* by being 'professionally opinionated'. In this sense, the ways in which both callers and hosts conduct themselves as they encounter each other in the public arena represented by the talk radio show both displays their mutual orientation to, and illustrates how they mutually sustain, that public arena as a context for a type of conflict talk which we might call argument 'for argument's sake'; or, perhaps a little more succinctly, *opinionated discourse*.<sup>12</sup>

In the chapters that follow, the basic stance mapped out here is fleshed out in a number of more detailed studies of aspects of the interactional organisation of conflict talk in calls to the talk radio show, in which we explore more precisely the articulation of social processes involved in the management of arguments and those involved in the organisation of interaction in institutional discourse in the specific case of the talk radio show.

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## Organising Participation: The Structure of Opening Exchanges

In the interactions between professionals and clients in many institutional contexts, participants are required to negotiate a particular set of constraints. On the one hand, encounters between clients and professional institutional representatives are structured by the general *processing requirements* characterising the organisation as a setting in which each encounter is another one in a series of such encounters, in each of which specific kinds of information have to be gleaned from clients, certain kinds of decisions have to be reached, and so forth. But on the other hand, each encounter incorporates its own particular *set of contingencies*, arising from the specific details of each client's 'case', which have to be dealt with on an essentially ad hoc basis.

In a number of recent studies (e.g. those collected in Drew and Heritage, 1992a) analysts have sought to show some ways in which the organisation of participation in the discourse of cultural institutions is designed so as to manage the convergence of these 'generalising' and 'particularising' constraints. One analytic strategy here involves the investigation of how encounters between professionals and clients are 'opened up'. What procedures are involved, that is, as participants move from initial 'ritual' greetings exchanges (Goffman, 1971) into the first topical business of the encounter? In all forms of interaction opening sequences are designed so as to enable participants to establish what Goffman (1971) called 'mutually ratified participation' in the encounter; and in this an alignment of relevant social identities is implicated (Kendon, 1990b). But a further feature of analytic interest in openings is that of how

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they work to map out an arena in which the participants can coordinate the introduction of first topical business of the encounter (Schegloff, 1986).

Examining how these issues are addressed in institutional encounters, in comparison with how they may be addressed in everyday conversational contexts, provides an insight into the ways in which the distinctive interactional space of a cultural institution is mapped out and occupied through collaborative communicative work on the part of participants. In this chapter I adopt such an approach to look at how structural aspects of the organisation of participation in calls to an open-line talk radio broadcast operate in the management of the processing of calls, seen as serial encounters between professional broadcasters (hosts) and lay citizens (callers).

In previous chapters I have discussed how talk radio represents a cultural locus for the production of 'opinionated discourse'. In this setting, ordinary citizens call in to a professional host and express their opinions on some issue of the day. And hosts, in turn, characteristically engage in opinionated or contentious talk as they debate with the caller, probing, challenging and often overtly disputing his or her point of view.

However, the ways in which that opinionated discourse is engaged in are shaped, at certain points, call by call, by the necessary accomplishment of various institutional tasks. For instance, the professional host has the official task of 'opening up' the call, both for the caller and for the overhearing audience. And while the official task of the citizen caller, on the other hand, is that of proffering an opinion on some issue of the day, there are various ways in which that activity is itself bound up with the organisation of incipient participation in the call as an episode of lay/professional interaction, as that is accomplished in the call's opening exchange.

This chapter begins with a description of a routine opening procedure by which host and caller coordinate their entry into ratified participation in the call's state of talk. Openings have a standard format which provides a generalised starting point from which calls can move into a range of particularised topical



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businesses. But that standard format is analysable as an *achieved* routine; and subsequent analysis of 'deviant' cases in which the routine appears to break down reveals a set of tacit institutional expectancies upon which the routine opening procedure relies for its ordinary accomplishment. I conclude with a more general discussion of the ways in which opening sequences are implicated in the work of 'organising participation' in the interactional space of the talk radio show as an institutional context for opinionated discourse, in the sense that the opening exchange operates to situate the participants as incumbents in particular, asymmetrical speaker identities with related specific speaking tasks to accomplish - tasks which of themselves are asymmetrically bound up with the management of opinionated and 'argumentative' discourse in the public setting of the talk radio show.

### **The work of opening sequences**

Goffman (1961, 1963, 1971) suggested that there are regular social-organisational procedures involved in the ways social actors move into what he called states of 'mutually ratified participation' in an encounter. In a well-known analysis of some human greetings at an outdoor gathering, Kendon and Ferber (1973) took up this suggestion, and showed that there are patterned ways in which in this context pairs of prospective interactants coordinate their entry into a fresh encounter in a number of stages. Beginning with initial perception of the other, prospective interactants typically enact a 'distance-salutation', in which intention to greet is signalled and acknowledged (e.g. by a fleeting establishment of eye-contact). A mutual approach is then managed, in the course of which the pair orient themselves bodily in relation to each other. Once a certain proximity has been attained, there occurs a 'close-salutation', in which handshakes etc. are engaged.' In this way, Kendon and Ferber show how 'the attention of the two participants is closely calibrated as they come to agree upon a greeting encounter and upon the precise form that the close-salutation will take' (Kendon, 1990a:258).

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Kendon and Ferber's study was based on encounters in which the prospective interactants are visually accessible to each other. Thus the 'distance-salutation' is conceived as a way of visually 'checking out' the other's availability for, and willingness to reciprocate in, greetings to be followed, possibly, by conversation. In this sense part of the significance of their study is that it showed how humans may indeed engage in the kind of unofficial exchange of 'clearance signals' posited by Goffman (1963), by establishing mutual availability for close contact prior to any words (such as *Hello*) being spoken.

But modern technology has of course developed various media for verbal communication in which the participants are not visually accessible to one another. Prime among these media is the telephone (Rutter, 1987; Hopper, 1992). And it is with telephone talk (albeit telephone talk in an additionally mediated, public context) that we are concerned in the present set of investigations.

Kendon (1990b) remarks that processes of 'frame-attunement' - the mutual coordination of locally relevant situated identities - comprise an incessant accomplishment in human interaction; and in a series of studies, Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986) has revealed systematic social-organisational procedures for frame-attunement in the opening exchanges of telephone conversations in day-to-day affairs. In line with the general methodological position developed within conversation analysis (Schegloff, 1992), our consideration of the opening exchanges of calls to a talk radio show begins by seeing these in relation to the less 'specialised' types of telephone talk carried on among ordinary acquaintances in our culture. Procedures for the coordination of social identities as revealed in the organisation of mundane telephone call openings work as a backdrop against which we can consider the more specialised features of call openings on talk radio.

We can begin by noting that in talk on the telephone, two sets of interactional issues routinely need to be addressed in the opening exchange. First, given that the participants are not visually accessible to each other, and hence mutual identification/recognition cannot be accomplished prior to the onset of verbal engagement (as

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it is in the episodes analysed in Kendon and Ferber, 1973), a question that necessarily arises for each participant with the onset of talk is that of *Who am I speaking to?* This we can call the *identification problem* (Schegloff, 1979). The second problem is the *first topical business* problem. This involves the issue of the array of 'relevant talkables' each participant brings to any encounter (Schegloff, 1986). Basically, 'what is to be talked about' in the call (or what is to be talked about 'first' in the call) is something that has to be negotiated consequent upon the establishment of mutually ratified participation in the call as an incipient state of talk.

In a number of studies, Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986; see also Hopper, 1992) shows how the opening exchange in everyday telephone conversations is systematically organised in such a way as to map out an interactional space or 'arena' (Schegloff, 1986:116) in which these issues can be worked out by the participants. Looking first at how these two problems are addressed in everyday telephone encounters, we can then turn to consider how institutional constraints at work in talk radio interaction result in the construction of a systematically different opening exchange.

In mundane contexts, as Schegloff (1968) points out, the first *Hello* of a telephone conversation is not a greeting, but an answer to the summons provided by the ringing of the telephone. Hence the second turn (i.e. the caller's first utterance) ordinarily constitutes a first greeting, which in some circumstances may be followed immediately by a return greeting - if, for example, whoever answered the telephone is the person to whom the call was placed (the 'called' as distinguished from the 'answerer-not-called'), and caller and called recognise each other's 'vocal signatures', etc. Schegloff (1979) considers a variety of ways in which the first exchanges in telephone calls are designed to resolve the identification problem posed by the fact that the basic issue facing an answerer to the summons represented by the telephone's ring is that of *Who is calling?*, while the basic issue facing the caller is, *Is whoever is answering the person I am calling?*

In many cases this identification problem can be resolved rapidly and unproblematically, as it is in extract (1) which shows

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the quite 'routine', 'unremarkable' beginning of a telephone conversation between two friends.

(1) [HG:1]  
(ring)  
Nancy: H'llo?  
Hyla: Hi:,  
Nancy: ↑Hi:..  
Hyla: How are yuhh=  
Nancy: =Fi:ne how er you,  
Hyla: Oka:ry,  
Nancy: Goo:d,  
(0.4)  
Hyla: .mkhhh[hh  
Nancy: What's doin',

Here, Hyla (the caller) evidently recognises Nancy's voice as Nancy answers the summons issued by the telephone ring with 'H'llo?'. Hyla's first utterance, 'Hi:', displays this recognition - note the heavy stress and lack of question-intonation. At the same time, that utterance invites reciprocal recognition from answerer (who in this case is also 'called') - note that Hyla does not attach a self-identification component to her first greeting (e.g. *Hi, it's Hyla*): instead she issues what Schegloff (1979) calls a 'vocal signature'. Nancy's enthusiastic return greeting displays that reciprocal recognition has been achieved, and they then move into an exchange of *how are you*s evidently without finding it necessary to check their mutual recognition by means of an exchange of names. Following this *how are you* sequence (cf. Sacks, 1975; Schegloff, 1986) they move into the first topical business of the call (an exchange of 'news') by means of Nancy's 'topic-initial elicitor' (Button and Casey, 1984), 'What's doin',.

The opening exchanges between Hyla and Nancy in extract (1) thus pass through a number of phases as the speakers collaboratively solve the identification problem and move into the first topical business of their call. These phases Schegloff (1986) dubs the 'summons/answer', 'identification/recognition', 'greetings' and 'howareyou/first topic' sequences respectively. 'Summons/answer' consists of the telephone ring and the first *Hello*. 'Identification/recognition' is accomplished in (1) as caller 'recognises' called from

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that *Hello* and uses a vocal signature to 'identify' herself and invite reciprocal recognition. That vocal signature is duly recognised by called, and at the same time 'greetings' are accomplished. A 'howareyou' sequence follows, which then gives way to 'first topic'.

In a study of a substantial corpus of everyday telephone conversation openings involving various kinds of associates, Schegloff (1979, 1986) identifies variations on this basic trajectory in the vast majority of his cases, prompting him to refer to the four phases mentioned as 'core sequences' systematically deployed in the opening moments of telephone calls in our culture.<sup>2</sup> It is in this set of sequences that the arena is mapped out in which participants can work through the identification and first topical business problems respectively. The opening works to organise a space in which 'who is talking' can be discovered or announced and 'what is to be talked about' can be negotiated from among the complement of talkables each participant brings to the encounter.

When we turn to look at the opening exchanges of calls between professional hosts and citizen callers on talk radio, we find a strong contrast with the kind of opening exemplified in extract (1). On talk radio, calls are routinely opened with a particular kind of exchange which operates as a systematically *compacted* version of the more expansive opening found in extract (1). While in that call the opening passed through a set of four apparently standard sequences on its way to first topical business, the calls in the present data corpus routinely get opened with the use of a single sequence, as exemplified in extract (2).

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1]

Host: Pat calling from Clapham now. Good morning.  
Caller: Good morning Brian. Erm:, I (li-) I also  
agree that thee .hh telethons a:re a form  
of psychological blackmail now. .hhh Because  
the majority of people I think do  
know...[continues on-topic talk]

Here, two turns are sufficient to place the parties on a footing of mutually ratified participation and get first topical business introduced. In the first turn the host announces the caller by name,

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and additionally identifies her in terms of an urban locality from where her call is being placed. To this announcement he tags a first greeting. In the second turn, the caller reciprocates by greeting the host by name, and then pretty much straight away launches into the first topical business of the call.

This kind of opening recurs in precisely similar form with enormous regularity throughout the data corpus. Some further examples follow.

(3) [H:23.1.89:2:1]

Host: John is calling from Ilford. Good morning.

Caller: .h Good morning Brian. (0.4) .hh What I'm phoning up is about the cricket...

(4) [H:30.11.88:10:1]

Host: Mill Hill:: i:s where Gloria calls from. Good morning.

Caller: Good morning Brian. .hh Erm ree the Sunday q:pening I'm just phoning from the point of vie:w, .hh as a:n assistant...

(5) [H:2.2.89:12:1]

Host: Brian from Uxbridge now. Good morning.

Caller: .h Er, g'morning Brian. .hh Emm:, I have some advi:ce that might be, a little bit more practical, to people...

(6) [H:30.11.88:2:1]

Host: Here's Keith live from Enfield. Good morning.

Caller: Morning Brian. I heard an item on A.M. this morning about Sunday trading reform. .hhh I just like to say...

In each case here, as in extract (2), a brief introduction and perfunctory greetings exchange is followed, virtually without pause, by a launch into first topical business of the call.

In their way, these exchanges seem as unremarkable and utterly routine as the opening found in extract (1) above. But if we begin to take them apart as Schegloff (1986) takes apart the opening sequences in mundane telephone conversations, we begin to gain some insight into how these openings are quite precisely shaped in terms of the contextualised interactional work they are required to do.

Clearly, the kinds of identification and first topical business problems involved in calls to a talk radio show are different from

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those arising in calls such as that shown in extract (1) above. There, it was not unequivocally clear for either participant prior to talk being engaged precisely who would be talking at the other end once the line of communication had been opened; neither was it absolutely clear (at least for answerer) that there would turn out to be any specific 'reason for the call'. Hence mutual identification and raising of first topical business were practically negotiated as the call progressed through its series of opening sequences. On talk radio, by contrast, caller and host are for all practical purposes 'preidentified' prior to the onset of talk between them. This is because callers, who have of course called the host specifically, first encounter a switchboard operative who acts as 'gatekeeper', taking details of the caller's name and location, and passing the details on, through the studio producer, to the host - who thus first encounters each new caller initially as an item on a list of callers waiting to be granted airspace.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the expectation of the host in this context is that the caller has called in with something specific to say, some particular topical business to raise; and the caller him or herself presumably expects to be provided with an opportunity to have their say.

Hence the work of these opening exchanges is not to map out an arena in which participants can negotiate selection from among an array of possible speaker identities and/or relevant talkables, but to provide a space in which participants can align themselves in terms of given institutional speaker identities ('host' and 'caller') and move into the *specific* topical agenda of the call - via what I will term the 'call validation' (Chapter 4). In short, openings on talk radio, like openings in professional/lay interactions generally (Heath, 1981; Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987), comprise cultural spaces in which perfunctory interactional routines are designed to work economically to align the participants in their context-relevant speaker identities and move the encounter swiftly towards its first topical business: that 'business' being precisely the purpose of the encounter.

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### The conventional opening

The introduction of first topical business is conventionally accomplished in our data in a number of stages. The first move of the 'call' (by which I mean the actual broadcast colloquy between host and caller) in all cases in the present data corpus takes the form of a *caller-identificatory announcement*.

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1]

→ Host: Pat calling from Clapham now.

(3) [H:23.1.89:2:1]

→ Host: John is calling from Ilford.

(4) [H:30.11.88:10:1]

→ Host: Mill Hill:: i:s where Gloria calls from.

In these utterances the host announces that a new channel is open and a next caller is about to engage in talk (cf. Crow, 1986). Thus, here, the host is identifying an upcoming citizen-participant as a 'new caller', principally for the benefit of the overhearing audience.

But it is worth noting that the host is not only addressing the audience in these utterances. The caller is being addressed too, in as much as he or she is hereby being asked to recognise him or herself as the next selected caller. For having been selected, the caller is expected immediately to start talking (and this is quite a powerful expectation in this context, as we will see in the next section). And while other kinds of utterance - *And now our next caller*, for example - would adequately work as call-opening devices from the point of view of host and audience, for the caller these kinds of introduction could appear systematically ambiguous, leading to a situation in which air-time is wasted as the caller engages in 'checking' that he or she is the one being referred to.<sup>4</sup>

Hence the caller-identificatory announcement sees the host on a footing of 'dual address', announcing a next caller for the audience and simultaneously inviting that caller to achieve self-recognition and so prepare to speak.

Typically, the host tags onto the caller-identificatory announcement a greeting, *Good morning*. Here the host moves from the



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dual address footing of the caller-identificatory announcement onto a footing of direct address. And since first greetings are canonical first parts in an adjacency pair sequence (Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), the production of a directly addressed first greeting occasions reciprocation from the caller, and thereby serves to 'invite' him or her onto a speakership footing.

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1]  
Host: Pat calling from Clapham now. Good morning.  
→ Caller: Good morning Brian.

(3) [H:23.1.89:2:1]  
Host: John is calling from Ilford. Good morning.  
→ Caller: .hh Good morning Brian.

(4) [H:30.11.88:10:1]  
Host: Mill Hill:: i:s where Gloria calls from. Good morning.  
→ Caller: Good morning Brian.

This use of a greetings exchange enables the speakers seamlessly to coordinate their mutual entry into ratified participation in the call's state of talk.

In some cases the first greeting is not produced by the host - and here we can notice that the coordination of entry into talk is very slightly disjointed, it seems as a result of this omission.

(7) [H:21.11.88:17:1]  
Host: Jo:hn in:: Enfield.  
→ (.)  
→ Caller: Oh good mornin' Brian.  
→ Host: Good morning.  
Caller: .hh Erm:, I'd just like to: erm, (.) go along y-w- erm:, with what your last caller jus' said...

(8) [G:26.11.88:7:1]  
Host: And we no:w go to Ann of Stanwell.  
→ (.)  
→ Caller: Yes: er- Good mornin':g. Um, .h] I'm actually=  
→ Host: [Hallo Ann,]  
Caller: =phoning in support of the stu:idents...

In each of these cases there is a small but noticeable gap between the end of the host's first turn and the beginning of the caller's

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first turn, which does not occur in excerpts (2)-(6). It seems that callers, having achieved self-recognition from the caller-identificatory announcement, are now awaiting the customary first greeting, which occurs in the second half of the host's first turn in the bulk of calls. Or if not specifically a greeting, then at least it seems that callers are momentarily waiting for the host to signal in some way a move into the mode of direct address from the dual address mode of the initial announcement. This not having occurred, callers subsequently seek to confirm that move by initiating a greetings exchange themselves.

Further signs of disjuncture may be found in the *Oh*, *Yes* and *Er* items with which callers' greetings-initiations are prefaced. The use of such prefaces may mark callers' engagement in a 'search procedure', as they are required to think of some way to embark on their first turn of the call. Basically, while the tagged *Good morning* in extracts (2)-(6) provides a simple kind of 'form' for the caller to follow in embarking on their first turn (i.e. it can be followed with a straightforward repeat *Good morning* - see on this Sacks, 1992 [Fall 1964-Spring 1965, Lecture 1]), the caller-identificatory announcement on its own (as it stands in 7 and 8) provides no such form, and hence callers are required to decide upon a turn-initial component themselves.

However, while in excerpts (7) and (8) there are these slight perturbations in what ordinarily is a smoothly coordinated move into mutually ratified participation, it is nonetheless the case that, as in extracts (2)-(6), first topical business of the call is rapidly engaged following what amounts to a brief exchange of preliminaries. In all but one of the fragments cited, callers move into the initiation of topical talk by means of a preface or 'buffer' consisting of components such as *Erm*, short inbreaths (.hh) or small pauses, which precedes and 'announces' embarkation on topic initiation. (In the one exception, fragment 6, topic is initiated by the caller without the use of any prefatory component.)

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1]

→ Caller: Good morning Brian. Erm: I li- I also agree...

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(4) [H:30.11.88:10:1]

→ Caller: Good morning Brian. .hh Erm ree the Sunday opening...

(5) [H:2.2.89:10:1]

→ Caller: .hh Er, g'morning Brian. .hh Emm:, I have some advice...

Here, with *Erm* or *.hh Erm* the caller signals for his or her recipients (host and audience) that he or she is about to move into the substantive business of the call: the 'call validation'. We could say that the item works as a kind of 'still-shot' marking the transition from one activity 'frame' (Goffman, 1974) - that of ritual preliminaries - to another - that of 'getting down to business'.<sup>5</sup>

A further point can be made about these items. In a study of the generation of topic in conversation, Button and Casey (1984) note the occasional use of components such as *Erm* by speakers to preface responses to 'topic initial elicitors' such as *What's new?* or *What's doin'?*. Button and Casey claim (1984:177-8) that such components mark a subsequently reported piece of news as having been 'searched for', displaying 'that the event reported was not immediately available for reporting'. While this is patently not the case in the calls cited here - since the topic initiated by callers is precisely the topic which they have called in to initiate - Button and Casey make a more general point: that *Erm*-type prefaces 'mark the upcoming report as the *result of the prior turn*' (1984:177; my emphasis). And this point will hold for the cases under consideration here. That is, the regular use of *Erm*-type prefaces in calls to the talk radio show can be understood not only as a transition-marker, but also as a way in which callers are displaying an orientation to the host's initial utterance as simultaneously an announcement, a greeting, and also, on an implicit level, a *topic elicitor*.

Heath (1981) points out that in general, in lay/professional encounters, first topic (ordinarily the 'reason for the encounter') is elicited by the professional. For instance, in primary healthcare consultations, it is typically the doctor who initiates topical business, with a patient-directed elicitation utterance like, *What can I do for you?*. Thus the interesting thing about the openings of calls

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to a talk radio show discussed in this section is that, while first topic is indeed 'elicited' by the professional host, that elicitation is entirely *implicit* in the host's opening utterance. Callers are expected to understand that, having been selected to speak, they have also been selected to initiate a topic, to produce a 'call validation'. We will see in the next section that when this understanding fails, interactional difficulties arise and have to be dealt with. But in the ordinary run of things, the opening exchange comes off in such a way that host and caller coordinate mutual entry into a ratified state of talk, and move into the topical business of the call, in the course of a routine two- (or where, as in 7 and 8, the greetings exchange occupies an embedded pair of turns, four-) turn sequence.

By 'in the ordinary run of things' I mean to refer to the following statistical fact. In around 96% of cases in the data corpus, the work of opening the call is accomplished either through the standard two-turn sequence exemplified in excerpts (2)-(6):

Turn 1 (Host): {Caller Identificatory Announcement +  
Greeting}  
Turn 2 (Caller): {Return Greeting + Topic Initiation}

or through the slightly expanded four-turn sequence shown in excerpts (7) and (8):

Turn 1 (Host): {Caller Identificatory Announcement}  
Turn 2 (Caller): {Greeting}  
Turn 3 (Host): {Return Greeting}  
Turn 4 (Caller): {Topic Initiation}

We have seen that there are features of interest in the differences between these two formats; however it is the basic similarity between them - the fact that in all cases, first topic is initiated without being overtly elicited - that I want to draw most attention to. In light of the overwhelming statistical recurrence of this format (the two-turn sequence is the most common, and indeed the four-turn sequence can be seen as a derivation from it) I will refer to the 'no-elicitation topic-initiation' sequence as the *conventional opening*.

The conventional opening on one level looks like a merely perfunctory interactional routine which economically works to align

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the speakers in terms of their task-relevant identities and move the encounter swiftly into the phase of 'introducing first topical business'. However, viewing opening exchanges purely as 'routines' serves to occlude much of the interactional work on which their case by case achievement as a routine is based (Schegloff, 1986). In addition, such an approach taken to opening exchanges in specialised contexts like the talk radio broadcast can deflect attention away from many additional aspects of the specifically 'institutional' work being achieved by means of that 'routine' (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979: Ch.3, on opening trial proceedings in court; Heath, 1981, on opening medical consultations; Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987, on opening calls for emergency services; Clayman, 1991, on openings of television news interviews).

In this regard we might note that the very term 'conventional' itself refers not only to the 'usualness' of a procedure but also to the fact that that usualness is based on certain tacit understandings - that the conventional procedure is oriented to particular underlying normative expectancies, and hence departures from it may be systematically open to sanction. The tacit understandings on which the conventional opening exchange on talk radio is based are intimately bound up with the institutional work which that opening is designed to do; and they are rendered observable in the small number of cases in which the conventional opening fails to come off.

#### **Breakdown repairs**

In a small percentage of calls in the data corpus, the smooth transition into first topical business of the call accomplished in the 'conventional' opening exchange does not occur. In these cases that non-occurrence is the occasion for reparative work on the host's part. And that work begins to reveal more clearly the achieved character of the apparent 'mere routine' of the conventional opening exchange as exemplified in excerpts (2)-(8), by illustrating the tacit institutional expectancies underpinning the construction of the exchange.

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Consider, for example, excerpt (9).

(9) [H:2.2.89:6:11]  
Host: .hh It's Geoffrey next in Woodford Green.  
(.)  
Caller: Good morning Brian.  
→ (1.0)  
→ Host: Yes.  
Caller: Er I'm calling about thee report...

In this case the caller, having produced a greetings-component, 'Good morning Brian', pauses (first arrow), evidently awaiting some next turn from the host. It is of course quite possible that what the caller is expecting here is a return greeting. Since the host has elected in this instance not to tag a first greeting onto his channel-opening announcement, the caller's greeting is open to treatment as a first greeting, occasioning a reciprocal *Good morning*. And as we have already noted, recurrently when hosts miss off the greetings-component from their opening utterance, not only do callers produce their own greeting in next turn, but that greeting gets reciprocated by the host:

(7) [H:21.11.88:17:1]  
Host: Jq:hn in: Enfield.  
(.)  
→ Caller: Oh good mornin' Brian.  
→ Host: Good morning.

(8) [G:26.11.88:7:1]  
Host: And we no:w go to Ann of Stanwell.  
(.)  
→ Caller: Yes: er- Good mornin:g.  
→ Host: Hallo Ann,

(10) [H:21.11.88:14:11]  
Host: Elsa. In Edgware.  
(0.4)  
→ Caller: Ei::r good morning Brian.  
→ Host: G'd morning.

However, in excerpt (9), while the caller appears to be opting for this form of opening exchange, the host does not reciprocate. Rather, he waits in silence for one second for the caller to embark on his call validation; then, with a brief 'Yes' (second arrow),

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peremptorily 'elicits' the first topical business of the call - which the caller duly produces: 'Er I'm calling about thee report...'.<sup>5</sup>

In one sense here, then, it seems that a problematic opening occurs because host and caller are simultaneously orienting to different possibilities in the call-opening routine. For the caller, a first greeting has been issued following an introductory announcement, and a return greeting is expectable - the host being the party from whom it is expected. For the host, on the other hand, a caller-identificatory announcement has been issued, and acknowledged, and now some topical business, an opinion-offering, a 'call validation', is expectable - the caller being the party from whom it is expected.

But these conflicting expectancies are themselves to be understood in the light of an organisational norm according to which callers are required to introduce a topical agenda for their call in response to the host's opening announcement. Clearly this institutionalised requirement overrides any requirement the caller may have for confirmation of ratified participation in the encounter by means of a reciprocal greetings exchange. What we are seeing, in the one-second pause and the host's péremptory 'Yes' in this extract, is an orientation on the host's part to the normative properties of the 'conventional' opening sequence. In refusing to reciprocate in the greetings exchange proffered by the caller, the host thereby constitutes the one-second pause as the caller's pause - a pause indicating that the caller has not succeeded in getting down to business in the requisite manner. For the caller, on the other hand, orienting to the more mundane norm which governs the ordinary accountable production of greetings sequences, the same pause will be attributed to the host. A significant part of the 'institutionality' of this encounter is thus to be found in the fact that the former, institutional 'frame' (Goffman, 1974) for the interpretation of the pause wins out over the more 'commonsensical' ordinary-conversational frame.

Thus, through what might seem to be a merely fleeting one second pause between the caller's 'Good mornning Brian' and the host's 'Yes' in this extract,<sup>6</sup> we begin to glimpse something of the way in

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which the evident 'routine' of the conventional call-opening exchange can be seen as an achievement of the parties to each call in turn. In the vast majority of cases callers indeed treat the host's initial utterance as simultaneously announcement, greeting and topic elicitor. The point is that the fact that they do this, and the apparent seamlessness and effortlessness of their accomplishment of the 'conventional' opening, is, as are all achievements, the product of 'work' - in this case, institutionally-contexted interactional work. Like all such products, on occasion the seams can begin to show through.

These seams, these tacit institutional expectancies, are revealed again, perhaps still more clearly, in the breakdown that occurs in excerpt (11):

- (11) [H:2.2.89:7:1]  
Host:     Jo:hn next.  
          (.)  
Caller:   He- Hello?  
Host:     Hello John in: Marylebone.  
→ Caller: Er, hello er, your- your people didn't give me  
          any wa:arning er, (.) okay. [ .h  
→ Host:                                 [ Well I said hello:  
          you're John now that was the warning now what  
          d'you have to say.  
Caller:   Right. Erm, (.) i:t's about the dogs...

Again, the host's initial utterance does not include a first greetings-component - indeed, in this case it does not even include the customary geographical-location component (e.g. *John in Marylebone*). Perhaps as a result of this, the caller's first 'Hello?' exhibits marked tentativeness; and following it the host produces a return 'Hello', and redoes his caller-identificatory announcement; this time including the location component. From the host's point of view, then, at this stage the caller has received *two* invitations to embark on opinion-talk - a first introduction, and a subsequent, expanded introduction. But the caller (first arrow) still does not move into the call validation phase; rather, he produces a turn designed to account for his failure to engage in topic-initiation in his prior turn (the tentative 'He- Hello?'). He accounts for this failure by reference to an unfulfilled expectation that the host's 'people'



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(presumably the switchboard operative) would provide him with some 'warning' that he was about to be accessed to the air. The host's palpably irritated response (second arrow) in turn makes quite explicit what ordinarily is only implied in the introductory announcement with which each call is keyed in: namely that the host's initial turn is to be treated not only as announcement, introduction and greeting, but also as *first topic elicitor*. The host's 'Well I said hello you're John now that was the warning now what d'you have to say' represents an exquisite display of his own orientation to that organisational feature of the discourse.

The examination of 'deviant' call-openings can reveal, then, a number of ways in which the apparent routine of the conventional opening is based on interactional work oriented to certain underlying institutional expectancies. In the vast majority of calls the routine opening is accomplished in the routine terms exemplified in excerpts (2)-(8). But in those instances in which, for whatever reason, this is not the case, the reparative work engaged in by the participants serves to render visible the interactionally achieved character of that institutionally-contexted routine. The fact that the host, in excerpts (9) and (11), 'elicits' first topical business of the call only once the caller has conspicuously failed to produce topical talk in the 'proper' sequential position, itself renders visible the organisational relevance of such a 'proper' sequential position for first topical business of the call.

Of course, it is not only hosts but callers as well who ordinarily orient to the organisational requirements conditioning the rapid transition from perfunctory greetings to first topical business of the call. In the two problematic instances cited, it is not being claimed that the callers are somehow 'unaware' of the fact that, having been given access to the air, they are now expected to offer their opinion on a relevant issue (after all, this is expectably precisely why they have called the show). Rather, in those two cases, other interactional issues are allowed momentarily to 'get in the way' of the callers' embarkation on opinion-talk. In (9), the caller quite reasonably expects a return-greeting from the host, which, as it turns out, he does not get. In (11), the caller is taken by surprise

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because he had been expecting a warning of some sort that he was to be next up on air. And in both cases the host, in his peremptory 'elicitation' of first topical business, can be seen to be sanctioning the caller's breach of an oriented-to organisational norm.

A contrasting case is provided in excerpt (12), in which extraordinary interactional work which *could* reasonably delay embarkation on opinion-talk (the 'misidentification' of a caller and subsequent rectification of the error) in fact gets truncated by the caller in favour of swift transition to the topic initiation phase:

(12) [G:26.11.88:2:1]

Host: .h We now have Martin. From Sutton.  
(.)

Caller: It's Margret.  
(0.8)

Host: Q:h. I'm [~~sorry~~] Margret,  
Caller: [(ah:-)]

→ Caller: That's- .h E:rm, .h I'm speakin' about thee:  
er, the heating, fuh the old age pensioners?

The caller, having been wrongly identified in the initial announcement as 'Martin', corrects the host in her first turn: 'It's Margret'. After a brief gap, the host realises his mistake, marking his realisation with 'Q:h' (Heritage, 1984b), and apologises to the caller. At this point the caller (arrowed turn) begins what looks (and sounds) very much like the kind of acknowledgement that conventionally follows such an apology: i.e. *That's alright*. But that utterance is abandoned after 'That's-', and the caller subsequently moves, in what by now we can see is the canonical fashion (i.e. with a short inbreath and transition-marker 'E:rm'), into the beginning of her call validation ('I'm speakin' about...the heating...').

In this instance, then, the caller clearly displays her orientation to her institutionally-contexted local role of 'opinion-producer'; and she also displays an orientation to the norm in terms of which first topical business of the call routinely comes immediately post a perfunctory greetings-component in caller's first turn of the call. Whereas in excerpts (9) and (11), callers allowed other interactional contingencies or expectancies to get in the way of their accomplishment of the requisite transition from opening

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exchange into call validation, and were sanctioned for it, in (12) the caller brushes aside other interactional contingencies, in order to press on with the requisite task of getting down to business.

#### **Interactional routine and institutional process**

Three main points about the structure of opening sequences on talk radio thus emerge. First, the opening exchanges of calls serve similar interactional purposes to openings in many other settings, including ordinary conversational telephonic encounters. That is, they provide an arena in which participants can coordinate their mutual alignment in locally relevant situated identities, and, thus aligned, proceed to first topical business of the call.

Second, there are however identifiable ways in which call-openings on talk radio exhibit specialised features which mark the encounters they open as a certain variety of 'institutionally-contexted' encounter. Centrally, the talk radio opening is designed in such a way as to facilitate rapid initiation of the specific topic to be discussed in the call, this topic-initiation to be done by caller at the very first opportunity - i.e. in their first turn at talk following their announcement by the host.

This feature leads to the third point, namely that the perfunctory routine of the 'conventional' opening sequence is itself based on certain tacit organisational expectancies, which are rendered especially visible on those occasions when the conventional routine fails to get routinely achieved. On such occasions those tacit expectancies can be brought to the conversational surface, and used as a means of sanctioning 'delays' in getting down to business - or else, as in excerpt (12), the conventions governing the opening sequence can provide for the truncation of 'normal' interactional business which would result in delay.

The opening sequence, then, operates to map out an interactional space in which, to use Goffman's (1971) term, ratified participation in the discourse of this cultural institution can be engaged. In the opening, participants in the nascent encounter collaborate in order

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to map out and display the 'kind of encounter' this will be. In so doing, call participants address one another from the outset as incumbents in specific institutional speaker identities, with associated locally relevant tasks to get accomplished.

This feature of the encounter is visible not only in the design of the opening exchange as a sequence enabling the identification and first topical business problems to be perfunctorily dealt with. We can also see the task- and role-oriented character of the talk in the design of the turns of which that sequence is made up. For instance, the initial caller-identificatory announcement sees the host on a dual footing addressing both the overhearing audience and the next-selected caller. And there is a sense in which he thereby both exhibits and sustains his identity as a 'professional' organisational agent at the interface between the 'private' world of the citizen-caller (and the audience) and the 'public' world of the broadcast. In routinely performing the caller-identificatory announcement, the host is routinely 'doing' being the host. He is displaying the fact that, and the way in which, the discursive space of the cultural institution is being opened up for another occasion to enable the contribution of another citizen-caller.

Similarly, in doing a topic-initiation following a perfunctory greeting directed to the host, callers are exhibiting and sustaining their identity as 'lay' contributors entering into the discourse of the broadcast. Callers' first utterances upon being granted access to the air pass through a distinctive trajectory representing a movement from 'incipient' to 'full' participation as an opinion-producing speaker. The first perfunctory greeting reciprocates the host's initial greeting designed to place the caller on a footing of incipient speakership in the show's public discursive space. The 'buffer' represented by *Erm* and/or a preparatory inbreath operates as a transition-marker between this incipient speaker status and the full speakership which the caller takes on as he or she embarks on the initiation of a topic for the call. Moreover, should callers somehow fail to properly progress along that trajectory, for instance by delaying in their topic-initiation, then the host can 'remind' them of their requisite task by engaging in a form of hostile 'other-

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initiated repair' (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977): 'Well I said hello you're John now that was the warning now what do you have to say' (extract 11).

The opening then is an interactional routine designed in such a way that the participation of each particular caller in the ongoing discourse of the broadcast can be organised and managed so as to show that each new caller is 'another one' in a series of callers (*John from Ilford, Elsa from Edgware*); while at the same time providing a standard starting point from which each call can, and can be constrained to, move into its *particular* topical business. In short it is an interactional routine which works as the vehicle for the accomplishment of specific institutional processing requirements. The opening sequence enables the overwhelmingly unproblematic management of the convergence of 'generalising' and 'particularising' constraints characteristic of serial institutional encounters such as calls to a talk radio show.

This brings us finally to the issue of the *asymmetrical* organisation of participation in calls to the show. It is a central theme in much research on discourse in institutions that institutional interaction is characteristically asymmetrical in various ways, in contrast to the ideally 'equal' nature of participation in ordinary conversation (Drew and Heritage, 1992b). Undoubtedly the distinction here is not as clear cut as it is sometimes presented: and Linell and Luckmann (1991; see also Drew, 1991) have pointed out that the dichotomy both oversimplifies the nature of 'asymmetry' in interaction and ignores the manifold ways in which participation in conversation may itself be asymmetrical. Nonetheless there is a powerful sense in which interactions between 'lay' and 'professional' participants in such settings as medical consultations (Heath, 1986; Silverman, 1987; Frankel, 1990), and educational (McHoul, 1978, 1990) or various social welfare encounters (Perakyla and Silverman, 1991a, 1991b; Heritage and Sefi, 1992), seem to instantiate a 'direct relationship between status and role, on the one hand, and discursive rights and obligations, on the other' (Drew and Heritage, 1992b:49).

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In a discussion of the ways in which asymmetrical aspects of institutional discourse have been treated by researchers interested in exploring the intersection of language use and social relations, Drew and Heritage (1992b:47-53) outline a number of major themes in the literature: 'such matters as differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, access to conversational resources, and to participation in the interaction' (1992b:49). While some of these themes (for instance, differential access to conversational resources) will be discussed in relation to talk radio discourse in the chapters that follow, we have seen here in detail how the opening sequence organises an asymmetrical alignment of participation statuses, or footings (Goffman, 1981b), as between caller and host. The host, for instance, has rights to control callers' access to the air, and in his opening announcements he is instantiating that right. The caller, on the other hand, is obliged to initiate a discussion on a chosen topic following a perfunctory greeting, and can be sanctioned or rebuked by the host for 'failing' in that obligation.

This leads to a further, particular, and for our purposes more significant asymmetry in the organisation of talk radio interaction, which has to do with the central activity in our data of *disputing* about issues in the public domain - and represents a theme which underlies much of the discussion in the chapters to follow. That is: because of the institutional organisation of open-line talk radio discourse there is for every call a structural sequential organisation, the roots of which we have examined in this chapter, such that callers 'go first' with an utterance that maps out a position, takes up a line, proffers an opinion on some issue. And hence, hosts systematically get to 'go second', and thus to go 'at' the line the caller has set out. The significance of this derives from an observation made by Sacks in one of his lectures on conversation (1992 [Spring 1971, April 5]) to the effect that those who 'go first' with their position on some issue are in a 'weaker' position than those who get to 'go second', since the latter can dispute the former's position simply by taking it apart - i.e., without necessarily having to develop, at least to begin with, a coherent counter-position of their own. Sacks proposes that speakers have a

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tacit awareness of this, and have systematic ways of trying to *avoid* going first. One such way, discussed by Sacks, is to counter a position-statement which invites reciprocation, such as *Isn't the X depressing?* with a non-committal floor-returning utterance such as *The X?* - which may (but only may) lead the first speaker to expand on the position, thereby providing further resources for a sceptical second speaker to try and take apart the first speaker's line. In short, there are it appears ways that speakers have of managing what in the previous chapter I called 'Action-Opposition sequences' to ensure that their interlocutor is placed on a defensive footing, being forced to account for their position in the face of piecemeal assaults on its aspects and details.

On talk radio, this kind of asymmetry is quite systematically present. By virtue of the structural organisation of the call, the lay caller is required to begin by setting out a position - which immediately situates the host in the more powerful 'second arguer' position with the caller correspondingly occupying the 'defensive' footing in the (Action-Opposition) framework of a dispute. The manifold consequences of this for the management of opinionated discourse in our data flow through, and periodically come to the surface in the chapters that follow. What we have seen in the present chapter is how that asymmetrical alignment of roles and capacities is established from the very outset of calls in the organisation of what initially appeared to be a quite unremarkable routine opening sequence.

### **Concluding remarks**

In their discussion of the 'institutional character of institutional talk', Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) remark that, in the kinds of 'non-formal' institutional discourse of which I have suggested talk radio talk is an example, 'aspects of the organisation of sequences (and of turn-design within sequences) having to do with such matters as the opening and closing of encounters, with the ways in which information is requested, delivered and received...are now beginning

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to emerge as facets of the ways in which the "institutionality" of such encounters is managed' (1991:98).

In this chapter we have seen how, indeed, aspects of institutionality in talk radio discourse are available for analysis in the organisation of the opening exchanges of calls. In a similar sense to reports on other kinds of 'professional/client' encounters (e.g. Heath, 1981, on GP consultations; Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987, on calls for emergency services; Clayman, 1991, on broadcast news interviews), we have seen how call-openings comprise systematically compacted sequences passing through a repetitive trajectory in which there can be observed 'a "density" or concentration of repeatedly deployed particular conversational machinery' (Zimmerman, 1992:459-60).

In these sequences interaction is intentionally focused on the issue of introducing the central business of the encounter. That business necessarily involves the introduction of contingent matters; and in certain kinds of professional/client encounter - e.g. Heath's (1981) GP consultations or Clayman's (1991) news interviews - the organisation of opening sequences exhibits marked sensitivity to those contingencies: for instance, Heath shows how doctors, using the medical record, employ systematically different openings in new and repeat consultations. On talk radio, a certain level of knowledge is possessed by the host about callers' topics prior to the onset of the encounter (e.g. through the information callers have provided to the switchboard about the issue they wish to address). But that knowledge is no more than general: the specifics of callers' comments stand, for the host, as purely contingent matters. Hence in these encounters, as we have seen, the opening sequence provides a generalised point of departure from which any of a whole range of contingent topical businesses may be raised.

We have also seen how this involves the participants in aligning themselves on asymmetrical footings which have particular consequences for the organisation of disputatious talk in this context. In the chapters that follow, we turn to look in more detail at how those consequences operate in the opinionated discourse of



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talk radio as calls move through their phases of substantive, topicalised dispute.

## Call Validations as Opinionated Discourse

Callers have 'reasons' for calling the talk radio show. As Schegloff (1986) remarks, in mundane telephone conversations, ordinarily, the 'reason for the call' represents a privileged topic, and is often - though not always - introduced as the 'first topic' of the call following the exchange of greetings. By contrast, in more specialised telephonic encounters, such as calls to directory enquiries (Clark and French, 1981), to emergency services (Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987; Zimmerman, 1992), or to phone-in advice services (Crow, 1986; Hutchby, 1992), the reason for the call constitutes not only the first but the *only* topic, and interaction within the call is usually focused on the introduction and appropriate processing of that topic.

Talk radio itself of course represents a specialised setting for interaction; and we have so far seen how a sequential environment is set up at the beginning of calls in which callers are expected to introduce the first topical business of the call as a component in their first, or maximally in their second, turn at talk. As in other specialised settings, the topics introduced in this sequential slot typically represent not only first, but the only topics for the call. Invariably, first topical businesses project the agenda for the call, by being constructed as statements of the caller's opinion on some matter, which then provides the springboard for debate, discussion and disputation between caller and host.

When callers introduce the first topical business of the call, then, they thereby present their 'reason for calling' the show: to proffer an opinion on a controversial matter. In this chapter I focus on some of the principal argumentative and rhetorical strategies used

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by callers in presenting their opinions. We will see that callers' topic introductions - or *call validations*, as I will refer to them - consist of a type of talk that is recognisably 'opinionated', or tendentious. My concern here is to describe some of the procedures underlying the accomplishment of that opinionated discourse in call validations.

Firstly we explore some patterned features in the organisation of *content* in call validations. There are three basic components out of which call validations are constructed: callers begin by identifying their topic as an 'issue' in the public domain; then move to making an argument in support of their position on that issue; and finally, signal the completion of their argument by means of a 'summative assessment' of some variety. In subsequent sections we delve deeper into the 'vocabularies of opinion' used in call validations, using these three basic components as our starting point. In one section I examine the rhetorical practices by which callers evoke a particular kind of 'public sphere' in their argumentative discourse, by presenting their topics not as private complaints but as public *issues*. I show that the 'relevant issue status' of topics is conveyed in the syntax of the call validation's first sentence.

Next I look at some significant rhetorical and idiomatic devices by which callers build alignments and convey stances as they make arguments in support of positions. The use of evaluatively loaded descriptive practices is an intrinsic element in opinionated discourse: and as a number of analysts have shown (e.g., Smith, 1978; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al., 1990; Wooffitt, 1992), giving attention to the phrases speakers select to describe events illustrates the extent to which descriptions and accounts are not mere reflections of reality but active *constructions* of it.

Finally, I describe the procedures by which callers underline the 'point' of their argument (Polanyi, 1979) through the use of summative assessments. These components simultaneously mark the move towards *closure* of an argument, and indicate to the host a place at which a *response* to that argument may be made - may, indeed, be invited.

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Call validations, then, are turns in which callers argue 'for' a position on some issue; but they are also moves in arguments 'with' the host on that issue. The distinction between these two notions of an argument - arguing 'for' and arguing 'with' - is an important one, on which it is necessary to make a few further comments before proceeding.

### **Making an argument**

In one sense, call validations represent a variety of what Schiffrin (1985) has called 'rhetorical arguments': utterances in which 'a speaker presents an intact monologue supporting a disputable position' (1985:37). Schiffrin distinguishes 'rhetorical' arguments from 'oppositional' arguments, in which two or more speakers openly dispute over positions. This distinction echoes what O'Keefe (1977) reminds us are two basic concepts of 'argument' available in our language. We can speak of *making* an argument and of *having* an argument. In producing their call validations, callers can be described as 'making' an argument.

It is clear, however, that there are dangers in sustaining too sharp an analytical distinction between 'making' and 'having' an argument. For one thing, arguments 'made' can of course become part of arguments 'had', as speakers' positions are contested and other positions taken up and argued for in opposition (Jacobs and Jackson, 1981). Further than that, arguments 'made' are akin to arguments 'had' in that both are interactional, contexted communicative events. Rhetorical arguments are addressed in particularised ways to intended recipients. They may indeed seek to construct for their audiences a restricted field of interpretation, deploying what Witten (1992) describes as 'centripetal devices': 'structures of information that turn in on themselves, close meaning down, license or authorise a particular set of messages, discourage plural readings' (1992:20). But the function of these features of self-reinforcement is to *persuade an audience*, or recipient, as to the validity of an argument. This means that the study of argumentation and rhetoric in natural

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settings needs to focus not only on the way in which arguments (or 'cases') are constructed but also on the way their intended audience responds to them - indeed the way in which they may be designed to invite or provoke a certain kind of response.

To a degree, the study of argumentation, which dates back to classical Greece and was revitalised in Europe with the appearance of the work of Toulmin (1958) and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971; for more recent developments see Kopperschmidt, 1985; van Eemeren et al., 1987; Schreier et al., frth a, b), has always been concerned with how cases are designed to persuade (Emlyn-Jones, 1987). Indeed the definition of 'argumentation' put forward by van Eemeren et al. (1987:7) explicitly links arguments and the expression of opinions with persuasion:

Argumentation is a social, intellectual, verbal activity serving to justify or refute an opinion, consisting of a constellation of statements and directed towards obtaining the approbation of an audience.

On this approach, however, argument is treated as a function of *reason*, as essentially an intellectual activity; rather than, as I proposed in Chapter 2, an interactional process. Argumentation theory takes a *speaker-centred* approach to the making of arguments, analysing (usually prescriptively rather than descriptively) the argumentations 'put together' by a speaker 'with the intention' of convincing a listener of the validity of a position (van Eemeren et al., 1987:9).

An alternative approach is embodied in a number of studies of the *interactional* aspects of rhetoric and argumentation in natural settings which have recently appeared, many of them taking their cue from the pioneering work of Atkinson (1984a, 1984b, 1985) on the management of applause in public oratory (e.g., Grady and Potter, 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986; Clayman, 1993; see also Drew, 1990; Potter and Edwards, 1990; Potter et al., 1990; and for a slightly different approach, Billig, 1987, 1991). Underlying Atkinson's approach is a conversation-analytic view of 'communication as response-centred dialogue based in speaker change' rather than 'a

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message-flow from an active speaker to a listener who decodes the meaning of the message' (Hopper, 1992:39-40). Conversation analysis homes in on this interactional dimension of rhetoric by considering arguments 'made' as turns-in-sequences, and investigating the structural patterns in relationships between turns embodying arguments and those carrying their responses, or rejoinders (e.g., an audience's applause). It is not just that arguments made in discourse are addressed to particular recipients. The role of the recipient itself involves not simply 'decoding' or understanding the message, but *exhibiting* that understanding by *responding* to his or her interlocutor. In the terms, then, of O'Keefe's (1977) distinction, we can say that arguments 'made', as well as arguments 'had', are interactive events which can be fruitfully studied using the turn-centred or sequentially oriented methods of conversation analysis.

In the present chapter I explore a number of aspects of call validations as interactive events, centring on the complementary issues of (a) how call validations are designed as turns presenting a strong case on an issue, and (b) how they are designed as turns which engender a *response* from the host.

### Basic elements of call validations

We can begin with some relatively broad observations on the kind of communicative actions performed by callers in the call validation slot. We have seen that callers to talk radio shows are required and can be constrained to begin talking to the topical agenda they wish to raise immediately after a perfunctory exchange of greetings with the host. We saw evidence of a particular institutionalised expectation at work in this setting (Chapter 3): namely that callers, having placed a call to the radio station, will (a) have something to 'say', and (b) be ready to say that something upon being introduced to the air. Callers who do not succeed in getting down to topical business in the requisite manner may be subject to rebuke by the host.

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Callers 'have their say' initially in the form of what I have termed a call validation. Call validations, as already remarked, consist of three basic components: a 'topic introduction' in which the caller announces the general theme of their call; a 'background account' in which the caller makes a case for their particular point of view on the subject in question; and a 'summative assessment' in which, in various ways, the argument is brought to a recognisable closure.

Extract (1) provides a first empirical illustration.

- (1) [H:2.2.89:3:1]
- Host: It's Kaiy, next from: Islington:, good morning.
- 1 → Caller: Yes guh morning...Um: (.) I: want tuh talk  
about thu-ee thee report on L.B.C this morning  
about Diana's visit to::, America:? h [hh  
Host: [The  
Princess of Wales.  
(.)  
Caller: Princess of Wales,  
Host: [..yes..=  
2 → Caller: =Yah(m). .hh E::r th- her stay in a thou:sand  
pou:nds a night hotel plus V.A.T:;, an' on her  
schedule she's visiting a home-=pu- place fuh  
the homeless. .hhh A:nd there's going t'be a  
ba:ill, .hh where they're- uw- the Americans  
uh clamouring fuh tickets at a thou:sand pounds  
a ni- ehr th- a thou:sand pounds each,=  
Host: [=Mm hm,]  
3 → Caller: [I: th-ink it's obsce:ne.  
Host: .pt Which:, part is obsce:ne.

A number of points can be made about this extract. First of all, the three components I mentioned are readily identifiable at arrows (1), (2) and (3). At arrow (1), the caller introduces her topic: 'I: want tuh talk about...thee report...about Diana's visit to:: America'. At arrow (2), we see her producing an account of certain reported details relating to the visit. One thing to note about this account is that it is designed to convey a sense of hypocrisy on the part of the Princess, via the contrastive juxtaposition of the reported price of a hotel suite and ball with the Princess' plan to visit 'a place fuh the homeless'. (This issue is returned to in more detail below.) Finally, at arrow (3), the caller presents an evaluative assessment: 'I: think it's obsce:ne.' Here she brings her argument to a

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recognisable closure using the kind of 'position-taking' device which Heritage and Greatbatch (1986), in a study of the rhetoric of political speeches, identified as a principal strategy for underlining the 'point' of a critique: namely, *I think*, plus a selection from what might be called the 'adjectives of offense' - *it's obscene, it's disgusting, it's outrageous*, etcetera. (We return in greater depth to this theme, too, in a subsequent section.)

Further issues relevant to the present chapter emerge in this extract. It's noticeable, for instance, that the host - atypically as it turns out - initiates a side sequence (Jefferson, 1972) between the caller's topic introduction at arrow 1 and the beginning of her account, at arrow 2. In this sequence he seeks to correct her reference to 'Diana', substituting the honorific 'The Princess of Wa:les'. At first glance this looks like a straightforward correction sequence: caller says 'Diana', host replaces it with 'Princess of Wa:les', and caller accepts his correction in next turn, 'Princess of Wa:les, Yah' (cf. Jefferson, 1987). Yet in two senses, there are more significant things going on here than just correction.

For one thing, the caller's initial reference to 'Diana' displays her orientation to the 'public' nature of her topic. By using the Christian name only, the caller shows that she is referring to a personage whom, she assumes, can be recognised by a general audience purely on that basis. There are not many persons in any complex society about whom one could make such an assumption. Indeed, in our society, perhaps it is only certain members of the Royal Family who could come into that category. Hence by using just 'Diana', the caller 'recipient designs' (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979) her topic introduction to show that it is just *that*, public, 'Diana' that she is referring to.

At the same time, however, there is a sense in which the host's correction is doing more than simply 'clarifying' that person reference. The absence of an honorific - the fact that the caller refers to 'Diana' and not 'Princess Diana', or even 'Princess Di' - can be interpreted as signalling 'disrespect': a subtle demotion of the Princess from the status of 'official public personage' to that of 'just a person'. The host may be picking up on that, and sensing from it, even at this early stage, the caller's critical attitude. In



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substituting the full honorific form, 'The Princess of Wales', then, he may be presaging (albeit extremely subtly) the dispute with the caller that he initiates more explicitly in the last turn of the extract, and which in fact takes up the rest of the call (see Appendix B, Call 1).'

Two principal features can be borne in mind about extract (1), then. First, the three basic components of the call validation: (i) a topic introduction, (ii) background details supporting a strong view on that topic, and (iii) a position-taking assessment. And second, a response from the host which is (at first subtly, then more explicitly) disputatious.

It turns out that broadly similar features can be identified in call validations and their rejoinders throughout the database. The following set of extracts provides a sample.

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1]

Host: Kath calling from Balham now. Good morning.  
Caller: Good morning Brian. Erm:, I (e-) I also agree that thee .hh telethons a:re a form of psychological blackmail no:w. (.) .hhh Be:cuz the majority of people I think do know that charities exist, .hh we all have our own charities we contribute to:, (.) .h we tdo not have open ended pockets where we can keep on doing this. .hh And to sa:y becoz you have a credit car::d, .hh you just salve yuh conscience by (paying-) sending in your number:, .phh I'm sorry but I: think that's making people, (.) appe:ar very erm (.) la:zy.  
Host: W'll it's certainly not blackmail,

This extract differs slightly from extract (1) in one structural respect. Whereas in (1) the caller began with a relatively 'neutral' introduction, and ended up by expressing a strong view, in (2) the caller's first sentence not only identifies her topic - 'telethons' - but also expresses her stance on that topic in strong terms: 'telethons a:re a form of psychological blackmail'. She then goes on to present a justification for that stance (marking it as such by the use of the conjunction, 'Because'). Notice, however, that although a position has been taken up at the start of the turn, the caller ends up with another 'I think'-type assessment: 'I: think that's making

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people, appear very erm lazy'. Following this, the host responds disputatiously to her argument: 'Will it's certainly not blackmail'.

In (3) the caller again begins with an evaluative formulation, ironically describing himself as 'fascinated...by the amount of contradictions' thrown up by 'telethons', and thereby conveying an 'anti' stance vis-a-vis that issue. He then justifies that stance, first by citing a 'pro' argument made by 'people who support' telethons, then pointing to a way in which the 'pro' stance can be faulted. Notice again (a) the overtly evaluative coda ('An' in fact it's getting worse') and (b) the disputatious response of the host.

(3) [H:21.11.88:11:11]

Host: On to Philip in Camden Town. Good morning.

Caller: Yeh guh morning Brian. Erm (.) really what I wanted to say was that I'm fascinated by watching these telethons by the anuh- amount of contradictions that're thrown up by them. .hh I mean one of the arguments that're made by people who support them is that the state can't sort of fill a bottomless pit, of need but when you look at er the childcare facilities in this country, .hh we're very very low, (.) e- on the league table in Europe of (.) yihknow if you try to get a child into a nursery it's very difficult in this country. .hh An' in fact it's getting worse.

Host: What's that got to do with it.

Caller: Well I think...[Continues]

In (4), the caller begins by expressing his position with respect to a current controversy in the British Labour Party, in which a member of the Shadow Cabinet had been sacked by the party leader. He then supports his position by criticising the MP in question; for instance by referring to him as a 'careerist' (a term of special contempt in British left-wing political circles) and suggesting that he will be 'no loss to the front bench whatsoever'. Notice again how he ultimately rounds off his call validation by evaluating the issue, this time by means of the rhetorical question, 'with statements like that,...who needs enemies,=in the Labour Party.'

(4) [G:3.2.89:6:11]

Caller: Erm, quite frankly I uh-uh I, personally I think Kinnock was right in i- in this instance,

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in:: sackin' a member, .h from the front bench,  
.hhh e::rm u-although I 'ave many disagreements  
probably: with the policy of the Labour Party.  
.hhhh But the fact remains is, Austin Mitchell,  
(0.4) tuh my mi:nd 'as bin a careerist, (0.3)  
.hhh a::nd uh I don' think 'e will be any loss  
tuh the front bench whatsoever, (1.1) An::d  
u::h I would like just to quote, one statement  
'e made, I heard 'im, .hh on thee In Committee  
programme on BBC Radio Four, (.) .h it comes on  
of a Sunday night, h .phh an:d this was on the  
steel debate. .hhh An:d e::r he wuz roused by  
the Tories, .h an' in a:nswer to the Tories he  
said this because he wuz chairman, of the  
Labour, (.) section of the committee at that  
particular time en 'e said this=quote. .hh We  
ai:m, that's the Labour Party, (.) .hh t'be,  
better, capitalists, (.) than: the capitalists.  
(.)

Host: You're quoting Austin Mitchell.=

Caller: =I'm quoting him, from the In Committee  
programme, on BBC Radio Four. I've still got  
the ta:pe I 'ad the tape on at the time. (0.4)  
.hhhh No:w (0.8) with statements like that,  
(0.2) .hhhh who needs enemies,=in the Labour  
Party.  
(0.5)

Host: .thhh Well. Yes. Bu- but, y:ou see, I mean  
Aus- Austin Mitchell's argument of course...

In (5), the caller's argument is built in a similar form to that in extract (1). Rather than beginning by stating a position, she begins by introducing the issue in a more 'neutral' fashion; by stating that she wants to talk about 'the same subject' (i.e. as the caller immediately preceding her in the show). She then proceeds to an argument in which a condemnatory stance is heavily implied, and then, once again, ultimately taken up. (NB. The caller is responding to then British Premier Margaret Thatcher's reaction of 'repugnance' to a news story about Turkish 'peasants' being paid cash for the removal of healthy kidneys for sale on an 'international black market'.)

(5) [G:3.2.89:8:1]

Caller: Oh hello yes I want to talk about the same  
subject. E::r what I'd like to say is, (1.0)  
(swallow) ehr Margaret Thatcher dgesn't  
min:d, people .hh paying surgeons to perform  
thee operation, .hh she dgesn't mind people

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with more money jumping the queu:e, .hh again  
payin' their money, .hh it seems to me what  
she finds repugnant, .hh is poor people,  
getting money from the rich. .hh Which of  
cou:rse is completely against her policy.  
(1.4)

Host: We:ll, I mean, .h that's not actually what  
she said...

As in (1), the caller's argument here is designed to imply a negative stance. This is accomplished through a listing of three attributions to Margaret Thatcher, in the first two of which it is asserted that she 'doesn't mind' people engaging in activities construed as discreditable, for instance 'jumping the queu:e'; and in the third of which, inversely, the assertion is that she 'does mind' their engagement in something construed as wholly creditable, namely 'poor people getting money from the rich'. The caller's negative stance is then stressed in a final assertion that the creditable aspect is something that is in fact 'completely against her policy'.<sup>2</sup>

An additional point of interest in this case is the marked delay of 1.4 seconds which elapses before the host begins to take issue with the caller's argument (with 'We:ll, I mean, that's not actually what she said'). One thing this pause seems to indicate is that the caller, having presented her argument and taken up her position, is 'handing back' the floor to the host in order for him to make his response. In other words, the caller evidently considers that she has 'done enough' in terms of making an argument - that she has produced an argument which is 'recognisably complete', that is, complete enough to warrant a response. Having (a) introduced her topic, (b) made the case for her opinion on that topic, and (c) evaluated the issue, she withdraws from the floor and 'invites' a response from the host to her controversially-formulated position.

The presence of such a 'response-inviting' gap in this excerpt suggests that callers may actively orient to their call validations as self-contained 'units', with recognisable points of closure. So that having made an argument, callers look for a response from the host.

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In the next extract, however, we see that callers may not be entirely free to propose the status of recognisable completeness for their arguments. Specifically, statements of position which are not provided with a supporting account of some description may be treated as inadequate as call validations by the host, in that he will decline to respond to them.

In (6), the caller expresses a position on an issue in the form of a single sentence. Then, appearing to consider that he has 'done enough' to warrant some response, he volunteers no further materials. But the host's response pointedly indicates that this statement as it stands is being treated as insufficient as a call validation.

- (6) [H:21.11.88:16:11  
Host: Gary no:w, frum B<sup>a</sup>rnet.  
Caller: .hh Yeah hell<sup>o</sup>. I don't see the problem with  
the Queen going tuh Russia at a:ll.  
→ (2.1)  
→ Host: Mm?  
Caller: I mean e- I've- we(h) heh uh- I don't  
understa:nd I've got this thing where people  
that mi:nd don't matter en people that  
matter don't mind=who the hell's gonna .hhh  
mi:nd if we get on better with the Russians  
I mean, .hh people've been tr- saying the  
Russians've been e:r, .hh ba:::d an' the  
red- peril an' ev'rything for, (.) god knows  
'ow many years, an' now they're tryina o  
something, .h ev'ryone's s:aying, the Queen  
→ shouldn' go over I don' understand the problem.  
Host: Well when yuh say ev'ryone it it's: actually::  
thee, it's actually Downing Street, e:r the  
Prime Ministe:r who's saying, that erm .h it is  
probably not a good idea,...

After stating a position on one of the issues of the day in bare terms ('I don't see the problem with the Queen going to Russia at a:ll'), the caller volunteers no further information, with the result that a 2.1-second gap develops (first arrow). This is a lengthy silence in the talk radio context (indeed only two lengthier silences occur throughout the database, with the longest being just over three seconds). This silence is broken eventually by the host's production of what Schegloff (1981) terms a 'continuer': 'Mm?' (second arrow). One general function of continuers such as *Mm*, *Mm hm*, *Uh huh*, in

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Schegloff's account, is that of displaying an orientation on the part of a recipient to the 'not yet finished' status of a speaker's turn. Such units are commonly used to exhibit 'an understanding that an extended unit of talk is underway... and that it is not yet, or may not yet be...complete' (Schegloff, 1981:81). Speakers may use *Mm hm*, *Uh huh*, etc., relatively benignly to exhibit this understanding 'precisely by passing an opportunity to produce a full turn at talk' (Schegloff, 1981:81).

But related to this is another use of continuers to 'withhold' a response that a speaker appears to be inviting (Schegloff, 1981:85-6). The host's 'Mm?' here seems to be an instance of this second feature of continuers: it conveys that the caller's single-sentence statement of position is being treated as only part of a turn that is not yet finished. As we see, the strategy is successful in that the caller indeed responds by going on to produce further information oriented to providing support for his position.

We might note in addition that although the caller, as remarked, begins his call by stating his position in bare terms, his subsequent argument eventually reiterates that position in more or less the same terms (third arrow: 'I don' understand the problem', compared to 'I don't see the problem [with the Queen going to Russia at a:11]'). Again this reiteration operates as a coda to his argument. And here it's notable that the host, while treating the caller's first statement of position as inadequate for the purpose of projecting an agenda for the call, treats this second statement, which follows upon a supporting argument, as an appropriate cue to initiate a dispute. Hence it is not that the host declines to respond to the caller's *position*, so much as that he declines to respond until that position has been provided with appropriate *support*.<sup>3</sup>

To summarise: this set of extracts illustrates how callers, having been offered the floor by the host at the outset of their call, routinely use their occupancy of the public space of the talk radio show to produce an extended turn at talk in which they put forward a justified or supported argument on some issue. There are patterned features to the organisation of the content of these extended turns.<sup>4</sup> We have seen that there are three basic component-types out of which

call validations are constructed: (i) a 'topic introduction' or *situating* component (which can take an 'evaluative' form as in 2, 3, 4 and 6, or a 'neutral' form as in 1 and 5); (ii) a 'background account' or *case-making* component; and (iii) a 'summative assessment' or *coda* component, in which the turn is brought to some kind of recognisable closure.<sup>5</sup> This three-stage pattern enables callers to signal to the host (and the audience) at the outset *what* they are going to talk about (cf. Clark and Schaefer, 1987), and then use the evaluative coda to signal the terminal *point* of their argument. This latter feature also enables hosts to identify a place at which they might enter a rejoinder to the caller's argument. We have seen, in addition, some indication that callers may 'invite' the host's response upon the production of a 'recognisably complete' argument; but also that hosts may work to constrain callers to justify their positions if a call validation is produced without any stage (ii) case-making component.

So far, however, we have only identified some of the basic characteristics of call validations in relatively broad terms. In the following sections, I want to sharpen the analytical focus somewhat and probe into the details of the strategies by which call validations are assembled, in order to show how each of their three basic components are involved in more subtle ways in the management of opinion presentation.

#### **First sentences: Focusing attention on an 'issue'**

One thing we saw in the previous section is that call validations are initiated through the use of a particular kind of component: a 'topic introduction'. These components take two basic forms: either (a) a caller introduces a topic via a 'neutral' preface of the general form *I want to talk about X* (extracts 1 and 5); or (b) the caller begins by stating a position in regard to the topic by means of a sentence taking the form *I think/agree/disagree that X* (extract 2, 3, 4 and 6).<sup>6</sup> In this section I want to explore some issues surrounding the interactional work being accomplished with these components: in particular the way in which they operate to 'situate' the subject

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matter of the call, both as a 'topic for discussion' in the broad sense, and, more significantly, as a topic that is 'contextually relevant' in the sense of being the kind of topic appropriate for discussion in the talk radio context.

In both the types of initiatory component we have identified the basic communicative work being accomplished is that of introducing a topic into the discourse of the talk radio show, and hence of organising a mutual 'focus of attention' (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1983) on that topic as between the caller, the host and (at least implicitly) the overhearing audience. This is one sense in which these initial components can be seen as 'situating' components: they operate to situate the participants vis-a-vis the topic in question.

But there is a further sense in which these components work to 'situate' the call, this time in relation to the standard activity of call validations: that of making arguments about issues in the public domain. We can see this first of all by looking in more detail at the class of apparently 'neutral' topic introductions exemplified by extract (1). In this extract, the caller begins by naming, without overtly evaluating, the topic to which her comments are to be addressed.

(1) [H:2.2.89:3:11 (Detail)

Caller: .mhhhhh Um: (.) I: want tuh talk about  
thu-ee thee report on L.B.C. this morning about  
Diana's visi:t to::, America:?

Further examples of this way of introducing a topic can be found in excerpts (7)-(11).

(7) [H:23.1.89:2:11

Caller: What I'm phoning up is about the cricket.

(8) [H:30.11.88:10:11

Caller: Erm, re the Sunday opening

(9) [H:23.1.89:10:11

Caller: Erm, it's about thee South African regi:me an'  
the cricket thing.

(10) [G:26.11.88:5:11

Caller: .hhh Erm:, I'd like tuh talk about the pensions.



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(11) [G:26.11.88:2:1]

Caller: .h E:rm, .h I'm speaking about thee: e:r, the  
heatin:g, fuh the old age pensioners?

Looking in detail at the construction of these initial sentences, we can find that they work on two levels, each of particular significance for the activity of 'projecting the call's agenda'. On the first level, as already remarked, they each propose something to be said about a topic. That is, they 'name' a topic which the call is going to be 'about'. In this way, callers indicate that they are embarking on multi-unit utterances (i.e., ones of at least two units: an introduction plus a comment 'about' the topic), while not 'officially' conveying any stance on the topic.

On a second level, however, callers here are proposing a specific *status* for their topics, essentially through a particular use of the definite article, 'the'. In each of these cases, we can notice that the topic to be spoken about is described as *The X*: 'the cricket', 'the Sunday opening', 'the pensions', 'the report on LBC'. To describe something with the prefix *the* is to do two principal things. First, it is to denote the specificity of a proposed object of attention. Secondly, it is to invoke some degree of *shared knowledge* between a speaker and recipient with respect to its properties as a readily available object of attention (Clark and Haviland, 1977; Chafe, 1976).

For example, in (12), A's reference to 'the hammer' proposes to B that B knows, first, that there is a specific hammer to be brought to mind, and second, exactly which hammer he is being asked to bring to mind (Hanks, 1992:58-9).

(12) [Hanks, 1992]

A: Where's the hammer?  
B: There.

In responding with the simple answer, 'There', B exhibits shared knowledge or displays congruent understanding (C. Goodwin, 1981; C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin, 1992) of the object of A's question.

In a discussion of this issue, Clark and Haviland (1977) propose that when speakers engage in interaction they orient to a 'Given-New'

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contract, whereby speakers are treated as responsible for marking as 'Given' that information they assume recipients know, and correspondingly for marking as 'New' that information assumed not to be known by recipient. One of the major ways in which the Given-New contract operates in the syntax of talk is in the use of indefinite articles to refer to 'new' information and definite articles to refer to the 'given'.<sup>7</sup>

In this regard, we might compare the announcement of the topic of 'Sunday trading' made by the caller in excerpt (8) with the way in which the same topic is announced by a different caller (excerpt 13).

(8) [H:30.11.88:10:11

Caller: Erm, re the Sunday opening

(13) [H:30.11.88:2:11

Caller: I heard an item on A.M. this morning about  
Sunday trading reform.

In referring to 'an item' on the news the caller in (13) is making a different claim about the interactional-cognitive status of his topic to that made by the caller in (8): 're the Sunday opening'. That is, he is proposing that the topic is 'New', rather than 'Given', as an object for the attention of the host (and implicitly, perhaps, the overhearing audience).

In the case of these two instances, it is perhaps significant that the call from which excerpt (13) is taken comes from the beginning of a particular broadcast (it's the second call of the show), while excerpt (8) is taken from a call coming much later in the same broadcast (the tenth call of the show). And since, as Ochs and Schieffelin (1983:67) point out, 'listeners will not accept as Given referents that they cannot identify in terms of general knowledge, prior discourse or present context', it might be thought that the caller in (13) is orienting to a need to 'put' a topic 'in play', while the caller in (8) is correspondingly orienting to her topic as already having been put in play.

But however far that may be so, it is the case that in other examples callers will use the definite article prefix to do 'first' introduction of topics to the show. Extract (1) is a case in point.

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(1) [H:2.2.89:3:1]

Caller: .mhhhhh Um: (.) I: want tuh talk about  
thu-ee thee report on L.B.C this morning about  
Diana's visi:t to:., America:?

As in (13), the caller refers here to an item on the news that morning. But notice that she talks not about 'an item' but about 'thee report'. She thus appears to be evoking the ready accessibility of that news item for the attention of her recipient(s).

Notice, however, that the caller uses a 'try-marked' (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979) intonation in this topic-introducing sentence - indicated by the question mark signifying a rising intonation contour across the words 'Diana's visi:t to:., America:?''. A similar phenomenon appears in extract (11). Here again, the caller uses a combination of definite article prefix and try-marked intonation. As we see, although the caller uses the definite article, the host apparently experiences difficulty in accessing the topic in question, and responds by initiating repair - i.e., asking for clarification.

(11) [G:26.11.88:2:1]

Caller: E:rm, .h I'm speakin' about thee: e:r, the  
heatin:g, fuh the old age pensioners?  
→ Host: You [ah w- w-] which- which particular point=  
Caller: [.hh Er- ]  
Host: =are you makin'g? the heatin'g?  
Caller: [Well. E:r, ] d-] about them  
givin' them thee e:r, the- the seventy fi:ve  
year olds, extra heating [money.  
Host: A::h.  
Host: U:h y- [I see yes.]  
Caller: [as of next] yea:r.  
Host: Right.

The caller responds to the host's question about which 'particular point' she is making by providing slightly more elaborate information on her topic ('about them givin' the seventy fi:ve year olds extra heating money...as of next yea:r.').

These examples may signal a particular way in which the Given-New contract is operating for this 'first' introduction of a topic in the specific interactional setting of the talk radio show. By combining try-marked intonation with a definite article prefixed

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introduction, callers apparently both evoke the ready accessibility of their topics for the attention of the host, and at the same time invite him to signal his recognition of that topic. It appears then that callers are orienting to their topics as simultaneously 'Given' and 'New'. One way in which we can account for this is to suggest that the topics the callers are introducing in extracts (1) and (11) are oriented to as 'New' in the *local* context of the broadcast itself, but at the same time 'Given' in the more *global* context of the domain of 'newsworthy issues' or 'opinionable public events'. In this respect their salience as talkables in the context of talk radio as a public sphere of discourse comes from their status as 'Given referents...[identified] in terms of general knowledge' if not necessarily 'prior discourse or present context' (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1983:67).

In still other cases, callers will more straightforwardly use the format *The X* to refer to their topics, deploying flat or downward intonation contours<sup>e</sup> and so not 'inviting' reciprocal recognition signals from the host:

(9) [H:23.1.89:10:1]

Caller: Erm, it's about thee South African regi:me an'  
the cricket thing. (0.2) .pthh Er:m, I've often  
a:sked people 'oo-'oo: .pt um object...

(10) [G:26.11.88:5:1]

Caller: .hhh Erm:, I'd like tuh talk about the  
pensions. Now, uh they're givin' us twu pounds  
fifty e:r a single person...

In most of these cases, the caller's topic is one that has either been discussed by prior callers on that particular day, or mentioned by the host in between-calls discussions of 'the news' aimed at suggesting topics potential callers might want to discuss. In such cases there is a clear warrant for treating a topic as Given and not New. The significant thing however is that topics evidently do not have to be already 'in play' in this sense for them to be referred to as *The X*. Whether try-marked intonation is used or not, callers can use the definite article prefix in the context of topic introductions to construct their topics as (at least in one sense) Given even in

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the absence of the clear warrant provided by their status as having been 'previously mentioned'.

I want to say, then, that rather than necessarily orienting only to the 'has been mentioned' status of a topic with the format *The X*, callers in these extracts are using the definite article prefix to more broadly evoke what might be called the *relevant issue* status of their topics. By producing call validations on the basis of topics identified as *The X*, callers constitute their agendas as involving not just topics but *issues*: issues which occupy a public domain of relevance in virtue of which they are 'in play' as possible talkables in the context of the talk radio show, even if they have not been the subject of prior calls. In this way callers can be seen to be oriented to the talk radio show as a place for the discussion of a certain 'class of topics'. Use of the definite article prefix in the context of topic introductions - which as remarked earlier have as one of their pragmatic functions that of focusing and organising a recipient's attention vis-a-vis some projected piece of talk - allows callers to focus recipient attention on the basis of a degree of assumed shared knowledge as regards the accessibility of 'issues' as readily available - that is to say, public - objects of attention.

This way of construing topics as public 'issues' also appears in call validations begun with the more overtly argumentative strategy of expressing a stance on the topic. For instance in extract (2) the caller uses the definite article prefix in identifying an issue ('the telethons') as regards which she begins by expressing a position.

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1] (Detail)

Caller: Erm:, I (e-) I also agree that thee .hh  
telethons a:re a form of psychological  
blackmail no:w.

Notably, here, the caller conveys her position by relating it to a view expressed on this issue by someone else ('I also agree...'). This is another regular strategy for appealing to the relevant issue status of topics, generally used, as in this case, in conjunction with the definite article prefix. But like the definite article, building a position in relation to another is not only used when the related

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position has been expressed by an earlier caller to the show. In (14), for instance, the caller refers to a conventionally 'newsworthy' issue (a student protest which ended in confrontation between students and police), and in his formulation 'I was actually at the student protest', implies that his comments on the matter are intended as a 'corrective' to other versions (e.g., in the press). This in fact is made explicit when the caller carries on after introducing the topic to say, 'an' I just wannid tuh make it cle:ar...'.

(14) [G:26.11.88:3:11]

Caller: .h E:r I was actually at the student protest  
yesterday,

Host: [[Mm.]

Caller: [[An'] I just wannid tuh make it- (.) cle:ar t'  
your listeners. .h e:r why we were actually, er  
doing what we were doing.

We can note also that the caller invokes the kind of rights to authoritative speakership that conventionally derive from having 'been there' in order to legitimate his projected corrective account. A similar strategy is used by the caller in (8), who after introducing her topic goes on to present herself as speaking from the authoritative perspective of personal experience (Livingstone and Lunt, 1992):

(8) [H:30.11.88:10:11]

Caller: .hh Erm re the Sunday opening I'm just phoning  
from the point of vie:w, .hh as a:n assistant  
who actually does do this.

Finally, recalling extract (6), we can notice that the caller here again uses both the definite article and the strategy of building a position in relation to others to evoke the relevant issue status of his theme.

(6) [H:21.11.88:16:11] (Detail)

Caller: I don't see the problem with the Queen going  
tuh Russia at a:ll.

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In this extract, the caller's introduction of his topic evidently relies on the ability of his recipient(s) not only (a) cognitively to access the issue of the 'Queen going to Russia', but also, it seems, (b) to realise that some person or persons has somewhere raised what he identifies as 'the problem' with the Queen making this visit.

We see then how the very first sentence of a call validation can be a place in which callers 'situate' their nascent contributions to the show not only in relation to specific topics, but also in relation to the context-relevant activity of making an argument on an issue in the public domain, by projecting agendas on the basis of topics construed as 'in play' as contentious *issues*. In the ways they introduce their topics, callers typically evoke a publicly accessible realm of relevant issues on which strong views can be argued for following no more than the briefest indication of what the issue at hand is. In this way they display an orientation (1) to their topics as appropriately thematically fitted to the talk radio setting; and (2) simultaneously to the 'opinionated' nature of the discourses relevantly produced on those topics in that setting.

### **Vocabularies of opinion: Making the case for a strong view**

A further way in which callers display an orientation to the talk radio show as a setting for opinionated discourse is in the descriptive practices they use to build accounts in support of their stances on issues. Whether call validations are begun with introductions of the 'officially neutral' form *I want to talk about X*, or through the use of the more straightforwardly evaluative *I think/agree/disagree that X*, callers typically follow these introductions with background details designed as support or justification for positions taken up (or to be taken up). Indeed, as we saw in relation to extract (6) above, the absence of such background support can become a normatively sanctionable affair in this setting, as the host declines to respond to a stated position

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and ultimately works to request further materials providing justification.

Callers use various rhetorical and idiomatic devices in constructing their supporting arguments. In this section I want to focus on two widely used procedures: first, what I call 'elaborated description'; and second, use of the term 'people' as a 'generalised contrast category'.

### 1) Elaborated description

Callers' accounts often involve descriptions of events, persons, and actions 'in the world', as they relate to the caller's view on an issue. As a variety of studies have argued over recent years (e.g., Smith, 1978; Mulkay and Gilbert, 1982; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Simons, 1989; Potter and Edwards, 1990; Wooffitt, 1992), descriptive accounts need to be seen not as 'more or less accurate renditions of some putative reality, [but] as designed for their robustness in an argumentative arena' (Potter et al., 1990:337).

We can illustrate this point in the case of call validations by returning, again, to extract (1):

(1) [H:2.2.89:3:1]

Caller: Um: (. ) I: want tuh talk about  
thu-ee thee report on L.B.C this morning about  
Diana's visi:t to::, America:? h [ .hh  
Host: [The Princess  
of Wa:les.  
(.)  
Caller: Princess of Wa:le[s,  
Host: [..yes..=  
Caller: =Yah(m). .hh E::r th- her stay in a thou:sand  
pou:nds a night hotel plus V.A.T:i:, an' on her  
schedule she's visiting a home-=pu- place fuh  
the homeless. .hhh A:nd there's going t'be a  
ba::ll, .hh where they're- uw- the Americans  
uh clamouring fuh tickets at a thou:sand pounds  
a ni- ehr th- a thou:sand pounds each,=  
Host: = [Mm hm, ]  
Caller: [I: th-ink it's obsce:ne.  
Host: .pt Which:, part is obsce:ne.

We've already noted that the caller's apparently casual reference to 'Diana' in her first sentence can be given a more subtle



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interpretation as an argumentative move; and how the host's substitution of the honorific 'The Princess of Wales' can be picking up on the critical stance that is thereby adumbrated, and so presaging their subsequent dispute. I want to point out another way that the caller conveys, prior to actually taking up her stance (with 'I think it's obscene'), that the evaluative assessment she is leading up to is going to be a negative or condemnatory one.

In designing her account of the cost of the Princess of Wales' hotel suite, the caller uses a practice that I will call 'elaborated description'. Basically, her description of the suite as costing 'a thousand pounds a night...plus VAT' seems designed to convey a sense that the hotel suite is not just expensive, but excessive. This sense is conveyed by the use of a description which is 'overbuilt' in purely informational terms. That is, the caller could equally informatively have described the hotel using some version of 'an expensive hotel': this would have served her basic argumentative purpose of attributing to the Princess a hypocritical or grossly patronising attitude towards the homeless and hence poverty-stricken people she is planning to visit, by means of the contrastive juxtaposition 'expensive hotel'/'place for the homeless'.

The caller, however, builds in more than is informationally necessary to her account of the cost of the hotel suite. By describing it as costing not just 'a thousand pounds a night' (a figure that is in itself, perhaps, conventionally interpretable as 'high') but *more* than that: 'a thousand pounds a night...plus VAT', she succeeds in conveying her judgement of this as 'not just expensive, but excessive'. Her use of this 'elaborated description' serves to indicate to her recipient(s), even before any overt evaluation has been expressed, the condemnatory nature of the stance being argued towards.

We can further notice that the cost-descriptor used in relation to the hotel suite is partially replicated in the subsequent report of the price of tickets for the ball: 'a thousand pounds a night...a thousand pounds each'. And here the caller uses another judgementally loaded descriptive practice when she refers to Americans as '*clamouring for tickets at...a thousand pounds each*'. The use of this

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description again serves to convey a sense of excess, via the implication that 'the Americans' are so profligate that they will not just discreetly purchase tickets for the ball, but will 'clamour' or unrestrainedly demand to pay 'a thousand pounds each' for what is an essentially transitory pleasure; and the attendant implication that these persons thereby display a callous disregard for the disprivileged in our society.

A similar tendentious use of elaborated description to convey negative judgements can be found in extract (15).

(15) [H:2.2.89:4:1] (Re. canine defecation on public walkways.)

Caller: I'm: a-er mother of two small boys, .hh an:  
I've now got tuh the situation where we ca:n't  
(.) gedout of our ca:r on the pa:vement si:de  
\*e- c- becuz it's so ba::d. .hhhh As I said  
we've gotta grass verge \*u-u 's outside our  
house, .hh an' the local dog owners, twalk  
their ↓dogs ↑past my ↓house, (.) .h they ↑do  
their bizni:ss, right outside, .hh an' walk  
a↑way. (1.0) One da:ly, I akchilly sa:w a  
lady: owner, allow her dog, tuh do its bizniss  
↑right in the middle of my: gateway. .hhh An'  
when I remonstrated with the lady, .h she told  
me that her dog ud got tuh do its bizniss  
somewhe:re, it ↓might ↑as ↓well be ↑the:re.

Host: M: m-i,

Caller: L.phhh (.) A-eis you can imagine I wuz  
absolutely: liyd(h),

Here the caller uses elaborated description to convey particular attributes of 'the local dog owners', and at the same time to propose the 'non-triviality' of the complaint she is making about these persons' treatment of what she might consider her 'personal bit' of 'public space' - i.e. the bit of civic space immediately in front of her house.

Notice that she describes the events taking place outside her house in such a way as to imply that the local dog owners are aware of just what they (or more strictly, their dogs) are doing and where it is being done. This is accomplished by using elaborated descriptions to portray the actions of the culprits in temporally ordered sequence, rather than more abstractly describing a current

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state of affairs. For instance, in the first part of the report, the caller states that 'the local dog owners, ↑walk their ↓dogs ↑past my ↓house, (.) .hh they ↑do: their bizni:ss, right outside, .hh an' walk a↑way.' Thus, local dog owners are portrayed as (1) walking up to the caller's house, (2) stopping outside, (3) letting their dog 'do its business', and (4) walking away. This is in contrast to an alternative possible descriptive practice, whereby the caller might have used a more abstract formulation along the lines of, *We've got a grass verge outside our house, and it's constantly scattered with dog mess.* In the second part of her report, elaborated description is again used to portray an owner as *allowing* her dog to 'do its business' right in the middle of the gateway: 'One da:yy, I akchilly sa:w a lady: owner, allow her dog, tuh do its bizni:ss ↑right in the middle of my: gateway.' In this way, then, the caller shows that there is nothing 'accidental' about the complainable circumstances. Her predicament is the result of the knowing action of persons, and so cannot be dismissed as a result of mere random or natural forces.<sup>10</sup>

#### ii) The category 'people'

Another recursive procedure by which callers convey stances in the design of their accounts is by building a position on the basis of another's (reported) position. Here, callers make regular use of the categorisation 'people' as what I want to call a 'generalised contrast category'. That is, using the categorisation 'people' (as in *People say/think/believe X*) is a way of invoking a population who can be generically associated with a particular view, usually (but not exclusively) in negative contrast with the caller's own view.

Excerpt (3) provides an illustration.

#### (3) [H:21.11.88:11:11]

Caller: ...I'm fascinated by watching these telethons  
by the anuh- amount of contradictions that're  
thrown up by them. .hh I mean one of the  
→ arguments that're made by people who support  
them is that the state can't sort of fill a  
bottomless pit, of need but when you look at er  
the childcare facilities in this country, .hh  
we're very very low, (.) e- on the league table  
in Europe of (.) yihknow if you try to get a  
child into a nursery it's very difficult in

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this country. .hh An' in fact it's getting  
wor::se.

Here, the caller makes a negatively contrastive use of the category 'people' in the phrase, 'one of the arguments that're made by people who support them [i.e. telethons] is...'. The use of the category 'people' here is not only a means of characterising a population associated with a particular view, but also a way of implicitly *excluding* the speaker from that cognitive population. Thus the viewpoint characterised as held by 'people who support [telethons]' is negatively contrasted with the speaker's own view; and as is generally the case in the management of competing accounts of reality (Pollner 1974, 1975; Mulkay and Gilbert, 1982; Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984) the view of 'people' is construed as fallacious while the view of the speaker is presented as veridical. The caller thus utilises a characterisation of a view held by a generalised category of 'people who support [telethons]' as a bolster for his own, critical position.

Excerpt (6) provides some further illustration of the argumentative uses of the category 'people'.

(6) [H:21.11.88:16:11

Caller: ...I mean e- I've- we(h) heh uh- I don't understand I've got this thing where people that mind don't matter en people that matter don't mind=who the hell's gonna .hhh mind if we get on better with the Russians I mean, .hh people've been tr- saying the Russians've been e:r, .hh ba::d an' the red- peril an' ev'rything for, (.) god knows 'ow many years, an' now they're tryina do something, .h ev'ryone's s:aying, the Queen shouldn' go over I don' understand the prqblem.  
Host: Well when yuh say ev'ryone it it's: actually:: thee, it's actually Downing Street, e:r the Prime Ministe:r who's saying, that erm .h it is probably not a good idea,...

Here there are at least two negatively contrastive uses of the categorisation 'people'. In the first few lines of the extract the caller presents an idiom-like saying that he has devised: 'I've got this thing where people that mind don't matter en people that matter don't mind'. This saying sets up two generalised populations for

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which particular viewpoints (*mind*/*not mind*) can be correlated with moral statuses (*not mattering*/*matter*). Perhaps not surprisingly, the caller associates his own standpoint with the positively characterised population (i.e., *matter* = *not mind*): 'who the hell's gonna .hhh mi:nd if we get on better with the Russians'. So that we again see how the characterisation of a generic cognitive population (in this case, the 'people that mi:nd' who therefore 'don't matter') can be used as a negative bolster for the speaker's own preferred position.

The caller's second use of the generalised contrast category - in the phrase, 'people've been tr- saying the Russians've been e:r, ba:::d an' the red- peril an' ev'rything for, god knows 'ow many years,' - reveals a further argumentative feature of the categorisation 'people': namely its *transformable* properties. The caller first develops a negative characterisation of the standpoint of 'people' by proposing that it is contradictory: people have been critical of 'the Russians' in the past, but now that politico-economic change is occurring in that country, rather than being positive (e.g. by supporting an official visit by the Queen), they still maintain a negative stance (i.e., withholding support for the visit). But notably, towards the end of this contrastive characterisation, the caller shifts from using the generalisable category term 'people' to using the more explicitly generalised 'everyone' - as in, 'ev'ryone's s:aying, the Queen shouldn' go qver'.

This in turn, it seems, allows the host argumentatively to transform the generalised categorisations used by the caller into their particularised, and hence in some way critically vitiated, constituent parts. The host's riposte, 'Well when yuh say ex'ryone it's: actually::...Downing Street the Prime Ministe:r who's saying, that...', deconstructs the caller's use of the generalised contrast category, and proposes that the supposedly generic viewpoint being denigrated by the caller is in fact held by only one person - and even though that one person is 'the Prime Ministe:r', the critical force of the caller's argument thereby is undermined in a major way.

We begin to see, then, that there are particular kinds of devices by which callers design call validations 'for their

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robustness in an argumentative arena' (Potter et al., 1990:337). Using procedures such as elaborated description and the contrastivity of the category 'people', callers design accounts in such a way that hearers may project the stance being argued for prior to its actually being expressed, simply by attending to the judgemental implications built into their choices of descriptive practices.

We have also begun to attend to the complementary issue of 'the way these devices are drawn upon in *undermining* accounts' (Potter et al., 1990:336). On the one hand, callers use call validations to 'make' arguments for strong views; on the other hand, hosts routinely respond to those arguments 'for' by arguing 'with' them - often, as in the case of *People say/think X*, turning the very validating devices used by callers against them.

This theme becomes the explicit focus of attention in the next chapter. Prior to that, however, it is worth noting in more detail the ways in which callers can be said to *instigate* arguments 'with' hosts, by constructing call validations in such a way as to 'invite' a response to an overtly opinionated, or controversial, statement.

### **Instigating an argument: Making the point and inviting a response**

Recall that we remarked in relation to excerpt (5) above the way in which the caller appeared to 'hand over' the floor to the host after making her position clear. In that extract, the 'invitation' to respond being extended to the host was evident in the pause that preceded the host's actual production of a response: the caller, having summed up her position in unequivocal terms ('Which of course is completely against her policy'), refrained from producing any further speech even though the host apparently had not yet mustered any response to her argument.

The kind of 'response-inviting' gap that we noticed in extract (5) is a very rare occurrence in the data corpus. However, throughout the data callers use similar types of component to that used by the caller in (5) to mark the 'point' of their argument, thereby signalling the 'closure' of a call validation and (albeit slightly

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less pointedly, perhaps) 'inviting' the host's response on a suitably controversial note. These component-types take the form of *summative assessments*.

In conversation, a characteristic way that speakers have of signalling a move towards closure of an extended utterance such as one in which a story has been told, a complaint put or an argument made, is to shift from description to *assessment* of described events (on stories see Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972b; Jefferson, 1978; on the strategy in political speeches, Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986; on arguments, Schiffrin, 1985; on complaints, Drew and Holt, 1988; and on assessments in general, C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin, 1992). For example, in excerpt (16) the speaker, Hyla, has been engaged for some time in recounting the plot of a movie to her friend Nancy.

(16) [HG:III]

Hyla: A:n then they go tuh this country club fer a  
party an' the gu:y .hh u::m (0.2) an' they kick  
him out becuz they find out he's Jewi:sh, .hh  
→ an' it's jus' r:rilly s:::sa::d, ]  
Nancy: [Guy that sounds] so goo::d?  
Hyla: En aq I mean it jist (.) a fanta:stic [movie...]

The arrowed sentence here, 'an' it's jus' r:rilly s:::sa::d,' marks the point at which Hyla shifts from descriptively recounting the storyline of the movie to actively evaluating the movie. This assessment has a 'summative' character, at least inasmuch as that Hyla's choice of the words 'an' it's jus' [really sad]' appears to mark the evaluation as a kind of coda to the recounting. The fact that her coparticipant, Nancy, hears this assessment as indicating a possible completion of the recounting is marked by the way she responds to Hyla's evaluation by producing a summative (or 'retrospective') assessment of her own: 'Guy that sounds so goo::d?', to which Hyla in turn responds by producing a third assessment.'

Returning to the talk radio data, it is notable that various kinds of summative assessments are systematically used by callers to bring call validations to a 'recognisable completion', and in this

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way, to 'signal' to the host a point in their argument at which a response may be entered.

In one major class of these components callers round off their arguments by means of sentences taking the format *{I think + (Assessment)}*, as illustrated in the following excerpts.

(1) [H:2.2.89:3:1] (Detail.)

Caller: And there's going to be a ball, .hh where they're- uh- the Americans uh clamouring fuh tickets at a thousand pounds a ni- ehr th- a thousand pounds each. I think it's obscene.  
→ Host: Mm hm,  
Host: .pt Which, part is obscene.

(2) [H:21.11.88:6:1] (Detail.)

Caller: .h We do not have open ended pockets where we can keep on doing this. .hh And to say becuz you have a credit card, .hh you just salve yuh conscience by paying- sending in yuh number, .phh I'm sorry but I think that's making people, (.) appear very erm (.) lazy.  
↳ Host: Well it's certunly not blackmail,

(17) [G:26.11.88:5:1]

Caller: .h Now why can't they have a telethon, .h fuh the poor old pensioners. .h that fought in the la:st war, .h made the country, .hh an' are walkin' about, an' can't afford to 'ave- go in an' 'ave a pinta beer or a packeta fags. .hh Now, I think it's disgustin'.  
→ Host: One of the complaints that's made Edna by a previous caller you probably hea:rd was that...

In each of these extracts, the host is able to coordinate his production of a substantive response to the argument with the production by the caller of the 'completion-marking' component, *{I think + (Assessment)}*.

These components are structurally similar to a kind of object recursively used by platform speakers such as politicians to invite a response (such as applause) to a point from their audiences: what Atkinson (1984a) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) refer to as 'position-taking'. Notice, for instance, in extract (18) (cited in Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986:131) the way in which the speaker marks a recognisable completion to his argument at the arrow by



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producing a similar kind of unequivocal condemnation of a state of affairs to those produced by callers in excerpts (1), (2) and (17).

(18) [Liberals:Tape 3:Rural Areas:Geraint Howells]

Howells: I quote one example .hhh that has recently caused great concern to my constituents .hh and to many other rural dwellers throughout Britain: .hh And that is the decision of the Post Office to declare .hh certain telephone kiosks in rural areas uneconomical .hh and threaten to withdraw: (0.5) them unless the community council is willing to pay for (0.2) their retention.

(0.4)

→ This is disgraceful in my view.

(0.2)

Audience: [Applause]

As in the talk radio extracts, the position-taking completion-marker here serves to indicate the point at which a response (in this case, audience applause) is relevant.<sup>12</sup>

In a second major class of completion-markers, callers produce sentences incorporating 'intensity' components (cf. Labov, 1984), through which the egregiousness of the circumstances or events they are complaining about is stressed. \*

(3) [H:21.11.88:11:1] (Detail.)

Caller: when you look at e:r the childcare facilities in this country, .hh we're very very low:, (.) e- on the league table in Europe of (.) yihknow if you try tuh get a child into a nursery it's very difficult in this country.

→ .hh An' in fact it's getting wor:se.

Host: What's that got tuh do with it.

(19) [G:26.11.88:5:1] (Re. a forthcoming increase in state pension allowances.)

Caller: Now, u-evrythink is going up, an' buh the time they give i' us back, .hh half the old age pensioners uh be dead. (.) with the cold, (0.7) an:d an:d er, short of food.

Host: That's a little bit of an exaggeration...

(20) [H:30.11.88:5:2] (Re. a TV programme about the death of a suspect in police custody.)

Caller: And uh they mentioned i- s-s- that 'e attended Sundee school. (.) Tha' 'e wuz in the Boy:s Brigade. .h Thut 'e sang in a church choir. (.) .hhh And e:r th- (.) they didn' address the

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actual .p suh much the actual events or what  
led up to 'em or how many- people wen' intuh  
the shop with 'im whether the man wuz  
intimidated whether 'e tried to es:cape. .hhh  
And e- i'wuz just an a:nti police- (.) it was  
a police bashin' exercise [(far as I-)]  
Host: [Well may]be-  
maybe it wa::s but I mean from what you've told  
me...

In each of these cases, callers produce summary components which share the property of emphasising 'just how' egregious the complainable matters are. That is, in (3), things are not just bad, but 'in fact' are 'getting worse'; in (19), a pensions increase is not only paltry, but by the time it is in place 'half' the old age pensioners uh be dead'; and in (20), a TV programme was not just biased, it was 'a police bashin' exercise'.

In regard to this last case, it's noticeable that the caller has abandoned what appears to be a first attempt at a summative assessment, 'i'wuz just an a:nti police-' (note the lexical similarities here with the terminal assessment produced by Hyla in 16), in favour of an *idiomatic* version of the same sentiment: 'it was a police bashin' exercise'. In a study of the use of idiomatic expressions in conversation, Drew and Holt (1988) found that one sequential location in which such expressions are recurrently used is at the termination of a complaint. Specifically, idiomatic expressions may be used to 'invite' the response of an uncooperative complaint recipient by summarising the complaint in a format sufficiently general to enable even a 'non-committed' affiliative response (e.g., one couched in similarly idiomatic terms). In this respect, then, idiomatic expressions such as 'it was a police bashin' exercise' may serve as one example of a generic class of 'response-inviting' items along with summations of the form (*It was just* (an X)) and position-taking statements, (*I think* + (Assessment)).

A third class of completion-markers used by callers consists of sentences built as summative assessments incorporating phrases such as 'of course' or 'as you can imagine', which both (a) invite the recipient to see the obviousness or reasonableness of the conclusion

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being drawn/stance being taken, and also (b) at the same time invite the recipient's *affiliation* with that stance.

(5) [G:3.2.89:8:1] (Detail)

Caller: .hh It seems to me what she finds repugnant, .hh  
is poor people, getting money from the rich.  
→ .hh Which of course is completely against her  
policy.  
(1.4)  
Host: We:ll, I mean, .h that's not actually what she  
said...

(21) [H:23.1.89:10:1] (Re. 'people who object' to the  
apartheid regime in South Africa)

Caller: when you ask them the question, would they like  
democracy, erm- (.) universal franchise one man  
one vote, tuh~~mor~~row, (.) .hhh (0.2) they a:ll  
seem tuh shift on their feet they're not su:re.  
→ .hhh Becuz of course u-j-'d end up in chaos  
yih cou~~ldn'~~ do it yih'd aff to 'ave a  
Host: [Well n-ay a-v-d- a:sk m-]=  
Caller: =tra:nsiti~~onal~~ period, ]  
Host: [Ask m- Ask m-~~e~~: that question and  
see what happen:s.

(15) [H:2.2.89:4:1] (Dogs fouling public walkways)

Caller: An' when I remonstrated with the lady, .h she  
told me that her dog ud got tuh do its bizniss  
somewhere, it ↓might tas ↓well be ↑the:re.  
Host: M:mi,  
→ Caller: [ .phhh (.) A-eis you can imagine I: wuz  
absolutely: =livi~~d~~(h),  
Host: [We:ll did you- did yih then  
ek- explain that you un:derstood that, yihknow dogs  
have the call of nature just as: er as people  
do:ii...

We can notice here that while these kinds of summative assessments invite a response from the host, and indeed invite a response that affiliates or sympathises with the caller's position, what they in fact get are responses that are expressly *disaffiliative*. In (5) the host disaffiliates by disagreeing with the caller's account of what Margaret Thatcher 'said'. In (21) the host disaffiliates with the caller's criticism of 'people who object' to the apartheid regime in South Africa - who 'shift on their feet' when asked if they want to see the regime dismantled immediately - by instructing the caller to 'Ask me: that question and see what

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happen:s', thereby indicating that he is *not* going to respond in that way.<sup>13</sup> Finally in (15), the host disaffiliates in a similar way by proposing that the caller, who has described her emotional reaction to the dog-owner at the centre of her complaint with the words 'absolutely: livid', make a coolly rational response to the woman by explaining her 'understanding' of the natural needs of dogs, and so on - in short, he proposes an action on her part that is patently *not* the action she would have undertaken in the 'absolutely livid' state of mind she has described.

Of additional note in this last excerpt is the host's production of a 'recipency action' in the form of a continuer, 'M:m:', just prior to the caller's production of the completion-marker, 'A-eis you can imagine I: wuz absolutely:=livid(h)'. Recall that in extract (1), a similar 'just pre-completion' continuer was produced by the host.

(1) [H:2.2.89:3:1] (Detail.)

Caller: A:nd there's going to be a ba:ill, .hh where they're- uw- the Americans uh clamouring fuh tickets at a thou:sand pounds a ni- ehr th- a thou:sand pounds each- I: th-ink it's obsce:ne.

→ Host:

Host: .pt Which:, part is obsce:ne.

In both cases, the host's continuer is produced at a point where it is not only (a) clear that the caller is taking an evaluative stance of some sort on the issue in question, but (b) just *what* that stance is may be readily projected. As we mentioned, in (1) the caller has used selectively juxtaposed facts to convey an impression of hypocrisy on the part of a member of the Royal Family. In (15), the caller has previously (see earlier citation, p.129) described a woman as 'allow[ing] her dog to do its bizniss right in the middle of my gateway.' And although the written transcription of (15) does not quite adequately show it, her use of a 'sing-song' intonation in her citation of the woman's response to her (the caller's) remonstrations - 'her dog ud got tuh do its bizniss somewhe:re, it umight tas well be tthere' - succeeds in conveying a denigration of the woman by pointing up the anyone-could-see 'unreasonableness' of this response.

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So that when the host produces his continuer, it is readily projectable what the caller's point is (e.g., something along the lines that *The unreasonableness of city dog-owners makes me, as it would make any reasonable person, furious*). The use of these continuers thus effectively proposes that the clearly evident upshot of the caller's case is not evident at all: in other words, the host appears to be producing the continuer in this particular position as a way of indicating disaffiliation, again, prior to the production of a summative assessment by the caller.

To summarise, there are various ways in which callers use specific types of phrasal units, namely summative assessments, as 'codas', bringing home the 'point' of an argument. Typically, these assessments express or encapsulate a controversial stance being taken by the caller in respect of issues of 'public concern' (the hypocrisy of the Royal Family, bias in the media, the plight of pensioners, public hygiene). It seems that not only callers but also hosts can orient to the effective use of these components to signal the termination of a call validation, and hence to mark a point at which a response might be entered. The responses which are entered are routinely disputatious; and this is so not only in cases where the argument is summarised in hearably controversial terms, but also in cases where it seems a more affiliative response is being invited.

#### **Concluding remarks**

We saw earlier (in Chapter 3) how the institutional organisation of talk radio interaction operated in the initial moments of calls to allocate to callers a public space in which to present a personal opinion on some chosen issue. I described this in terms of a particular 'slot' in the institutional organisation of discourse within the structure of calls. In this slot callers are required and can be constrained to set out a reasoned agenda for debate with the host. In the present chapter, we have examined some systematic features of the kinds of communicative actions of which 'call validations' routinely comprise. In the ways in which they identify and introduce 'issues'; in the ways in which they design descriptions

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of events in the world and present accounts of their alignments towards them; and in the ways in which they underline the 'point' of their arguments or take up their positions, callers typically display an orientation to the relevance of opinionated, argumentative and controversial talk in the call validation slot.

We can add that, by talking in a contentious manner in the call validation slot, callers not only 'display an orientation' to the relevance of that kind of talk in that kind of environment, but actively and ongoingly *reproduce* that context and those contextual relevancies. In the conversation-analytic approach, action and context are mutually intertwined: contributions to discourse are simultaneously context-shaped and context-renewing (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991). Thus on one level the present chapter has been an exploration of the ways in which the discourse of call validations is both influenced by the perceivedly 'appropriate' modes of discourse for call validations on talk radio, and at the same time reflexively constitutive of those perceivedly appropriate modes.

But on another level this chapter has also been about strategies and procedures for making arguments: for situating opinionated discourses in terms of 'opinionable worldly events', for making strong cases, and for encapsulating contentious stances. And on this level one thing we have seen is how, in managing the presentation of their opinions in this public discourse context, callers deploy a range of linguistic resources by which they can not only overtly express but also implicitly convey the alignments and oppositions in their personal stances on public issues. Many of these resources correspond in various respects with those used in other forms of persuasive, emphatic and evaluative talk - in settings both formal (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986) and informal (Pomerantz, 1986; Drew and Holt, 1988). In this sense the chapter has contributed to another central theme of this work: the ways in which speakers utilise quite general verbal resources in designing their talk as they enter the specialised discursive spaces mapped out by cultural institutions such as the talk radio broadcast.

## The Pursuit of Controversy

The preceding chapters have described patterned features of calls' openings and entries into the 'reason for the call': what I have termed the call validation. We might observe at this point that call validations are arguments produced in an interactional environment which is simultaneously 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious' from the caller's point of view. On the one hand, at the outset of calls, an extended occupancy of the floor is institutionally granted to the caller so that he or she may have their say on a chosen issue. But at the same time, the host may, and routinely does, orient to the caller's call validation as 'arguable', and respond to it by arguing *with* it. So that in the course of producing call validations, callers are engaged in presenting their private opinions on public issues in a 'public' setting (i.e. one to which a dispersed overhearing audience is privy) in which an institutional agent (the host) is ready to take the arguments they 'make' and use them as the bases for arguments 'had'.

There is a sense in which the institutional organisation of talk so far described, whereby callers are required and can be constrained to proffer an opinion as a component in their first or, maximally, in their second turn at talk, represents a basic framework in which certain asymmetries between hosts and callers in the management of Action-Opposition sequences can readily emerge. The fact that callers are required in open-line talk radio shows to set the initial agenda for their call places them, somewhat paradoxically, in a defensive position vis-a-vis the host. In that callers are required to 'go first' with a turn at talk that maps out a position, takes up a line

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on some issue, so, correspondingly, hosts systematically get to 'go second', and hence to go 'at' the line the caller has taken. As Sacks (1992 [Spring 1971, April 5]) has observed, those who go 'first' with their position on some question are in a weaker position in any ensuing argument than those who get to go 'second', because the latter can dispute the former's position simply by attacking it or its presuppositions, its evidential basis, and so on, without necessarily having to set out any coherent counter-position of their own.

In conversation, as Sacks remarks, speakers may deploy strategic means to try and *avoid* going first, or at least to prompt an interlocutor into taking first position in a potential argument sequence. Sacks discusses some data in which one speaker indicates an assessment of a local amusement park with the words, 'Isn't the New Pike depressing?', to which his interlocutor responds, 'The Pike?'. Sacks' approach is to take 'a question like "The Pike?"', which might simply be treated as "he isn't sure he heard what was said", and give it a position within some developing argument with respect to some controversial matter...in terms of a simple distinction between going first and going second' (1992 [Spring 1971, April 5]:346). Producing a question like 'The Pike?' can be treated as a strategic manoeuvre by which the conversational floor is thrown back to the first speaker with an invitation to go on and develop what he indeed had to say, and so set himself up to have his position attacked.

On talk radio, as we have seen, callers are not able to avoid going first with their positions within the structural organisation of calls. Hence, given the 'power' attached to second position in disputes, there is a kind of built-in asymmetry to the disputation sequences engaged between callers and hosts. It is important to recognise that this is first and foremost a *structural* issue: what we are talking about are sequential organisations for differentials in interactional potentialities. It is not necessary to consider whether callers might think it better that they go second, or wish that there were ways in which they could avoid going first. Indeed, in terms of motivation, we can take it that callers will have called in to the show precisely *in order to* 'go first' - to express their point of



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view on some issue in the public arena provided by the broadcast. The point is that callers are systematically placed in a situation where they are arguing a line in an environment which is 'inauspicious' by virtue of the fact that the host gets to go second and hence is in a position to dispute the caller's line simply by 'taking it apart'.

As Sacks points out, we can see readily enough that first and second positions, in the sense outlined here,

are not equivalent positions, and also begin to see *why* they're not equivalent positions, i.e., that it's quite a different thing to develop a critique of someone's position than to develop a defence of your own....[I]f you can put off going first, it's not just a matter of your going second, it's that you don't have to state your position or argument; instead, you can criticise the prior party's. (Sacks, 1992 [Spring 1971, April 5]:345-6)

In the present chapter, I explore aspects of the resources available to hosts, as arguers in second position, to develop a critique of callers' lines as calls proceed. The central focus is on one specific, recursive procedure used by hosts in the talk radio data to try and take apart callers' positions - to exploit the 'power' of second position by exhibiting scepticism of claims and assertions made by callers without necessarily taking on board substantive issues of 'truth' and 'falsity' in those claims or setting out reasoned counter-positions of their own.

The procedure in question involves hosts in deploying a cultural device for exhibiting scepticism of a person's claim, argument, or account of reality. The device takes the form of a *contrast* structure (Smith, 1978; Atkinson, 1984a; Mulkay, 1986; Pomerantz, 1988/9; Drew, 1990) in which, first, a claim or version of events is attributed to the caller, often (but not always) in the form of a direct quotation, and second, the host projects doubt about the caller's version by proposing in various ways that that version is 'faultable'. This device takes the general linguistic form:

***You say X, but what about Y?***

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where *X* and *Y* respectively represent the claim attributed to the caller by the host, and the fault-finding element proposed by the host.

Using this formal device as the focal point of analysis, I explore various dimensions of the theme of how hosts on talk radio use this procedure to, as I will put it, 'pursue controversy' in callers' contributions to the show. By the *pursuit of controversy* I mean the practice by which hosts routinely attend to callers' talk as 'potentially arguable', and seek to construe particular claims and assertions as arguable actions - as initial moves in disputatious Action-Opposition sequences. In this sense, the present chapter focuses on an empirical dimension of the structural asymmetry in calls that has, up to now, been described largely in abstract terms.

### **Resources for arguing: Attributing a position and building a contrast**

In the course of calls hosts may seek to undermine, challenge the legitimacy of, or express their disaffiliation from the positions advanced by callers. I am suggesting that a particular form of asymmetry is involved here. Because it is the caller's 'official' task to take up a position on a chosen issue and to present that position as their reason for calling the show, the host, correspondingly, is always in a position to construe the caller's claims as 'arguable', and to locate, in the details of the caller's talk, resources for building opposition.

My aim in what follows is to describe and explore the interactional implications of one quite robust procedure used by hosts in this practice of projecting doubt about a caller's claims. We can gain a first sense of how that device works with the help of the following extract. Here, the caller begins by putting forward a position on the issue of whether the laws against British shops trading on Sundays should be changed to allow shops to open for business seven days a week. The host initially responds to the caller's argument by seeking to clarify a point of detail: 'as I understand it...the law...they're discussing...would allow shops to

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open for six hours...on a Sunday'. He then, more strongly, makes a challenge to the caller's position by proposing that it is empirically inadequate (arrowed segment):

(1) [H:30.11.88:2:11]

- Caller: ...I think we should (.) er reform the law on Sundays here, (0.3) w- I think people should have the choice if they want to do shopping on a Sunday, (0.4) also, that (.) i-if shops want to open on a Sunday th- th- they should be given the choice to do so.
- Host: Well as I understand it: thee: (.) the law (.) as they're >discussing it< at the moment would allow shops to open .h for six hours, .hh [e:r ] on a Sunday,=
- Caller: [Yes.]
- Caller: =>That's right.<
- Host: [From:, ↑mid↓day.]
- Caller: Yes,
- Host: [The:y wouldn't be allowed to open before that. .hh Erm and you talk about erm, (.) the rights of people to: make a choice as to whether they shop or not, [o:n ] a Sunday,=whut about .hh=
- Caller: [Yes.]
- Host: =the people who may not have a choice as to whether they would work on a Sunday.

I want to begin by remarking on two design features of the challenge proffered in the arrowed turn-segment here.

First of all, it is noticeable that the first thing the host does in constructing his challenge is to *attribute a position* to the caller: 'you talk about...the rights of people to: make a choice as to whether they shop or not, on a Sunday'. Secondly, it will be noted that the host next seeks to undermine the claim he has attributed to the caller, by locating a fault in its logic or reasoning: 'whut about .hh the people who may not have a choice as to whether they would work on a Sunday'. In purely formal terms, then, the host builds his challenge to the caller's position in the form of a *contrast structure* involving the juxtaposition of an attributed position - *You say X* - with a recognisably contradictory version - *What about Y*.

In a study of some strategies for building contesting versions of events found in courtroom exchanges between witnesses and lawyers, Drew (1990:49) remarks that formally contrastive structures

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have been found to be employed as rhetorical devices in argumentation in [a variety of] settings...including political speeches (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986) and disputes among scientists (Mulkay, 1986). Their recurrent use and forcefulness is particularly striking...in courtroom cross-examination.

For instance, during hostile cross-examination, as Drew (1992) shows, counsel may seek to juxtapose various 'facts' of a witness' testimony so as to achieve a contrast which has damaging implications for the supposed veracity of that testimony. Two specific interactional tasks that are accomplished through the strategic construction of contrastive devices in cross-examination, then, are (a) the *location of inconsistency* in a witness' version of events, and (b) the consequent *projection of doubt* as to the veracity of that version (doubt being projected in this setting for the overhearing jury). While the arguments occurring on talk radio are, of course, much less consequential for participants than those disputes out of which jury trials are built, it can readily be seen that these two basic tasks of contrast structures are relevant not only for the courtroom setting, but also for sceptical talk in the talk radio context. Indeed, it might be said that the contrast structure appears to be such a common rhetorical device in disputation in the public sphere largely because these features of its basic interactional work are crucial to the ways that arguments in the presence of 'audiences' are carried on.'

In seeking to locate inconsistency in and project doubt about another's position a sceptical speaker needs to present some version of that position which he or she is then going to undermine. In cross-examination, as already noted, such a version is derived from a witness' earlier testimony. In a study of media scepticism based on the famous Bush-Rather encounter on American television, in which what started as an interview rapidly developed into a confrontational argument, Pomerantz (1988/9) has shown that one way in which similar tasks are accomplished in television news interviews is by leading in to the interview with footage showing the upcoming interviewee (usually a politician) making two contradictory statements in prior speeches. The interview can then be opened by the interviewer

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pointing out the discrepancy and asking the interviewee to account for it. In the talk radio extract above, as already remarked, the host exhibits his scepticism by first *attributing* a position to the caller relatively directly ('you talk about...the rights of people to: make a choice as tuh whether they shop or not, o:n a Sunday'), then presenting a contrastive position from which the overhearing audience, like the caller, are invited to judge that the caller's position is faulty ('what about...the people who may not have a choice a:s tuh whether they would work on a Sunday').

It turns out that hosts in my data regularly use this particular contrastive format - which I am referring to by the shorthand formula *You say X, but what about Y* - in doing 'being sceptical' of callers' accounts. The following set of extracts provides some further examples.

(2) [G:3.2.89:14]

Caller: I think it's quite wrong that, .h that older people er allowed tuh di:e, .hh erm, whe-where younger people are given preference when it comes tuh kidney transplants.=There er plenty uv kidneys around.

1→ Host: You say there are plenty of kidneys around>now  
2→ the evidence suggests that that is not the case.

(3) [H:26.1.88:2] (Caller is female)

Caller: .hh E:rm, \*uw- u-women uv been fighting fur equalitie:s (.) e::r fo::r, u-yihknow many yea:rs, .hhh an:d i-it seems tuh me thut=erm, they- want their cake and eat it.  
(0.5)

Caller: Er:m,  
(0.3)

1→ Host: m-d- You s-=You say=You sa:y "the:y" but I mean:  
2→ .hh >er your voice seems to give awa:y thee erm,  
.p fact that you're a woman too.

(4) [H:21.11.88:16]

Caller: .hh people've been tr- saying the Russians've been e:r, .hh ba:i:d an' the red- peril an' evrything for (.) god knows 'ow many years an' now they're tryina do something, .h everyone's saying the Queen shouldn' go over=I don' understand the problem.  
1→ Host: Well when you say ey'ryone it's actually:: thee,  
2→ it's actually Downing Street the Prime Minister who's saying that erm .h it is probably not a good idea.

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(5) [G:3.2.89:4]

Caller: Ni:nety per cent of people, (.) disagreed  
with the new propo:sals for thee N.H.Si. in  
the White Pa:pah.

(0.8)

Host: You're- you're quite sure about that  
1→ You say ni:nety per cent of the people  
2→ disapprove thu- .h as if you have carried  
out your own market rese:arch on this:.

(6) [G:3.2.89:8]

Caller: I:t's a similar kinda thing tuh surrogate  
mothe:r:s. .hh°

(0.2)

Host: Mmm?=  
Caller: =Nob<sup>h</sup>'dy m'i:nds- (.) surrogate mothers=  
Host: [yes, ]  
Caller: =but they object t'them being paid  
mone:y. .h [I me:h i's- i's- ]  
Host: [Hq:w d'you mean a--] n- er a- No:  
1→ hang on a minnit you're saying no:body  
2→ mi:nds:, duh su- erw I think there's a lotta  
people who object tuh that.

In each of these cases, as in extract (1), the hosts' arrowed utterances are built as contrast structures designed to 'project doubt' about aspects of callers' positions. In each case the first part of the contrast consists of an attributed position (arrows 1), while the second consists of a component that finds fault, and/or expresses a competing position (arrows 2).

In the following sections I analyse instances of this contrastive device in detail, focusing on the ways in which it exhibits what I want to call the 'pursuit of controversy' by talk radio hosts; that is, hosts' work of exploiting the 'power of second position' to build an argument out of *whatever resources a caller's talk provides*.

### 'Finding fault'

One issue we might address here concerns precisely what it is that hosts in these fragments are finding fault with in callers' talk, and how exactly they are finding that fault. Consider again the relevant detail from extract (1).

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(1) [H:30.11.88:2:11] (Detail)

- Host: ...You talk about erm, (.) the rights of people  
to: make a choice as tuh whether they shop  
or not, [o:n ] a Sunday,=  
Caller: [Yes, ]  
→ Host: =what about .hh the people who may not have  
a choice a:s to whether they would work on  
a Sunday.

Here, the host locates an inconsistency in the caller's position by suggesting that the caller's quoted reference to 'the rights of people' to choose to shop on a Sunday in fact leaves out of account a category of 'people' (shop workers) who may thereby *lose* the right to choose (not) to *work* on a Sunday. The inconsistency is thus 'located' by treating the caller's reference to 'people' as what Maynard (1985) terms an 'arguable' - an initial part of what, once the host has made his oppositional move, becomes an argument or dispute.

As Maynard notes, opposition is a crucial feature of arguments (recall our discussion in Chapter 2); but insofar as 'any utterance or action may contain objectionable features and [so] may become part of a dispute' (Maynard, 1985:3), a significant part of any analysis of the interactional instigation of arguments (such as, in the present case, between hosts and callers) is the consideration of the local particulars of those utterances/actions that do get treated empirically as arguables. In the case of extract (1), as remarked, the host treats the caller's reference to 'people' as generic, and opposes it by locating a category of 'people' which this usage can be seen to leave out of account. If we return again to excerpts (5) and (6), we find that the remarks which get treated as arguables, in both cases, are assertions of a noticeably 'unmitigated' type - assertions, that is, which seem to have the character of 'authoritative' versions.

(5) [G:3.2.89:4]

- Caller: Ni:nety per cent of people, (.) disagreed  
with the new propo:sals for thee N.H.Si. in  
the White Pa:pah.  
(0.8)  
Host: You're- you're quite sure about that  
→ You say ni:nety per cent of the people  
disapprove thu- .h as if you have carried  
out your own market rese:arch on this:.

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Here, the caller asserts that 'Ni:nety per cent of people, disagreed with the new propo:sals'; and the host argues with this position by first quoting it back at the caller, and then proposing that it implies the caller has access to some specialist knowledge, which the host clearly presumes is not the case.

In (6), a similarly unmitigated assertion on the caller's part is treated as arguable by the host.

(6) [G:3.2.89:8]

- Caller: I:t's a similar kinda thing tuh surrogate  
mo:the:r:s. °.hh°  
(0.2)
- Host: Mmm?=  
→ Caller: =Nob'dy mi:nds- (.) surrogate mothers=  
Host: [yes,  
Caller: =but they object t'them being paid  
mone:y. .h [I me:h i's- i's-  
Host: [Hq:w d'you mean a-] n- er a- No:  
→ hang on a minnit you're saying no:body  
mi:nds:, duh su- erw I think there's a lotta  
people who object tuh that.

The host argues with the caller's assertion that 'Nob'dy mi:nds-surrogate mothers', again, first by quoting it back at the caller, 'you're saying no:body mi:nds:', then by proposing it to be incorrect in terms of an alternative position supported by the host: 'I think there's a lotta people who object tuh that'.

In both these cases, then, the arguable items are unmitigated or 'extreme case' formulations (Pomerantz, 1986). The interesting point here is that, as Pomerantz (1986) has shown, extreme case formulations ('It went everywhere', 'Everyone knows that', 'He stayed out all night', etcetera) represent an important device that speakers use to *bolster* their positions, particularly where it may be felt that there is special reason for doubt on the part of a recipient.

In many circumstances, indeed, this strategy works unproblematically and successfully. For instance, speakers may exhibit scepticism about another's claim by using extreme case formulations as elements in a contrast structure very similar to the



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combative *You say X, but what about Y* - namely *He/she said X, but I/we know Y*:

(7) [SBL:2:1:8:1]

Nora: Although she: said she wen' into hq:mes  
why that doesn't mean anything one home in each  
country doesn't mean a thing.

Here, Nora exhibits scepticism of an attributed claim ('she: said she wen' into hq:mes') by contrasting it with a contradictory account employing the extreme case formats, 'that doesn't mean anything' and 'one home in each country doesn't mean a thing'. These extreme case formulations work to provide a sense of 'authoritativeness' for her complaint about the reported claim.

In a similar sense, authoritativeness can be lent to a sceptical party's version by presenting that version as an unmitigated statement of 'objective fact'. In (8), Ann exhibits her scepticism of a restaurant's claim to have sent out a meal which is 'hot'n spicy' by again using a contrast structure; and she justifies this scepticism by reporting as an outright factual matter that the meal she has received 'isn't' hot and spicy.

(8) [CG.CD:42] (A take-away meal has just been tasted)

Ann: Hey waitaminnit. They told us- (0.6) Don said  
get something hot'n spicy an' this-  
→ they said this was and it isn't.

And in (9), note Brenda's similarly blunt 'the teacher doesn't', provided to legitimise her scepticism of an attributed claim.

(9) [PB:5.31.71:1-2]

Brenda: She says she just doesn't like schq:1,  
(0.8) and that the teacher (0.8) leaves her  
alg:ne,  
(0.6)  
→ which (.) the teacher doesn't. I mean I  
spoke to the teacher.

Here, Brenda additionally underscores the account of the 'facts' at the arrowed turn ('the teacher doesn't') by reporting that she 'spoke to the teacher', and thus can vouch from the authentic standpoint of

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personal experience (Livingstone and Lunt, 1992) for the veracity of the account against which the attributed position is being set.

In extract (10), we see unmitigated versions being used as components in *both* the complainable and the complaint itself.

- (10) [NB:II:2:19] (Emma and Nancy are sisters)
- Nancy: A:nd ah, h he seh that he: w'ss: hed tried  
t'call 'er on Mother's Day en, h .hhhhh
- A:n::d he id- (0.3) spent all da:y (.)  
yihknow tryin' t'call 'er: h [a:nd [she:]  
Emma: [ 'Mm hm: ]
- (.)
- Nancy: knqws better th'n thqt becuz Roul never  
→ Emma: stayed home all day tih call tanybudd [y, h .hh  
[n::Nq:,

Nancy is reporting (and affiliating with) the scepticism of her ex-husband's mother regarding a claim of the ex-husband (Roul) to have called her (the mother) on Mother's Day. She recounts Roul's claim to have stayed in 'all da:y' trying to call. Thus, the claim itself is bolstered by an extreme case formulation. But that formulation subsequently gets treated as the basis for a complaint, which is based on the fact that the mother 'knqws better th'n thqt' and bolstered, in turn, by the extreme case formulations, 'never stayed home *all day tih call anybuddy*'.

In short, returning to extracts (5) and (6), we can see that callers are using powerful conventional resources for legitimising a position and justifying a complaint: in (5), 'Ni:nety per cent of people disagreed' is a strongly 'objective'-appearing statement, while in (6), 'Nqb'dy minds surrogate mothers' is an extreme case formulation. Yet in each case, hosts are 'finding fault' precisely by treating these same features as the bases for arguing with the positions they are designed to justify. The *You say X* device operates as a framework in which to turn callers' attempts to legitimise their stances against them, by taking extreme case formulations and 'fact' statements literally, rather than idiomatically.

It appears, then, that depending on the standpoint of a recipient, extreme case formulations and other ways of legitimising claims can work either in bolstering a position, or in allowing it to

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be undermined. This depends on whether the formulation is taken idiomatically or literally. One way of 'doing argument' thus seems to be to adopt, and follow up, a 'literal' interpretation of an interlocutor's words.

Another feature to note on this point is the way in which the very 'tense' of the *You say X, but what about Y* construction allows fault to be found in callers' talk in an especially 'argumentative' fashion. The sceptical devices discussed in this section all incorporate 'citatory' elements; that is, they all involve a sceptical speaker in attributing a position to others by citing (some version of) their words. But these elements operate in different ways according to the interactional work which the device is being used to do in different cases. In extracts (7)-(10), sceptical speakers are complaining about the actions or claims of other, absent parties. The contrastive device they use to express their scepticism - *He/She said X, but I/we know Y* - incorporates both a citatory and an accusatory element (Pomerantz, 1978b, 1988/9). The person or persons who 'said' *X* are being attributed with responsibility for making that fallacious claim: in short they are being allocated *blame* (Pomerantz, 1978b; Wowk, 1984). But in these cases it is an *absent party* who is being singled out as having made the claim or performed the action, and thus as being knowingly responsible for that complainable action or claim.

In the excerpts taken from argument sequences on talk radio, on the other hand (extracts 1-6), the citatory element of the device, and hence its accusatory properties also, are turned against the complaint recipient him or herself (i.e., the caller). So that an 'argumentative' property is built into the very tense of the construction. Since, as we have seen in previous chapters, one basic feature of argument is the exchange of directly addressed accusations/positions and counter-accusations/positions, the device, *You say X but what about Y*, can be seen to be a particularly effective one for combative talk precisely because *You say X* allocates responsibility to its recipient for a claim with which *What about Y* finds fault. The citatory properties of the construction thus

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serve to locate fallibility not only in the substance of a claim, but in the person of the claimant him or herself.<sup>2</sup>

### Ad hoc doubt

This point is related to a generic feature of contrast structures as sceptical devices. As Pomerantz (1988/9) and Drew (1990) have both suggested, the significant point about contrast structures in disputatious environments is not whether or not the juxtaposed versions are respectively true or false, but rather that the juxtaposition itself has the effect of encouraging a recipient or audience to *judge* that one of the versions is in some way faulty. Drew (1992) shows how counsel in cross-examination exploit this property of contrasts to project doubt about the veracity of witnesses' evidence by simply 'leaving hanging' a contrastive presentation of two particular details of a witness' testimony. In a similar way, hosts on talk radio might exploit those same properties to project doubt about the general validity of a caller's position from the demonstration of faultiness in its details.

A number of features illustrate how hosts can use the *You say X* device to 'construct' a caller's opinion as arguable in an essentially ad hoc way, and without necessarily taking on board substantive issues of truth and falsity. The citatory element turns out to be very important here since it allows hosts, as sceptical parties, to home in on the lexical structure of a caller's claim itself as a resource for projecting doubt. This in turn means that one thing hosts are able to do is to cast aspersions without necessarily taking on board the issue of a claim's 'actual' veracity or accuracy. We can see that this happens in extract (5).

(5) IG:3.2.89:41

Caller: Ni:nety per cent of people, (.) disagreed  
with the new proposals for the N.H.S. in  
the White Paper.  
(0.8)

Host: You're- you're quite sure about that  
You say ni:nety per cent of the people  
disapprove thu-

→ .h as if you have carried out your own market

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research on this:.

Here, the caller's authoritative-sounding claim, 'Ninety per cent of people, disagreed with the new proposals', gets turned against itself in the host's ironical counter, 'You say ninety per cent of the people disapprove...as if you have carried out your own market research on this'. This counter does not, of course, work by opposing the caller's purportedly factual claim with another purportedly factual claim, such as *You say ninety per cent of people disagree, but if you look at the real figures you'll see it's only sixty per cent*. Rather, the host uses his citation of the caller's claim to effectively 'turn it against itself', ironising it by way of the commonsense inference that ordinary citizens do not normally go about doing market research in order to test public opinion. The structure of the *You say X* device thus allows the host in this example to pick up on the caller's actual chosen way of formulating her claim to propose that that claim must be erroneous.

In extract (1) the host again uses the device as a framework in which to turn a caller's version against itself by picking up on the lexical selections a caller makes in presenting his position. This time, however, the evidential basis of the caller's claim is countered with an empirically grounded alternative. (Recall here that the caller has just previously said 'I think people should have the choice if they want to do shopping on a Sundee'.)

(1) [H:30.11.88:2:1]

Host: You talk about erm, (.) the rights of people  
to: make a choice as tuh whether they shop  
or not, [o:n ] a Sunday, =

Caller: [Yes, ]

→ Host: =what about .hh the people who may not have  
↵ a choice a:s to whether they would work on  
a Sunday.

Although the host ironises the caller's version on one level by bringing into play a collection of 'people' left out of account in the caller's original use of the collectivity categorisation 'people', what is especially striking here is the way in which the lexical format of the caller's assertion 'people should have the *choice*' is turned

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against itself in a quite symmetrical contrast: 'what about the *people* who may not have a *choice*...'.  
The lexical symmetry, indeed, goes further than this. Notice that the two parts of the host's contrast structure itself are markedly symmetrical: 'You talk about...the rights of *people* to: make a *choice* as to whether they shop or not, on a *Sunday*'/'what about the *people* who may not have a *choice* as to whether they would work on a *Sunday*'. This illustrates a point made about the effectiveness of symmetry in contrastive devices by Atkinson (1984b), in his work on public speech-making (where such devices occur with marked regularity as applause elicitation strategies). Atkinson shows that 'for a contrast to work effectively in eliciting an immediate or early audience response, the second part should closely resemble the first in the details of its construction and duration' (1984b:395). In extract (1) these two conditions are elegantly met. The symmetry between the sets of lexical items in which the actual contrast (between *shop* and *work*) is set allows that contrast maximal visibility, both for the caller and for the overhearing audience.

Thus, the citatory properties of the *You say X* device allow hosts to use the actual details of callers' talk to construct, in an ad hoc fashion, argumentative positions in the form of rhetorically effective contrast structures. This potential is illustrated particularly nicely in extract (11), where caller and host are arguing about a recent march organised by the National Union of Students which ended in confrontation between marchers and police. The caller has been arguing in defence of the marchers and in criticism of the police. The caller has just referred to the march in question as an 'organised lobby'.

(11) [G:26.11.88:3:1]

Host: You say it was an organised demonstration by  
the National Union of Students. [=dɔ y-  
Caller: or- it was an organised lobby. .hh a:nd a  
mɑ:rtʃ, which was s'pɔ:zɪ tʊh go: [to ( )  
Host: you c'n organise a lobby or a march it still  
amounts to a demonstration, =d'you think it  
got out of hand? [wɛ:lɪ you-

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Here (leaving aside the caller's interjection and the side sequence (Jefferson, 1972) it occasions, which I will come to in the next section), it is clear that the host's first turn is once again designed to be a contrast juxtaposing an attributed position, 'You say it was an organised demonstration', with a fault-finding counter: 'd'you think it got out of hand?'. The overhearing audience, like the participants, know that, in fact, the event in question did end up in pitched battles between marchers and police (this eventuality and its subsequent treatment in the popular press have been discussed in the host's introductory comments to the morning's show). The host's contrast between the caller's descriptor 'organised' and the alternative 'out of hand' is thus heavily ironic; his question, 'd'you think it got out of hand?', borders on the rhetorical. The significant point here, however, is that this extract demonstrates once more how, by picking up on an apparently innocent detail of a caller's account (in this case, the use of the descriptor 'organised') and, through the use of the *You say X* device, turning it against itself, the host can 'find fault', constructing controversy ad hoc out of the resources - the micro-details of talk - he is presented with as a call proceeds.

In sum, there are various ways in which hosts' use of the *You say X* device evidences the 'power of second position' in disputatious Action-Opposition sequences. The oppositions that hosts can construct within the framework of the contrastive device display a sensitivity to the finest detail of the accounts they are designed to undermine. These oppositions frequently focus on the small details of a caller's presentation of a position (use of extreme case formulations, generic references, inappropriate descriptors), and pick on those details for sceptical treatment. Moreover, the contrastive device not only works in the construction of controversy by locating empirical inconsistencies in a caller's account. In some cases, quoting a caller's assertion back at him or her and subsequently allowing it, by means of the contrastive device, to be *judged* as faulty, is a way in which hosts can project doubt about the verisimilitude of the

caller's account without taking on board the question of its actual truth or falsity.

**Recipients' work: Recognising and resisting**

So far nothing has been said about how callers, as recipients of the kinds of disputatious moves analysed in the preceding sections, respond to such utterances and to the interactional work in which they are involved. I want to remark now on some observable ways in which callers, as well as hosts, can be seen to be orienting to the *You say X* format as an effective device for exhibiting scepticism.

A first point to note might be that *You say X*, at least (but not exclusively) when intoned in a particular way (e.g. with stress, and perhaps also vowel-extension, on the *sa:y*) has an immediate sense of ellipsis about it. It suggests something 'more', a *but...*: 'You *sa:y* that - *but...*'. And there are some instances in the data corpus which manifest features exhibiting callers' recognition that, when produced by hosts, *You say X*-type utterances indeed are 'heavily incomplete'; that is, that on completion of such a phrasal unit, substantive speaker transition is not yet relevant. This recognition is exhibited through callers' use of the standard conversational objects which Schegloff (1981) labels 'continuers'. Continuers, as we've already mentioned, are tokens such as *Mm hm* or *Uh huh* that display a recipient's understanding that an extended turn at talk is underway and not yet complete.

(12) [HG:II:35]

- Hyla:       One time I 'member, .hh 's girl wrote end her,  
              .hh she wz like (.) fifteen er  
              six-teen end] her mother doesn' let 'er wear,=  
→ Nancy:     [Uh hu:h,]  
Hyla:        =.hh nail polish er sh(h)ort ski:::rts...

Nancy's 'Uh hu:h' in this excerpt can be characterised as a 'display of continued reciprocity'. C. Goodwin (1986) shows that continuers frequently are positioned at a particular place in the course of a speaker's turn - namely at or near the end of one phrasal or sentential unit and extending into the beginning of another.



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Continuers thus 'bridge turn-units', and show their producers passing on the opportunity to take the floor at what Sacks et al. (1974) termed a '(speaker) transition-relevance place'. In (12), for instance, Nancy's continuer bridges the end of the unit 'she wz like (.) fifteen er sixteen' and the beginning of Hyla's next unit, 'end her mother doesn't let 'er wear, .hh nail polish...'.  
Looking again at extract (10), we can notice similar features in the continuer produced by Emma (arrowed).

(10) [NB: II:2:19]

- Nancy: A::nd ah, h he seh that he: w'ss: hed tried  
t'call 'er on Mother's Day en, h .hhhhh  
A:n::d he id- (0.3) spent all da:y (.)  
yihknow tryin' t'call 'er: h [a:nd [she:]  
→ Emma: [·Mm hm:·]  
(.)  
Nancy: knows better th'n tha:t becuz Roul never  
stayed home all day tih call tanybudd<sub>y, h .hh</sub>  
Emma: <sub>n::NQ:</sub>

Here, Emma's continuer, 'Mm hm:', comes at a point in Nancy's ongoing turn which bridges the end of one unit, 'spent all da:y...tryin' t'call 'er', and the beginning of the next, 'a:nd she: (.) knqws better th'n tha:t'.

Now it turns out that Emma's 'Mm hm:', in addition to bridging two phrasal/sentential units of Nancy's extended turn at talk, also bridges two units of a different type - i.e., the two parts of a contrast structure beginning with *He said X*. And without necessarily wanting to advance a claim that Emma is shown thereby to be orienting to the specifically *contrastive* nature of Nancy's ongoing utterance, we can point to a markedly similar placement of continuers in the following excerpts from the talk radio corpus.

(1) [H:30.11.88:2:1] (Detail)

- Host: You talk about erm, (.) the rights of people  
to: make a choice as tuh whether they shop  
or not, [o:n ] a Sunday,=  
→ Caller: [Yes, ]  
Host: =what about .hh the people who may not have  
a choice a:s to whether they would work on  
a Sunday.  
Caller: .hh Well the la:w, aba- according to what they  
were saying the law will protect the workers...

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In (1), 'Yes,' is used as a continuer (see Schegloff, 1981:80). It comes, again, at what is hearable as the bridge between two turn-constructional units, even though the host tags 'o:n a Sunday' onto 'whether they shop or not' in overlap with the caller's 'Yes,'. And the two units which it bridges turn out to be the two parts of a sceptical contrast structure (respectively, a *You say X* and a *What about Y*).

(13) [H:21.11.88:11:31]

- Host: You say that you would not force people tuh do  
it, .h you do however accept that there is  
prejudice agenst .hh er certain kinds of, homes  
and er, [.hh] hospitals in communities [.hh] so=  
→ Caller: [Yeh] [Yeh]  
Host: =.h if: that prejudice exists people aren't  
going to gi:ve ti:me. Or money fuh that matter.  
Caller: [Well]  
no I- what I think is that these telethons a:re  
educating people but they're educating them in a  
certain wa:y...

In (13), the caller's first continuer comes in what appears to be a relatively embedded location (i.e. it is placed after the host has projected the continuation of his sentence with the conjunction 'and er,'). But the second, again, occurs at the bridge between phrasal units/contrast parts. Both continuers, like the 'Yes' in (1), signal the caller's acceptance of the host's attributed version of their position. But what they also appear to exhibit is the caller's recognition that, having produced this attribution, the host has not yet completed his turn, and that he is going on - and is being allowed to go on - to produce further units. As we see, in both cases, it is only once those further units - the *What about Y* half of the contrast - have been produced that callers go on to offer substantive responses to host's turns.

Thus, in these excerpts, we can see that a *You say X*-type utterance, while not perhaps projecting a specifically *contrastive* 'but...what about Y', nonetheless recognisably projects something 'more' from the speaker; and this implicativeness can be observably oriented-to by a recipient. In short, callers, while they may not

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necessarily be recognising that hosts are using *You say X* to begin a sceptical contrast structure, nonetheless exhibit a recognition that hosts are doing something 'more' than simply quoting their (i.e. callers') assertions back at them.

There are, however, examples in the data corpus where callers indeed appear to be orienting in a stronger way to the particular activity for which hosts regularly use *You say X*: i.e. the casting of aspersions, or projection of doubt. This orientation to activity-type can be observed in those cases in which callers appear to recognise and, in some way, attempt to resist the sceptical potential implied in an attribution. In extract (14), host and caller are arguing about the public hygiene problems caused by dogs fouling public walkways.

(14) [H:2.2.89:12:1-2]

- Caller: U:usually when a dog fouls:, .hh e::r it, it  
lea:ves--the scent that is left behind even  
if you:, qlean up with boiling wa:ter an'  
disinfectant, .hhh is a ma:rk. .h An'  
when 'e comes on 'is e::r, (w:-)wa:lk the  
next da:y, when 'e gets tuh that ma:rk, he  
does the same thing again.  
...
- 1→ Host: er you s-seem tuh be suggesting that they go  
t' the same place ev'ry ti:me. Bucuz they've  
been there buhfore,
- 2→ Caller: Ooh yes,=quite often ye:s.=  
Host: =Yeah but er(h)n(h) then:, .h e:r,=  
Caller: =An[d o:ther dogs will: 'also'.]  
Host: [this- this means that] they >never go  
in a< diff'rent pla:ce,=doesn't it.

The host attributes to the caller (arrow 1) the claim that dogs 'go' in 'the same place ev'ry ti:me'. In the second part of his contrast he casts doubt on this position by pointing out that 'this means that- they never go in a diff'rent pla:ce'. Thus the host uses the (attributed) extreme case formulation 'same place ev'ry ti:me' to turn the caller's version against itself by proposing that its claim goes against some kind of 'commonsense' logic.

But we can notice in addition that the host here is subtly *reformulating* the caller's account: whereas the caller, in his prior turn, has explicitly used the adverb 'usually', the host claims that the caller 'seem(s) to be suggesting that they go to the same place

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every time'. It is then noticeable that, at arrow 2, the caller tags onto his apparently acquiescent 'Ooh yes', the modifier 'quite often'. The caller, then, while appearing to be affirming the host's inference, is in fact offering a more cautious version of his position than that contained in the host's attribution. And it is clear that, if the caller's more cautious version were to be allowed to stand as a modification of the host's attribution, then the host could no longer complete the particular sceptical contrast which he has begun (i.e., 'quite often' could not be effectively contrasted by the host's 'never go in a< diff'rent place,').

It is thus significant that in his next turn the host utterly ignores the caller's 'quite often', and treats the prior turn simply as an affirmation. With his 'Yeah but er(h)n(h) then:, .h e:r,...' the host displays his intention to go on to do the second part of the contrast he has set up in the first turn of the fragment. The caller, however, having heard the host's 'Yeah but...', interpolates in what Jefferson (1986) calls 'interjacent' overlap position<sup>3</sup> a further tagged modifier - 'And other dogs will: also'. This time the host simply overrides the caller's utterance, doing his second contrast part in clear disregard of whatever it is the caller might be seeking to say.

Similar phenomena can be observed in extract (15) (which is an extended version of extract 11, above).

(15) [G:26.11.88:3:1]

- Caller: Uh what was s'p<sup>o</sup>se tuh happen y<sup>e</sup>sterda:y,  
it was an org- it was an o:rganised  
l<sup>o</sup>bb<sup>y</sup> of Parliament by: the National  
U<sup>o</sup>nion of Students.
- Host: \*M: mm, \*
- Caller: An' the idea was to make, .hh the public of  
England, an' Great Britain, .h aware, .h  
of: thee loans pro<sup>o</sup>sals.
- ...
- 1→ Host: Y<sup>o</sup>u say it was an organised demonstration by  
the National Union of Students. [=d<sup>o</sup> y-  
N<sup>o</sup> it wz'n]
- 2→ Caller: or- it was an organised l<sup>o</sup>bb<sup>y</sup>. .hh a:nd a  
m<sup>a</sup>rch, which was s'p<sup>o</sup>se tuh go: [to ( )  
We:ll you-]
- 3→ Host: y<sup>o</sup>u c'n organise a l<sup>o</sup>bb<sup>y</sup> or a m<sup>a</sup>rch it still

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amounts to a demonstration,=d'you think it  
got ou:t of hand?

Noticeably, again, the host quotes back at the caller a reformulated version of his (caller's) position (arrow 1): that is, the host transforms the caller's descriptor 'organised lobby' into the hearably more confrontational 'organised demonstration'. The caller detects this substitution and seeks to combat it (arrow 2), reasserting his own milder version, and adding further modulating components to it (that the lobby was *accompanied* by a march, that the march was originally *supposed* to go to a particular location...). Thus it might be said that the caller, like the caller in (14) with his substitution of 'quite often' for 'every time', is sensing some sceptical intent in the host's *You say X*, and attempting to forestall the host's contentious move.

The host nonetheless displays as clearly here as the host in (14) his intention to go on and complete his contrast in spite of the caller's interjection (arrow 3). Rather than attempting to ignore or override the interpolation, however, he begins by assimilating the caller's more cautious version to his own, now proposedly generic, category: 'you c'n organise a lobby or a march it still amounts to a demonstration'. He then rapidly goes on to produce the second part of the contrast (using the contrast set *organised/out of hand*) with an utterance which, we can now notice, he had earlier hearably begun in overlap with the caller's interjection: 'd'you think it got ou:t of hand?'.  
hand?'

Evidence is furnished of two significant phenomena of recipients' (i.e. callers') work, then. First, the use of continuers at the boundaries of *You say X*-type turn units demonstrates callers' recognition that such units can and indeed 'should' project something more from the host. That is, callers recognise and orient to the elliptical character of *You say X*. Second, callers' occasional attempts to modify hosts' first part attributions suggest that they may also recognise the potentially damaging work achieved by means of such a device, and can sometimes seek to resist this doubt-casting on the part of hosts.

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A final significance of this discussion lies in the fact that it again shows hosts 'pursuing controversy', and pursuing it singlemindedly with the use of contrast structures incorporating attributed positions. Hosts' building up of ad hoc arguments out of the details of callers' talk is not foxed, in fragments (14) and (15), by callers' attempts to modify positions they have had attributed to them through the use of more cautious versions. Rather, in both these excerpts hosts pursue the contrasts they have set up and thus cast the attendant aspersions regardless of callers' attempts at possible resistance.<sup>4</sup>

### **'They said it wouldn't happen here'**

On talk radio, disputation is both ad hoc and outright. Hosts have only the most general idea, prior to the caller's beginning to speak, of the possible contents of any particular call.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, if they want to construct arguments in pursuit of controversy they will have to closely monitor callers' accounts for potential arguables. At the same time, having located such features, the argument must be developed overtly and rapidly, given that hosts are working within a particular economy of broadcasting time in the space of which a large number of callers have to be dealt with.

A major resource which talk radio hosts draw on to construct such ad hoc arguments is a contrast structure built to the format *You say X, but what about Y*. This chapter has been devoted to an analysis of some interactional properties of such an argumentational device. We first saw how the device works as a rhetorically effective way for hosts to home in on the particulars of callers' accounts in order to find fault with and exhibit scepticism of those accounts. This rhetorical effectiveness was seen to be underlined by the fact that the citatory element of the device allows doubt to be projected not only through challenges to the evidential basis of a claim, but also by ironicising a caller's chosen way of putting their claim. Subsequently it was seen that callers can exhibit an orientation to the host's uttering of *You say X* as projecting something 'more', a

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but... Moreover, callers occasionally exhibit a recognition that this something more is a *sceptical* 'but...'; that is, they show, in their response, an orientation to the conventional use of *You say X*-type utterances as ways of keying in specifically doubt-casting remarks.

I want to draw this chapter to a close by making some more general points about the uses of this device in exhibiting scepticism and pursuing controversy.

We can note first of all that use of the sceptical device *You say X, but what about Y* is by no means restricted to talk radio hosts or to the kind of ad hoc argument characteristic of talk radio broadcasts. Other settings in which we find recursive use of the device include the broadcast news interview (both on radio and on television). Here is an example:

(16) [WAO:21.8.84] (IE=Interviewee, IR=Interviewer)

IE: The death of Sean (Giles) was tra:gic. I've expressed my sympathy to his fa:mily.=But it is the British who decided to use violence (.) to use murder (.) to use terrorism. .h I could not have foreseen that,

...

1→ IR: You say you have sympathy for the widow: and the chi::ld of Sean Downes

h[hh What do you: ]  
2→ IE: [I have sympathy for every]body=  
=[who has died in the past fifteen years.]  
3→ IR: [What (did you) have: for the ] widows  
and the children of RUC  
me[n and British Army soldiers.]  
IE: [hh I have sympathy for everybody  
who has died in the past fifteen years.]

Note here the interviewer's *You say X* at arrow 1 and his *What about Y* at arrow 3. Notice also the interviewee's modulating interpolation at arrow 2. In a similar way to the callers in talk radio extracts (14) and (15) the interviewee appears to be recognising some potentially damaging implications in the interviewer's attribution, and so attempting to forestall the interviewer's upcoming aspersion-casting. This extract is thus significant as a further illustration of the 'recognition/resistance' phenomenon which I have explored in relation to extracts (14) and (15) above. But it is also, and more importantly, suggestive of the more general availability and use in

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public settings of contrast structures with *You say X*-type initial components as oriented-to devices for the display of scepticism.

Another instance located in a broadcast interview context is of additional interest for our theme of how the device is used to 'pursue controversy'. Excerpt (17) comes from an encounter (originally broadcast in 1967) between the British TV personality David Frost and Emil Savundra, a businessman notorious for liquidating his insurance company leaving a large number of claims outstanding. The 'interview' is in fact more of a 'confrontation' (cf. Schegloff, 1988/9): taking place before Savundra's trial (at which he was convicted of fraud) it occurs in front of a studio audience consisting mainly of individuals having claims outstanding against the company, and Frost explicitly takes up a position opposed to Savundra, overtly attacking his claims throughout. At one point, such an attack is couched in the format of the *You say X* device:

- (17) [Frost Savundra 1967]
- Frost: You have- (0.5) you have total moral  
responsibility for ALL these people.
- Savundra: [I beg your pardon]
- Savundra: I beg your PARDON mister Frost.
- Audience: You have
- Savundra: I have not.
- Frost: How can you s- You say you're a Roman  
Catholic and [it's] the will of God.
- Savundra: [Yes,]
- Frost: .hh How can you be responsible and head of  
company when all these things happen.

Of particular interest here is the fact that Frost, in using the *You say X but what about Y* device to express scepticism of Savundra's arguments, does not actually begin, in the arrowed turn, by using the *You say...* formulation. Rather he begins to formulate his turn in a different way: 'How can you s-'. This appears to be a start on an utterance such as *How can you say X...* (e.g., 'that you're a Roman Catholic and it's the will of God'). The fact that he changes his mind about how to put his argument, altering his formulation from 'How can you s-' to 'You say you're a Roman Catholic...', provides good evidence of both the robustness, and the oriented-to relevance, of the *You say*



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*X* format as a rhetorically effective device for expressing scepticism in combative interactional environments.<sup>6</sup>

The format also crops up for similar purposes in other places. For instance, in a recent television adaptation of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story *The Yellow Wallpaper*<sup>7</sup> the following lines occurred:

(18) [Notebook]

Stark: You say your wife is neglecting her domestic duties, neglecting the home. But Charlotte is neglecting herself as well.

Here the (fictionalised) speaker is performing a similar operation on an attributed assertion as we saw the talk radio host doing with the caller's claim in extract (1) above. That is, he is using a contrast to point out the claim's empirical inadequacy.

The *You say X* format in short appears to be quite generally available in Anglo-American culture as a device for projecting doubt. This accounts not only for talk radio hosts' recursive use of the format as a means of seeking to undermine callers' positions, but also for callers' ability to recognise what is being done in the use of the device. It might be said, indeed, that *You say X, but what about Y* belongs to a syndrome of linguistic strategies, which can be dubbed the *They said it wouldn't happen here* syndrome. Basically, *They said it wouldn't happen here* is a conventionalised way of rather melodramatically implying that whatever 'it' is, it indeed *has* happened here. In the mere saying of *They said it wouldn't happen here* is implied a contrary actuality; and in a similar sense, in the mere saying of *You say X* seems to be implied that I, the speaker, don't agree with you.

The basic use of the utterance *You say X*, then, is as a preface to a dubitative counter. And this core usage might go some way towards accounting for the fact that on talk radio callers do not appear to use the device at all (i.e. we find no cases in the current data corpus), while hosts use it with some regularity. As I suggested at the outset of this chapter, the structural organisation of interaction within calls provides an initial framework in which callers and hosts respectively are 'situated' in the asymmetrical

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'first' and 'second' positions with respect to opinions on controversial matters. A result of this is that callers are generally oriented to the task of presenting their opinion and if necessary defending their line against the host's attacks, and therefore are not principally attuned to the remarks of the host in a sceptical mode; whereas hosts may be typically oriented to the task of pursuing controversy, finding *something to argue with* in what a caller is saying. Hosts thus adopt a stance of 'professional scepticism' vis-a-vis callers' claims, treating anything the caller says as potentially arguable. The combination of these institutionally relevant task-orientations with the core usage of the *You say X* format provides an explanation for the fact that generally speaking hosts make use of the device while callers do not.

Parenthetically, it would seem that similar points can be made about the occurrence of the device in news interviews. Interviewees are there to make a case in response to interviewers' questions; while the latter are often oriented to 'probing' their interviewee's case for faults or inconsistencies. Hence it might be predicted that *You say X*-type contrasts will be used more frequently by interviewers than by interviewees.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, we have seen here how *You say X, but what about Y* is a culturally available device for the accomplishment of doubt and disputation; and the operation of the device in disputes between hosts and callers on talk radio has been examined in some detail. We have also suggested how some task-orientations contingent for that context (and in related ways for others too) can account for the regular use of the device by the incumbents of particular social identities (professional broadcasters) and its rare or even non-use by others (lay callers, interviewees).

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## Confrontation Talk: Aspects of 'Interruption' in Argument Sequences

One way in which talk radio discourse is hearably argumentative derives from its especially 'confrontational' character. Often enough hosts, in their pursuit of controversy, appear not to be taking up positions counter to callers' positions on the basis of personal conviction, but rather to be developing counter-positions more or less for the sake of generating *confrontation*. And of course, as we've noted already (Chapter 4), callers' arguments themselves tend to be presented in a contentious manner. In this sense conflict talk on talk radio often seems to involve what might be called argument 'for its own sake'; or as I will prefer here, confrontation talk.

Among the ways in which this sense of 'confrontation talk' is brought off is, it seems, by the use of *interruption* as a verbal strategy to package classically argumentative actions such as challenges, rebuttals and ripostes. The present chapter takes as its theme that use of interruption in argument sequences, and considers a number of aspects of the way in which the activity of 'interrupting' may be bound up with the 'confrontational' character of certain spates of conflict talk on talk radio. The possibility explored here is that doing 'interruption' might be one way in which speakers can interactionally display that they are 'doing argument' or 'doing confrontation': one way in which they can frame (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974) or contextualise (Gumperz, 1982, 1992a) the current activity as 'argument' or 'confrontation'.

This sense of a relationship between interruption and confrontation has been explored before, notably by Schegloff (1988/9) in his study of the notorious Bush-Rather encounter on American TV,

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in which what was purportedly an interview given by then Presidential candidate George Bush to CBS anchorman Dan Rather turned into what was widely viewed as a 'confrontation' between the two men. Schegloff notes how, at several points, the 'confrontational' trajectory of the 'interview' seems to be marked precisely by the interruptive conversational behaviour of the antagonistic participants. A related point is made by Greatbatch (1992) in his study of the management of disagreements between antagonists in panel interview broadcasts, when he notes that interviewees 'commonly escalate their disputes by (a) moving out of...their institutionalised footings, and (b) producing their talk interruptively' (Greatbatch, 1992:291).

In this chapter I pursue this theme in some depth in relation to argument sequences on talk radio. I begin from a particular standpoint: a recognition of the status of 'interruption' as a members' evaluative construct, a category in which participants in everyday discourse routinely and unproblematically traffic, rather than merely a subclass of the technical category of 'speech overlap'. Following among others Talbot (1992:451), I try to show how 'attention to the occurrence of candidate interruptions [needs to] be coupled with attention to discursual indications of interactants' perceptions of them as interruptions'. This perspective is then used to investigate the ways in which doing 'interrupting' and 'being interrupted' are ways speakers have of framing their talk as confrontational.

Approaching interruption as an interactional and not just a sequential phenomenon allows us to discriminate particular uses of interruptive talk by hosts to construct controversy within the organisational constraints characterising the talk radio setting. Two such uses are focused upon. First, the use of interruption to accomplish the 'arguability' of the caller's version of events. And second, the use of interruption to constrain the discursive options available to callers at given moments. This latter strategy shows hosts exerting institutional control over the exchange by challenging the 'agenda-relatedness' of a caller's remarks and interrupting to press for an 'acceptable' response to such a challenge.

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I begin, however, by outlining in a little more detail how the category of interruption is to be used in the empirical sections which follow.

### **Perspectives on 'interruption'**

Part at least of the reason why interruption seems to be bound up with the escalation of confrontation in disputatious talk comes from our native sense of interruptions as *incursive* actions. As Talbot (1992:458) says: 'Interruptions are appropriations of a right to speak.' Or, in the technical argot of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), to interrupt is to start up on a turn at talk at a point which is not readily identifiable as a 'transition-relevance place': to start up in the course of a speaker's ongoing utterance before that utterance has reached a projectable 'completion point'. It is also effectively to deny the right of the interrupted speaker to take that current turn to such a transition-relevance place. There is thus both a sequential and a moral dimension to interruption: interruptions are violative on the level of turn-taking rules and on the level of interpersonal relations.

Hence it would seem that interruption is by definition not only an incursive act, but also a hostile one. However, to say 'by definition' is highly problematical in relation to the phenomenon of interruption, for a number of important reasons. First of all, 'interruption' is a concept that has currency both among lay participants in everyday interaction, and among professional analysts of interaction. And the concept is constructed and used differently in these differing constituencies. For lay speakers, interruption operates essentially as an evaluative construct, a category which 'participants can make use of to deal with currently prevailing rights and obligations in actual [speech] situations' (Bennett, 1981:176). Interruption thus takes the form, in everyday discourse, of an unavoidably moral (i.e., evaluative) feature of an interactional environment (Murray, 1985).

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Professional analysts, on the other hand, have often seen the need to develop sophisticated operational definitions by which to count and codify 'interruptions' (e.g., Ferguson, 1977; Beattie, 1983; Roger, Bull and Smith, 1988). One reason for this is the assumption, frequently made by social psychologists working with experimentally manipulated data, that interruption can be treated as an objective indicator of such personal and relational attributes as dominance, control, and power (see for a critical discussion, Drummond, 1989). As Goldberg (1990) points out, such an approach, in reifying interruptions as indicators of sociological variables, tends to ignore the interactional significance that interruptions have for interlocutors themselves (cf. Talbot, 1992). Recently however, as Goldberg observes, researchers interested in the social significance of interruption have come to see that 'the correlation of interruptions with power, control, and/or dominance is weaker than tacitly presumed' (1990:885). Some 'interruptions', it is recognised in these studies, 'may convey one's rapport, cooperation or camaraderie with the interrupted speaker' (Goldberg, 1990:885).

But these studies are still subject to a basic difficulty which Drummond (1989) has identified in the operationalist approach. Essentially, analysts who have sought to operationalise the concept of interruption, however wide the array of subcategories they deploy, repeatedly encounter problems which can be traced to their treatment of interruption as a 'subclass of speech overlap' (Drummond, 1989:150). In the operationalist approach, the coder decides on the basis of (often quite exhaustive - see e.g. Roger et al., 1988) technical criteria which of a set of instances of overlapping speech are to be categorised as 'interruptions', and of what particular subtypes of interruption they are to be examples. This results in two characteristic problems. First, as Drummond (1989) shows, it can lead to a premature categorisation of an interactional event as a straightforward instance of some 'interruption' subtype when a more considered analysis might lead to the revelation of orderlinesses operating in the local context of the talk at much more subtle levels (and see, for a sophisticated discussion of a variety of such orderlinesses, Jefferson, 1986).

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Second, and relatedly, it tends thereby to result again in a failure to take proper account of the participants' own displayed orientation to the 'interruptiveness' of particular overlaps - as evidenced, for instance, in the ways in which overlapped speakers might show, tacitly or overtly, that they are treating an interlocutor's utterance as interruptive by orienting to its bid for conversational floorspace as *illegitimate*. A good example is Beattie's (1982, 1983) well-known study of interruptions in political interviews. Using a coding scheme which is developed from Ferguson (1977), Beattie attempts to classify all 'attempted speaker switches' on the basis of three criteria: the 'success' of the attempt, whether or not there is 'simultaneous speech', and whether or not the first speaker's utterance is 'complete'. Beattie uses these criteria to come up with categories such as 'simple interruption', which is a *successful* speaker switch, involving *simultaneous speech*, in which the first speaker's utterance is *not complete*. On one level this is a similar definition to that suggested earlier: interruption as an incursive appropriation of the right to speak.

But on another level the category of 'simple interruption' is highly abstract, in that, for instance, it pays no attention to what an ongoing utterance's 'completeness' might consist in. That is to say, the analyst is not encouraged to attend to how the 'interrupting' speaker might be orienting to the current status of their interlocutor's utterance (e.g., in respect of whether its upcoming completion is projectable in some way); or to how the 'interrupted' speaker may react to the actions of their interlocutor. As Clayman (1987:20-26) shows, by reanalysing some of Beattie's examples, coding for 'completeness' (and for other criteria) is done on the basis of Beattie's native intuitions, not on the basis of a consideration of the local interactional particulars of the talk.'

In sum, operationalist approaches ultimately seek to treat 'interruption' as a *thing*, whereas for participants in real-time interaction interruption is a *deed*. What operational studies do, basically, is subcategorise and then count and correlate instances of interruption treated as a subclass of speech overlap. What they mostly fail to do is to pay enough attention to the interactional

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uses of interruption - what interruption is being used to *do* in particular interactional contexts.

This brings us back, then, to the possibilities of considering the use of interruption in doing confrontation talk on the grounds of its properties as a 'moral' as well as a sequential event. If, for participants in interaction themselves, 'interruption' is a social activity that amounts to something like the act of *starting to speak 'in the midst of' another's speech; not letting another 'finish'*, then there may be an analytical pay-off in attending to the situated practices of doing 'interrupting', and also of doing 'being interrupted'.

In this chapter I try to retain the focus, implicit within the mundane perspective, on interruption as an interactionally as well as a sequentially violative act. This focus allows us to approach candidate interruptions as something more than simple subtypes of speech overlap. Candidate interruptions become treatable as unavoidably moral features of an interactional environment; and at the same time as interactionally achieved features of the production of a certain kind of talk - in the present case, 'confrontation talk'.

### **Interruption and confrontation**

As Goldberg (1990) observes, speakers who produce utterances which 'interrupt' an interlocutor's speech on the sequential level may, on the interactional level, be engaging in either disaffiliative or affiliative actions. Goldberg's study seeks to distinguish between interruptions that are 'power' displays and those which are 'rapport' displays by focusing on the motivations of their producers: 'distinguish[ing] between those interruptions seemingly motivated by the interactional rights and obligations of the moment, and those seemingly produced to satisfy personal...needs or wants' (Goldberg, 1990:885). Less attention is paid to another dimension of this distinction, however: that of the different ways in which interruptees may react to *being* interrupted, thereby displaying their own



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orientation to the affiliative or disaffiliative nature of the incursion.

This dimension is significant for our theme of the relationships between interruption and confrontation because on many occasions, speakers who start up at a point which is not a proper transition-relevance place - or at a point which *for current speaker* is not such a place - are sanctioned or rebuked by their coparticipants for having made an illegitimate bid for the floor. Extract (1), taken from the talk radio data, is a particularly clear example.

(1) [H:2.2.89:4:1-2]

Caller: As you c'n imagine I wuz absolutely: .  
           livvi d(h),  
 Host:        [We:ll did you- did yih then ek- explain  
               that- yew- un:derstood. that, yihknow do:gs  
               have the call of nature just as: er as people  
               do: i .hh ] an' they don't have the same kind=  
 Caller:       [eYe:is,  
 Host:        =uv control and so the[re]fore th- s-sq  
 → Caller:        [No: i but dogs] cun  
               be t r a i n e d , ]  
 → Host:        [ m- I haven't fi[n]ished, so therefore thee  
               owner, .hhh er whether you train them or not is  
               not rilly:, quite the point, but the owner,  
               being there has thuh responsibility...]

Here, the fact that the caller's bid for the floor (first arrow) is treated by the host as an *illegitimate* incursion is clear from the way he explicitly sanctions her (second arrow): 'I haven't finished', before resuming his utterance at its precise cut-off point: 'so therefore thee owner...has thuh responsibility'.

In other cases where a speaker starts up before a current speaker's utterance is 'transition ready', we do not find the incursion being subject to negative evaluation. Take the following instance, from ordinary conversation.

(2) [NB:II:4:R:16]

Nancy: He's jist a ri:l sweet GU↓\*:y.  
           .h .t [ .hhhhh  
 Emma:        [↑WONder↓f\*ul.  
 Nancy:        ↑Sq: we w'r [s\*itting in]  
 → Emma:        [YER LIFE] is CHANG[ing].  
 Nancy:        [↑↑EEYE::AH]

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Emma's arrowed turn is 'interruptive' in the sequential sense - it begins before Nancy's ongoing utterance has reached a projectable completion point - but it does not seem to conform to the sense of interruption as a hostile act. In fact it is an *affiliative* utterance, expressing Emma's pleasure at the fact that Nancy (a divorcee) has found a new boyfriend (the 'ri:l sweet GU:y' Nancy refers to). And Nancy's recognition of the utterance's affiliative character is visible in the unhesitating and enthusiastic 'EEYE:AH' with which she responds.

Hence speakers who have been 'interrupted' can respond in different ways to their coparticipants' action. They can react negatively or positively to an interruptive bid for turn-space. It is not necessarily the case, therefore, that turns which are interruptive in the 'sequential' sense get treated as interruptive in the 'moral' sense. What it may be possible to say, however, is that the way in which a bid for turn-space gets treated along the moral dimension by a current speaker can often play a significant part in rendering such a bid 'interruptive'. On this view, although of course it is possible for a speaker to *intend* to interrupt a coparticipant, it is similarly possible that a turn which may not be intentionally interruptive can become constituted as an interruption through the reaction of an 'interruptee'.<sup>2</sup>

We can also note, in line with Goldberg's (1990) approach, that the particular activities being engaged in by the overlapping speakers in extracts (1) and (2) are different. In (2), as we saw, Emma is doing 'congratulations', and hence is engaging in an affiliative act. In (1), by contrast, the caller is 'disagreeing' with what she takes as the host's position, and hence is engaging in a disaffiliative act. In treating her overlapping response as an interruption, the host notably also treats it as an argumentative move - notice that he momentarily abandons his self-retrieval, 'so therefore thee owner', to insert a retort to the caller's overlap: 'er whether you train them or not is not rilly:, quite thuh point'.

A further sense of the interactionally relevant distinction between the sequential and the moral senses of interruption emerges if we look at some ways in which the action being done in an

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incursive utterance can serve to 'neutralise' the morally interruptive dimension of a sequentially interruptive bid for the floor. Extract (3) is taken from a telephone conversation, and shows how exogenous events - happenings occurring outside the immediate conversational context - can occasion 'legitimate' interruptions.

(3) [MDE:60-1:3:1-2]

Sheila: What time did 'e get on the pla:ne.

Tom: Uh:: (0.2) I: dɒn't know exæctly I think  
it wɜ arou:nd three o'clock er something  
a'that sort.  
(0.2)

Sheila: Oh: maybe he g[ot s'm- ]  
Tom: [He took it] et fou:r.

↳ Gerda says.

Tom starts his second utterance of the extract (arrowed) in a position clearly prior to the possible completion of Sheila's ongoing sentence: 'Oh: maybe he g//ot s'm...'. So in purely sequential terms, he 'interrupts' her. But note precisely what Tom is doing here. In his previous turn, he has provided a vague answer to Sheila's question, 'What time did 'e get on the pla:ne'. Evidently, a third party at Tom's end of the line, Gerda, hears this vague answer, surmises the gist of Sheila's question, and calls to Tom what she knows to be a more accurate time. And Tom interrupts Sheila in order to convey this new information: 'He took it et fou:r. Gerda says.'

There is no hostile intent evident on Tom's part in this excerpt. He is making an incursion into a coparticipant's ongoing utterance in order to do a kind of interactional activity which, in our culture at least, may legitimately be done in such a position. That is, there are some actions which, by virtue of their nature, can be done and indeed should be done 'now', at the moment of their immediate relevance, without regard for whether a cospeaker is 'now' in the middle of an unfinished utterance or not. Conveying better or additional information furnished by a third party, as in extract (3), is one such action. Others include warnings (*Don't touch that, it's hot; Watch out for that pothole!*) and extraordinary noticings (*Look at that!; Did you see that?*).

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In another type of instance we see the moral dimensions of 'interrupting' expressly oriented to by coparticipants. For example, in the following case, taken from the talk radio data, a host formulates (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970) what he is doing as 'interrupting'.

(4) [G:26.11.88:7:1]

- Caller: I'm actually phoning in: support of the  
stu:dents, .hh and also be//cus I:--  
→ Host: [Wuh e-ca- can I  
→ just interrupt you, wu- [were] w-were you=  
→ Caller: [Yes.]  
Host: =actually on the demonstr[ation yesterday?  
Caller: [No: I: . wasn't,

The host here begins a question in a sequentially incursive position: his 'Wuh' (first arrow) comes in the middle of an ongoing sentence from the caller: 'and also be//cus...'. But notice that the host then interposes a kind of apology for this incursive start-up: 'can I just interrupt you,'. And the caller, a moment later, acknowledges this displayed orientation on the host's part to the 'interruptive' status of his turn, and assents to his taking the floor, with 'Yes.' (third arrow).

This case illustrates how on occasion, the hostile or negative connotations which may attach to the production of an interruptive bid for turn-space can be prospectively neutralised by an interruptor. A speaker starting an utterance in the midst of a cospeaker's ongoing utterance may use a component such as *Can I just interrupt you* in order to (a) exhibit for cospeaker an orientation to the possibility of negative evaluation of their interactional move, and (b) show that, in this case, no hostility is intended.

The point so far then is that the phenomenon of 'interruption' is not best understood simply as a particular type of speech overlap. Rather, in line with the evident orientations of members themselves, interrupting is to be treated as an interactional *deed* (Murray, 1985; Drummond, 1989; Talbot, 1992). 'Interruption' can be seen as an accomplishable feature of given interactional environments, as a social resource by means of which one speaker does something to, or else is treated as having done something to, another.

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In the confrontation talk characteristic of argument sequences on talk radio this sense of interruption as a 'deed', and moreover as a largely hostile deed, emerges in episodes such as the following, where the sequential and the moral aspects of interruption coalesce.

(5) [H:21.11.88:6:1]  
Caller: .hh But I expect tuh get a lot mo:re.  
Host: Sq?  
Caller: .h Now the point is there is a limit to ( )-  
→ Host: What's that  
got tuh do- what's that got tuh do with  
telethons though.  
Caller: hh Because telethons yesterday (0.6) e::rm wuz  
appealing tuh people, (.) to: send in fo:r  
various things.

(6) [H:23.1.89:10:2]  
Host: Yih can't change things overni:ght  
...  
You c'n make a decision, (0.3) but to  
actually, (0.3) carry that ou:t overnight  
cannot be do:ne. .thh What you would  
do: obviously,  
→ Caller: B't if you can't change things why do  
we 'ave a Labour government en then a:ll a  
sudden o:vernight we gotta Tuh- we've got  
a: a Tory government.  
Host: I didn't say you couldn'  
change things,

(7) [H:21.11.88:11:1-2]  
Caller: the thing that worries me is that I think  
it actually creates a sense uh separateness  
between the people who're giving and the  
people who get.  
(0.8)  
Caller: If you try: to-  
→ Host: Well there is a separateness  
without the telethon.  
Caller: Well: , yeah but e:r, I- I think we should be  
working at breaking down that separateness.

In each of these cases, an incoming speaker (the host in excerpts 5 and 7, the caller in excerpt 6) starts in on a turn in a sequentially 'interruptive' position - that is, in each case when incoming speaker starts up, current speaker is clearly embarked on a turn or turn-component which is not finished: their turn is not 'transition-ready'. But notably, also, in each case incoming speaker is starting up in

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this position to do an argumentative interactional move. Thus in extract (5), the host cuts off the caller's utterance, 'Now the point is there is a limit...' to do a disclaimer-type challenge: 'What's that got tuh do...with telethons though'. Similarly, in (7), the host cuts off the caller's 'If you try: to...', begun after a marked pause of (0.8) seconds (this being an appropriate place for a speaker transition), with a rebuttal: 'Well there is a separateness without the telethon'.

With these instances we can begin to get a stronger sense of how, in argument sequences, confrontation and interruption can become bound up together, in the sense that antagonists will often 'do' being confrontational precisely by aggressively invading each other's legitimate conversational floor-space, attempting to close each other down - in short, by 'interrupting'. In the following sections, I analyse this issue in closer detail; and look at some of the patterned ways in which interruption is used in the talk radio data to struggle over the argumentative lines being pursued in calls.

#### **Pressing the point home**

In the following extended episode of conflict talk from a call to a talk radio show, the dispute between caller and host seems to become progressively more confrontational. In the course of the excerpt, three interruptive episodes occur (arrows 1-3); and this series of episodes appears to mark an increasingly confrontational trajectory between the participants as each tries to press his/her point home.

For background, the caller and host are carrying on an argument about what the caller believes is the hypocrisy involved in a recent visit by the Princess of Wales to the United States. The caller has underlined her point by drawing a contrast between two facts. First that the Princess of Wales will be staying in a 'thousand pounds a night hotel'; and second that during her stay she will be 'visiting homeless people'. Moreover, the caller notes that there will be 'a ball, where the Americans are clamouring for tickets at a thousand pounds each'.<sup>9</sup> The host argues that there is no hypocrisy here

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because, he claims, 'the money for the ball (is) going to charity'. The extract begins at the point where the caller, in response to this latter claim of the host's, has shifted the line back to her earlier point about the price of the hotel suite.

(8) [H:2.2.89:3:2]

- Caller: ...but a thou:sand pounds a night et e- a  
he- at a hotel is: (.) [I: think is still=  
Host: [We- n- n-  
Caller: =o- bscene.  
Host: [S:o you think it's all right the:n, er::m  
if: they pay a thousand pounds tuh go tuh  
this ba:ll, .h if it's fuh ch-arity.  
Caller: [No::i,  
Caller: I:, well if- ↑We'll I s'p-ose so yes but I  
min if it go:es tuh charity but we're not  
told that. .h Beh I min I [don't know the-  
1→ Host: [Well what d'you  
think it's going to.  
Caller: I've no- 'aven't a ↑clu:e.  
(.)  
Host: E:r, well if you haven't a clu::e,  
you m-ight-  
2→ Caller: [Ye:h well ahmin whe:re  
d'you [think it's going] to.  
Host: [you- you might've-  
Host: I think it's going to charity.  
Caller: (di-) But you don't know do you.  
Host: Ehrm I'm almost su:re.  
(.)  
Caller: We:ll,  
(.)  
Caller: [(Oh!-)  
Host: [But you had no idea.  
Caller: ↑No I- well I [m being honest. ]  
3→ Host: [And you came to a ] con-=  
Caller: =-You don't ] know e:i-ther.  
Host: [You ha(d) yi- ] [You came to a  
conclusion wuthahdenny- without any idea  
and without ↑even taking it into  
consideration.  
Caller: Bud I ↑still think all right, weh- we  
dgn't know where the- money's going t'  
(whether) charity bud I still thing a  
thou:sand pou:nds a night at a hote:l,  
.hhh a:nd the fact that she's going on tuh  
visit (p) ho:meless peopu:l,...

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In this extract we see three instances of sequentially interruptive overlaps being used to do interactionally hostile actions. And we also see something of how these interruptions are used as a part of each speaker's attempts to gain or maintain the argumentative initiative.

Just before the extract begins, as I remarked, the caller has backed down in the face of the host's retortive claim that 'the money for the ball (is) going to charity'. The first few lines thus show the host attempting to underline this small victory by having the caller admit that 'it's all right the:n...if: they pay a thousand pounds tuh go tuh this ba:ll, .h if it's fuh charity.' And the caller indeed concedes the point; although she immediately qualifies the concession, noting that 'we're not told' that the money is going to charity.

A moment later the caller apparently attempts to open up another line of argumentative attack with the disjunct-marked, 'Beh [But] I min I// don't know the...'. It is in the midst of this utterance, at a point where (1) it is clear that the caller has embarked on a next turn-component, but (2) nothing substantive has been said, that the host interrupts with a combative challenge, 'Well what d'you think it's going to.' (arrow 1). With this turn the host successfully maintains the argumentative initiative he had gained just prior to the excerpt's opening, by effectively disallowing the caller's signalled attempt to raise some next related matters; and as it turns out starting up a to-and-fro, who-knows-what argument which takes up most of the rest of the excerpt.

It is in the course of this who-knows-what confrontation that the two further instances of interruption found in the extract occur (arrows 2 and 3). At arrow 2, the caller, who has so far been on the defensive against the host's attacks on her complaint, suddenly takes up an aggressive stance, interrupting the host's scornful 'well if you haven't a clu::e, you m//ight (have)...' with a challenge linking back to his prior interruptive challenge to her (at arrow 1): 'Ye:h well ahmin whe:re d'you think it's going to.'<sup>4</sup> And at this point we see the host doing something reminiscent of the way the host in extract (1) reacted to the caller's 'illegitimate' bid for turn-space: that is, he



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refuses to cede the floor cleanly once the caller's bid has got underway. It is very frequently the case, at least in certain non-combative interactional environments, that speakers who are overlapped, even in what Jefferson (1986) calls 'interjacent' position (i.e. before an ongoing turn is 'transition-ready'), quickly drop out of competition for the floor. In excerpts (9), (10) and (11), interjacently overlapped speakers readily cede the floor soon after overlap onset.

(9) [SBL:2:2:3:R:38]

Zoe: an' he sorta ↓scares me, h  
 Amy: Have you seen 'im?  
 Zoe: .hhh We:ll I(m) I've '↓met eem, '  
 Amy: .hhhhh W'l \*uh\* actually: [when she's ] ↑  
 → Zoe: [En the way th-eiy  
 ↓pla:y. Oh-:  
 (.)  
 Amy: Serious huh?  
 Zoe: .h ↑Y-ah,

(10) [TRIO:2:III:1]

Marjorie: We:ll? She doesn't kno:w. uhhh:  
 huhh-huh-huhh-huh-huh-heh-heh]  
 Loretta: [Q h h m h y G h o : d, ]=  
 Marjorie: =hhhhh Well it [w'z 'n] ↑  
 → Loretta: [Er you watching Dakari:?  
 (0.2)  
 Marjorie: nNo:,  
 (.)  
 Loretta: Oh my go:sh Office Henry is (.) ul-locked  
 in the ca:ge wi- (0.3) witha lion.

(11) [SBL:2:2:3:R:42-3]

Claire: So: uh:::: she said [don't worry about i:t=  
 Chloe: [Mm hm, '  
 Claire: =an:d so en I jus thought .hh the nex'  
 ti::me u-thet [I have- ] ↑  
 → Chloe: [No:w uh se-e Pat anno:ys my  
 ↓Frank. hh  
 (0.3)  
 Claire: Ye:↓ah.  
 (0.2)  
 Chloe: Uh he:'s told me ↓that.

In each case here, the topical line is in a minor way 'hijacked' by an incoming speaker. But in no case does the overlapped speaker overtly sanction their coparticipant for engaging in a morally dubious

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activity. Indeed, once they have dropped out, each one subsequently topicalises the hijacker's line with short utterances like 'Serious huh?' or 'No:, ' or 'Ye:ah.'.<sup>5</sup>

In extract (1), by contrast, the host displays his negative evaluation of the caller's overlap by (a) announcing, as the caller is speaking, that he 'hasn't finished', and (b) explicitly resuming his utterance at its cut-off point once the caller has stopped speaking.

(1) [H:2.2.89:4:1-2]

Host: We:ll did you- did yih then ek- explain  
that- yew- un:derstood. that, yihknow dɔ:gs  
have the call of nature just as: er as people  
do: [i .hh ] an' they don't have the same kind=  
Caller: [eYe:is, ]  
Host: =uv contro:l and so the [refore th- s-sɔ ]  
Caller: [No:i but dɔ:gs ] cun  
be t- r a i i n e d , ]  
a→ Host: [m- I haven't fi- nished,  
b→ so therefore thee owner, ... being there has thuh  
responsibility...

Here a basic characteristic of overlap in conversation, which is visible for instance in fragments (9)-(11) - namely its *minimisation* (Jefferson and Schegloff, 1975) - is markedly absent. Just after the onset of overlap, the host cuts off in a similar way to overlapped speakers in the conversational fragments: 'so the//refore th-'. But he immediately attempts a re-start: 's-sɔ-', before cutting off again prior to doing his explicit sanction, 'm- I haven't finished'.

At arrow 2 in extract (8) we see a similar phenomenon. The host (a) cuts off just after overlap onset, but then (b) attempts, while the caller is still speaking, to restart the second part of his interrupted *if-then*-type utterance.

(8) [Detail]

Host: E:r, well if you haven't a clu::e,  
a→ you might-  
Caller: [Ye:h well ahmin whe:re  
d'you [think it's going ] to.  
b→ Host: [you- you might've ]  
Host: I think it's going to charity.

Although the host's next full turn, 'I think it's going to charity', comprises a response to the caller's interruption rather than (as in

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1) a self-retrieval in clear turn-space, his evident unwillingness to cede the floor to her interruption once again shows how the confrontational or combative nature of 'interruptions' can become visible precisely in the actions of an interrupted party him or herself.<sup>6</sup>

A few moments later in the excerpt we see a third spate of interruptive talk, during which neither party shows willingness to cede the floor. Instead we find caller and host 'talking over' one another in a simultaneous attempt to press home their respective points.

(8) [Detail]

- Host: But you had no idea.  
1→ Caller: ↑No I- well I [ 'm being honest. ]  
2→ Host: [ And you came to a ] con==  
3→ Caller: = [ You don't ] know ei:i [ ther. ]  
4→ Host: [ You ha(d) yi ] [ You came to a +5  
conclusion wuthahdenny- without any idea  
and without even taking it into  
consideration.

At arrow 1, the caller embarks on a response to the host's riposte, 'But you had no idea', with an attempt to neutralise its argumentative force: 'No I- well I// 'm being honest.' The host interrupts the caller at arrow 2 with an utterance linked to his prior riposte: 'And you came to a (conclusion)...'. Note here, first, that the caller's overlapped turn is not abandoned at or shortly after the onset of overlap (as in excerpts 2, 5-7, and 9-11), but is taken to a recognisable first completion point. Hence, again, evidence is provided of the caller's orientation to the illegitimate nature of the host's 'interruption' by virtue of the fact that she thereby refuses to let him hijack her point.

But note also the host's cut-off (arrow 2), 'con-', just at the point where he has obtained clear turn-space. Evidently, this cut-off is done in preparation for a post-overlap 'recycle' (Schegloff, 1987b), which indeed immediately follows: 'You ha(d)...' (arrow 3). Yet at the precise moment this recycle begins, the caller has embarked on a linked second part to her prior rebuttal: 'You don't know ei:ither' (arrow 3). And again, the caller does not drop out of the ensuing

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competition for turn-space, while the host does drop out but only in preparation for the recycle which he produces as soon as an upcoming transition-relevance place is projectable (arrow 5).

In this excerpt then we find a spate of talk that is combative not only in terms of what it is about, but also in terms of how it is done. In the caller's refusal to cede the floor to the host's interruption, and her subsequent determination to press her point home in overlap at arrow 3, and in the host's own determination to press home the point by recycling his turn until he finds himself in clear turn-space (arrow 5), we glimpse again a relationship between the sequential and the moral aspects of confrontation talk. Here, and in the other features of extract (8) we have looked at, we start to see more clearly how particular ways of talking - e.g. interruptively, incursively - and of reacting to the talk of a coparticipant - e.g. as interruption, incursion - can be bound up with the 'framing' (in the sense of Bateson, 1972, and Goffman, 1974) of the talk as 'confrontation talk'.

#### **Uses of interruption I: 'Reining back'**

So far I have shown some ways in which interruption can be viewed analytically, yet in line with the commonsense account, as a moral feature of an interactional environment, as a communicative deed rather than as merely a type of speech overlap. But this approach can be applied to examine in more detail how interrupting is an activity bound up with the accomplishment of confrontation talk specifically within the organisational constraints characterising talk radio as an institutional locus for disputation. As a cultural institution, talk radio allocates particular interactional tasks to the incumbents of particular speaker identities. We have seen, for instance, that callers have as their basic task the presentation of an opinion on some issue of the day, formulated as their reason for calling the show (Chapter 4). Hosts on the other hand orient to these opinion-presentations in a 'professionally sceptical' manner, monitoring the details of callers' arguments in the pursuit of controversy (Chapter

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5). A way in which hosts can be seen to be orienting to the contextual relevance of 'argument' or 'confrontation' in their dealings with callers is in their frequent use of a particular interruptive strategy which involves something akin to 'reining back' the development of a caller's line of talk.

The episode at arrow 1 of extract (8) provides an example of this kind of interruptive move.

(8) [H:2.2.89:3:21 (Detail)

Caller: if it goes tuh charity but we're not  
told that. (.) .h Beh I min I [don't know the-  
→ Host: [Well what d'you  
think it's going to.  
Caller: I've no- 'aven't a tclue.

Here we can note that, sequentially speaking, the caller has come to the completion of one turn-construction unit with 'but we're not told that.' This point comprises a possible transition-relevance place (Sacks et al., 1974). The caller subsequently holds the floor by starting up on another sentence ('Beh I min...'). Before this new sentence has really got anywhere, however, the host starts up on his retort: 'Well what d'you think it's going to'.

The host interrupts in a particular sequential position which has been identified by Jefferson (1986), in her work on the systematics of overlapping talk, as a standard position for the onset of turn-incursive overlap: namely *post-continuation* onset. 'Post-continuation', Jefferson remarks, seems

a reasonable enough place to 'interrupt'. For example, if what has been - adequately and syntactically possibly completely - said so far is something to which a recipient wants to respond, and now it looks like the speaker is at least continuing and perhaps moving on to other matters, then one might want to get in now, while the initial matter is still relevant, even if it means interrupting. (Jefferson, 1986:160)

This 'getting in now' can be done when a recipient wants to make some affiliative or cooperative response to something a speaker has said, as in the following extracts (12)-(14). In each case, as Jefferson remarks, a next speaker starts up 'just after current

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speaker has produced a clear indication of going on, following a possible completion' (1986:159).

- (12) [SBL:3:1:R:6]  
Amy: all thet stuff Marylou<sub>i</sub>? requires a  
lo::tta spa:ce. Ah me<sub>a:n</sub> i h ] .hhh  
→ Marylou: [Specially] if yer  
gonna have it open fuh the public,

- (13) [SCC:DCD:26]  
Bryant: that braiding that wouldn't of been touched  
with 'n i:yn. The m<sub>o</sub>:st we'd of done  
→ Sokol: [O h : n o a : w]right,  
steam.

- (14) [NB:IV:4:R:4]  
Emma: cuz you see she wz: depending on: h<sub>h</sub>im takin'  
'er in tuh the L.A. deeple S:- depot  
Sundee so ['e siz]  
→ Nancy: [Ah:'ll] take 'er in:

In each case here the second speaker's move is in some sense (a) incursive, but also (b) affiliative. The arrowed turns are incursive in that they begin one or two syllables into what is clearly a continuation in occupancy of the floor by current speaker, following the production of turn-units that are intonationally and/or syntactically complete. But those incursive utterances package cooperative actions: for instance, in (14), Nancy's overlapping utterance comprises an offer of help occasioned by Emma's reporting of some trouble encountered by her daughter in getting to 'the L.A. depot Sundee'. And in (12) and (13), Marylou and Sokol respectively are producing variform agreements with what their interlocutors are saying (in the latter case, Sokol's 'Oh: no a:wright, steam', evidently represents a backdown from a previous assertion).

But as the episode at arrow 1 of excerpt (8) illustrates, post-continuation overlaps can also be used to do essentially combative or argumentative actions.

- (8) [H:2.2.89:3:2]  
Caller: if it g<sub>o</sub>:es tuh charity but we're not  
t<sub>o</sub>ld that. (.) .h Beh I min I [don't know the-  
→ Host: [Well what d'you  
think it's going to.  
Caller: I've no- 'aven't a t<sub>o</sub>clue.

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Here the host is 'getting in now' with a retort to a remark of the caller's which he has identified as an 'arguable' (Maynard, 1985). Evidently the host recognises in the caller's micropause, short inbreath and disjunct-marker 'Beh' (i.e. 'But') that the caller is possibly moving on to some next related point, and so he jumps in with an interruption which effectively 'reins back' that inchoate development.

If we look at some further examples of post-continuation interruption drawn from argument sequences on talk radio, we find a recurrence of this feature: in each of extracts (7), (15) and (16) below the host interrupts a clear continuation on the caller's part to rein back the line of talk, having it seems identified an arguable which, by virtue of the caller's possible move on to next related matters, is in imminent danger of disappearing below the horizon of conversational relevance.

But a further striking feature emerges in these cases, which is itself related to the 'confrontational' nature of this set of interruptions. This is that in each case, the amount of talk that gets produced by current speaker (caller) following a syntactic/intonational completion and prior to next speaker's (host's) start-up, is substantially more than was the case in excerpts (12)-(14).

(7) [H:21.11.88:11:1-2]

Caller: the thing that worries me is that I think  
it actually creates a sense uh separateness  
between the people who're giving and the  
people who get. [(0.8) If you try:] [to-  
→ Host: [(1.2) ] [Well there is a  
separateness without the telethon.

(15) [H:21.11.88:11:1]

Caller: I think this is a- a clea::n way of giv- of  
getti- get- salving yuh conscience, tuh just pick  
up the credit ca:rd and uh .hh .t.k pay thuh money.  
[= .h There's a big contra] [diction-  
→ Host: [(1.0) ] [Well if people want to  
do that why nqt.

(16) [G:26.11.88:7:1]

Caller: My real point is that I'm: very concer:ned, .hh  
about thee, (0.5) (kh) the lack of freedom of

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speech in this country at the moment.  
→ Host: [ .hhh Erm, this first ca ] [ me tuh my:-  
(1.4) ] [ What d'you mean by- What  
d'you mean by that Ann,

In these excerpts, callers continue in active speakership following a possible transition-relevance place for between one and one-and-a-half seconds; in contrast to the one-and-a-bit syllables of the continuations in fragments (12)-(14), these continuations proceed for between three and five syllables before hosts start up on incursive turns.

Most graphic in this sense, perhaps, is excerpt (7). There the caller completes a turn-unit at 'the people who get.' This is followed by a substantial pause of 0.8 seconds. It's only after the caller has produced three complete words of his next sentence that the host comes in with his riposte: 'Well there is a separateness without the telethon.'

There are, then, two major ways in which we can trace the argumentative and confrontational uses of post-continuation interruptions in these instances. One way in which this second set of interruptions in post-continuation position differs from the first is in terms of the sheer amount of talk that next speaker lets go by before making a bid for the floor. The other is in terms of the host interrupting a continuation on the caller's part to 'rein back' the line of talk, so as respond to an arguable action which the caller's continuation places in imminent danger of losing its hearable contextual relevance.

Post-continuation interruption is a strategy typically adopted by hosts. This is not exclusively the case, as is shown by extract (6) which involves a caller making argumentative use of post-continuation interruption.

(6) [H:23.1.89:10:2]  
Host: You c'n make a decision, (0.3) but to  
actually: (0.3) carry that out overnight  
cannot be done. .thh What you would  
do: obviously,  
→ Caller: [ But if you can't change things why do  
we 'ave a Labour government en then a:ll a



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sudden overnight we gotta Tuh- we've got  
ai, a Tory government.

But apart from this clear example there are virtually no other cases of callers interrupting to rein back a host's line of talk. Overwhelmingly it is hosts who use this kind of interruption to render arguable selected claims made by callers.

There is a sense in which this use of post-continuation interruption by hosts is linked to a particular organisational feature of talk radio disputation. Hosts who seek to 'construct controversy' out of the things that callers call in to say need to orient to callers' claims as 'potential arguables'. And once an arguable has been identified, it has to be argued with there and then. Given the restricted economy of talk-time within which hosts have to hear and comprehend callers' opinions and then, if they wish, dispute them (the average length of a call being around 1½ minutes), it does not pay to let any arguable go unargued-with. This practice of jumping in to rein back a possible move on from a particular claim or assertion is one way in which hosts can be seen accomplishing the 'arguability' of callers' accounts. In that accomplishment, hosts are simultaneously accomplishing, at least in part, the sense of 'confrontation' as a feature of talk radio discourse. The use of interruption in post-continuation reining back thus illustrates how discursive moves which are 'interruptive' in both sequential and interactional senses can be used in the production of confrontation within the specific organisational constraints characteristic of talk radio shows as an institutional setting for conflict talk.

**Responding to interruption: Retrieving the line**

Again, with the argumentative episodes, their character as interruptive on the interactional or moral dimension can be traced in the reactions of interruptees. In non-argumentative talk, it is frequently the case that speakers who are overlapped in interjacent position will subsequently topicalise their interlocutor's bid for the floor. I remarked on this kind of occurrence earlier in relation to

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extracts (9)-(11). In extract (9), for instance, note that although Amy abandons her turn very shortly after Zoe starts up in overlap, at the completion of Zoe's turn Amy does not attempt to retrieve her abandoned line but rather topicalises Zoe's line with 'Serious huh?', thereby returning the floor to Zoe.

- (9) [SBL:2:2:3:R:38]
- Zoe: an' he sorta ↓scares me, h  
 Amy: Have you seen 'im?  
 Zoe: .hhh We:ll I(m) I've \*↓met eem,\*  
 → Amy: .hhhhh W'l \*uh\* actually: [when she's ]  
 Zoe: [En the way th]e:ly  
 ↓pla:y. Oh-:  
 (.)  
 → Amy: Serious huh?  
 Zoe: .h ↑Y-ah,

By contrast, in argument sequences, the kind of post-continuation interruptions discussed in the previous section regularly result in interrupted speakers paying only cursory attention to their interlocutor's competing line in their next turn at talk, before more or less explicitly retrieving their own interrupted line very soon afterwards. We thus see the capacity of interrupted parties to sustain the coherence of their discursive contributions in the face of incursion on the part of a coparticipant.<sup>7</sup>

In excerpt (1), it will be recalled, the host who is interrupted by a caller abandons his utterance only momentarily in order to sanction the caller's illegitimate bid for turn-space, with 'I haven't finished'. He subsequently retrieves his turn from the precise point at which it was overlapped:

- (1) [H:2.2.89:4:1-2]
- Host: did yih then ek- ixplain that yew understood.  
 that, yihknow dogs have the call of nature  
 just as: er as people do: [i .hh ] an' they=  
 Caller: [eYe:is, ]  
 Host: =don't have the same kind of control and  
 so the-refore th- s-sq  
 Caller: [Nq:i but dogs] can be t[ra:ined,  
 → Host: [m- I haven't  
 finished, so therefore thee owner, .hhh er  
 whether you train them or not is not rilly:,  
 quite thuh point, but the owner, being there  
 has thuh responsibility...

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Although, as noted earlier, the host briefly drops his retrieval in order to rebut the caller's interruptive remark, the rebuttal itself is done as a short interpolation: it only delays, and does not stop, the host's completion of his original sentence.

In other examples, we find that callers too can be seen retrieving overlapped lines. For instance, in excerpts (16) and (17) callers are interrupted in post-continuation position. But in both cases the continuations which are interrupted are retrieved following the interruption. In (17), this is a relatively simple operation, since the host's interruption comprises a question which the caller can treat as requesting precisely the information which the caller has, in his overlapped continuation, already begun to provide.

(17) [H:21.11.88:11:2]

Host: You're going back tuh that original argument  
we shouldn't have charity.

Caller: Well no I- um: I wouldn't go that far, what I  
would like tuh [see: is-

→ Host: [Well how far are you going  
then.

→ Caller: Well I: would- What I would like tuh see...  
[continues]

In (16), the caller can be seen to make two attempts at retrieval: on the first occasion (arrow 1) the host holds the floor in order to complete his question; but on the second attempt (arrow 2) the caller's retrieval is successful.

(16) [G:26.11.88:7:1]

Caller: My real point is that I'm: very concer:ned, .hh  
about thee, (0.5) (kh) the lack of freedom of  
speech in this country at the moment. .hhh Erm,  
this first ca<sub>r</sub>me tuh my:-

Host: [What d'you mean by- What d'you  
mean by th<sub>r</sub>at Ann, I mean wh-when you say th<sub>r</sub>e=

1→ Caller: [Well it first ca:me-

Host: =lack of >freedom o'speech<=are you suggesting  
that there is a perceptible, shift, away from  
freedom of speech?

2→ Caller: Ye<sub>s</sub> an' I'll tell you why:.. .h This first  
came tuh my attention when...[continues]

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In this example, notably, both retrievals take the form of virtual word-for-word repeats of the original overlapped sentence-beginning: 'This first came tuh my attention...'. Additionally, the second retrieval is itself prefaced by a component, 'Ye;s an' I'll tell you why:..', which seems to strongly imply something like *If you'll let me finish* - thereby again exhibiting negative evaluation on the part of an interrupted speaker.

These cases show how, in argument sequences, interruptions are not necessarily disruptive of a topical line. Indeed, interrupted speakers often find little difficulty in retrieving the line that has been interrupted, thus sustaining the local topical coherence of their talk. This does not mean that interruptions can never succeed in disorganising a topical line, however. Nor that speakers who are overlapped at sequentially illegitimate points will always try to retrieve their overlapped utterance (see for instance the remarks in relation to excerpts 9-11 above, p.184).

But on the face of it there are good reasons why, in argument sequences, interruption is not bound up in any definitive sense with the 'successful' disruption of a topical line. When parties are arguing, each one is trying to pursue and *defend* his or her line. Hence there is less likelihood here than in non-argumentative talk that a speaker will acquiesce in the 'hijacking' of their point by an interlocutor. Interrupted parties in confrontation talk will thus often *parry* retorts by the use of prefaces - such as *Well, yes, but* (extracts 7 and 15) or *Yes and I'll tell you why* (extract 16) - to the retrieval of an overlapped turn.

#### **Uses of interruption II: Interruption and control**

Parrying a retort is, of course, not always an available option. In particular, in institutionally-contexted forms of discourse such as that between doctor and patient (Frankel, 1990), or that occurring in the classroom (McHoul, 1978), as well as the type of disputation found on talk radio, various contingencies related to the setting operate to constrain the options available to particular speakers at

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given moments. In many settings it is the case that one party has disproportionate rights to ask questions, while their coparticipant is obliged and can be constrained to answer those questions (Fisher and Todd, 1983; West, 1984; Davis, 1988; Drew and Heritage, 1992a). This represents one major basis of the control which professionals and institutional agents can exert over the topical agendas of their encounters with lay 'clients'. As Davis (1988:304) puts it, 'control over topicality is one of the primary ways that power is exercised by professionals in institutional encounterings'. And sometimes, 'interrupting' is a way of enforcing such a distribution of rights and obligations.<sup>9</sup>

Talk radio is similar to these other forms of institutional discourse in that various institutional contingencies place the host in control, structurally and technically speaking, of the course of each call. This does not mean, of course, that the host is necessarily in *practical* control of the development of a dispute at every particular moment in any given call. However, one way in which hosts might indeed be said to exert their 'institutional' authority in practical sequential terms is through the use of a particular strategy involving a form of 'post-response-initiation' interruption.

For this configuration we look back again at extract (8) and recall that the third instance of interruption found there involved the host starting up a turn midway through the caller's response to the host's prior accusation:

- (8) [H:2.2.89:3:2] (Detail)
- Host: But you had no idea.
- Caller: ↑No I- well I-'m being honest]
- Host: [And you came to a] con==
- Caller: =-You don't ] know e:i-ther.
- Host: [You ha(d) yi] [You came to a  
conclusion wuthadenny- without any idea  
and without even taking it into consideration.

In the first three turns of this excerpt we find the following three things occurring. (1) The host produces an accusation ('But you had no idea'). (2) The caller embarks on a response to that accusation ('No I- well I-'m being honest'). (3) The host interrupts that response with an utterance which is hearably linked (in this case via

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the conjunction *And*) to his prior accusation ('And you came to a...conclusion...without even taking it into consideration').

A similar configuration is observable in extract (18).

(18) [H:21.11.88:11:3]

- Caller: .h Well giving ti:me would actually bring the people together.  
1→ Host: mbu- d- d- But you're suggesting they should be ma:de, tuh do it?  
2→ Caller: No:, no what I'm suggestin<sup>g</sup> i:s-  
3→ Host: Well if the prejudice exists they're not going tuh do it.  
Caller: Well what I- what I'm: suggesting i- should be do:ne...

Here, at arrow 1 the host produces a turn which, by virtue of its question intonation, clearly solicits a response from the caller. At arrow 2 the caller responds, and displays that he is orienting to this question as being of the type *If not that, then what?*. So having disagreed with the host's characterisation of what he is 'suggesting' he goes on to offer his own characterisation of his argument. But at arrow 3 the host interrupts this response with an utterance which is linked to, which in a similar sense to the previous excerpt 'follows up', his question at arrow 1, as it were 'bringing the point home'.

Jefferson (1981) has noted some similar uses of this kind of 'post-response-initiation' interruption as a way of 'following up' a prior statement or question, specifically in dealing with 'unfavourable' responses on the part of recipients. Jefferson's central phenomenon is the 'post-response pursuit of response': a device whereby speakers 'attempt to elicit revision of a problematic response by proposing, in effect, that the response did not occur, and response is due' (Jefferson, 1981:i). Fragment (19) is an example, taken from a psychiatric intake interview.

(19) [Br.Pr.1.2.1] (Free translation of original German)

- Dr. F: I understand (0.8) ( ) that you're not feeling very well.  
Mary: Yea::h well that is [the opinion]  
→ Dr. F: [Is that correct?  
Mary: of Doctor Hollmann.  
Dr. F: Uh [huh  
Mary: [But it isn't mine.

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In Jefferson's account, Dr. F's arrowed utterance here, 'Is that correct?', appears very similar to a type of utterance which she terms 'tag-positioned' response solicitation: i.e. a request for response placed usually after a small gap in which the recipient of a first adjacency-pair part - say, a question - has failed to embark on the provision of a requisite second part - an answer. But while it has this appearance, it is of course begun some distance into the response upon which Mary has in fact embarked. This 'post-response-initiation response-solicitation' is, Jefferson suggests, 'an attempt to counter, override, interrupt, an unfavourable response-in-progress' (1981:13): unfavourable in the sense of it being not the response the doctor was after, a judgement based on his interpretation of Mary's 'Yea:h well...' as indicating an upcoming disagreement with his initial formulation of her condition (cf. Pomerantz, 1984).<sup>9</sup>

A related phenomenon discussed by Jefferson (1981:14-18) again involves 'post-reponse-initiation' response solicitation, but this time not in the form of a tag-positioned question. Rather, as extract (20) (taken from a US talk radio broadcast) shows, this related configuration involves the interruptive repeat of a *prior* response-solicitation.

(20) [BC: I:G:15]

Host: Haven't you bothered to check your facts on any of this,

Caller: Yes,

Host: Well then you should know, that a Congressman, or any member of the Congress of the United States, is immune to arrest under certain types of charges, during the time the Congress is sitting.

Caller: Mhm,

Host: Didn't you know that?

Caller: But that's ( [ )

→ Host: [ Didn't you know that,

Caller: I unders- I know that.

Host: If you knew that why did you ask me.

Here, the host's repeated response-solicitation, 'Didn't you know that', again interrupts a response-in-progress. And in doing that

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interruption the host, like the doctor in (19), effectively displays that the caller's response is not the response that was required.

Returning to the British talk radio data, we can note a markedly similar use of post-response-initiation interruption to override a response-in-progress that is evidently not the response required in extract (5).

(5) [H:21.11.88:6:11  
Caller: .hh But I expect tuh get a lot mo:re.  
1→ Host: Sq?  
2→ Caller: .h Now the point is there is a limit to ( )-  
3→ Host: [What's that  
got tuh do- what's that got tuh do with  
telethons though.  
Caller: hh Because telethons yesterda:y (0.6) e::rm  
wuz appealing tuh people, (.) to: send in  
fo:r various things.

At arrow 2 the caller responds to the host's 'Sq?' (arrow 1) with an utterance which is responsive to her hearing of that 'Sq?' as a gloss for *And so what's your conclusion?*. That is, she proceeds with a formulation of her point. But the response she offers evidently is not the required response, from the host's point of view. For he, it subsequently becomes clear, had produced 'Sq?' as an abbreviated version of *So what?*. Thus his interruption of her response at arrow 3 both displays to her that she has wrongly interpreted his question, and in the process makes explicit the combative point left implicit in the original, brief 'Sq?' - i.e., that what she is arguing doesn't have anything to do with the supposed topic of her call.

Post-response-initiation interruption thus can work as a device by which hosts may attempt to exert control over the topical development of a call. By using a follow-up question to press for an 'acceptable' response to the first, the host can attempt to direct the line of the dispute along a particular trajectory. Thus in excerpt (20), the host demands an answer to his question, 'Didn't you know that?', and gets it, after which he proceeds, retaining local control of the dispute, to a next confrontational move.<sup>10</sup> In (5), the host's interruption of an unfavourable response-in-progress is similarly successful in that the caller subsequently takes up the line he has



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pressed in preference to retrieving her own interrupted line. But as extract (18) demonstrates, the attempt at line-control is not always fully successful. In this instance the caller does retrieve his interrupted line, and goes on to complete his original response to the first question.

Relatedly, post-response-initiation interruption works as a means by which hosts can exert control over the caller's active participation in the colloquy. In extract (21) we get a sense of the host using his 'institutional' authority, his incumbency in the local role of 'initiator of combative questions', to somewhat forcefully express his disagreement with a particular caller's point of view, by using post-response-initiation interruption.

(21) [G:26.11.88:10]

- Caller: ...they said the average family of these Asian families, .hhh was five tuh six children, .hh and often ni:ne tuh ten. .hhhh Well- the:y shouldn't put the burden of nine to ten [(chil-)]
- Host: [I see you- you- you're going back tuh the ol:d- the old argument that people have too many children an' therefore that impoverishes them are you?  
(0.3)]
- Caller: .hh Well I [(think-]
- Host: [(Not a very enlightened view I would've thou:ght, [but perha- per]haps you come=
- Caller: [.hh No no:.]
- Host: =from the fortunate mi:nority Marjorie th[ank you very muh-] .h Thank you very much we go=
- Caller: [(No: I do:n:'t, ]
- Host: =to...[next caller]

Here the host interrupts the caller's response to a first question (itself produced interruptively), 'you're going back tuh the...old argument...' etc., with a follow-up which is not a reformulation or repeat of that question, but an obliquely formulated dismissal of the position he had attributed to the caller in the course of the original question: 'Not a very enlightened view I would've thou:ght,'. Notice that this original question, like the first questions in extracts (5), (18) and (20) above, implies an accusation, in this case of being 'unenlightened'. Since the preferred or default response to

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an accusation is a denial (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Bilmes, 1988), the fact that the caller does not immediately enter a denial, but pauses and then prefaces her response with 'Well' (a typical marker of dispreferred actions, as Pomerantz (1984) shows), indicates to the host that his accusation is on target. This then provides him with resources for not only interrupting her response with his follow-up dismissal, but also terminating the call: note that the two further attempts at a response made by the caller ('No no:' and 'No: I don't') are overridden as the host uses his dismissal of her (attributed) 'position' as a unilateral closing line for the call (we focus on strategies for closing calls in the next chapter).

Interruption, then, can be used by talk radio hosts to constrain a caller's participation in the broadcast's public discourse. This can involve the use of post-response-initiation interruption as a means of pressing for an 'acceptable' response to a question, and thereby exerting a degree of control over the agenda-relevance of caller's remarks.

In sum, the analytic approach to interruption I developed in previous sections, whereby interruption is understood as a moral feature of an interactional environment, has not only allowed close attention to be focused on the observable ways in which 'interrupting' and 'being interrupted' (and relatedly, 'resisting interruption') are achieved by interactants; such an approach has also facilitated the discrimination of those particular occasions where interruption is indeed used in the accomplishment of 'control' in institutional dispute sequences.

#### **Concluding remarks**

Some sociological and social psychological studies of talk in interaction want to develop reliable operational definitions of interruption as a speech phenomenon. But part of the problem with trying to establish an objective technical definition of interruption is that 'interruption' is not in the first place a technical event: it is a members' evaluative construct, a term and a category in which

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participants in everyday discourse routinely and unproblematically traffic. Operational definitions try to treat interruption as a *thing*, whereas in real-time interaction interruption is a *deed*.

In this chapter I have sought to treat 'interruption' as an intrinsically moral feature of an interactional environment. This entailed an attempt to pay analytical attention to the significance of the distinction between incursive utterances which are 'interruptive' sequentially speaking, but which may well be cooperative interactionally speaking, and those which are interruptive in both sequential and interactional terms - that is, in which a speaker is *doing* 'control', or 'dominance', or 'being hostile', or 'being argumentative'. This in turn has facilitated examination of the ways in which 'interrupting' and 'being interrupted' are interactionally achieved as features of a way of talking - in this case, 'confrontationally'. We focused on a number of strategic uses of interruption in argument sequences on talk radio, and explored aspects of the way in which doing interruption is bound up with the struggle for control over the topical direction of disputes between callers and hosts within the institutional constraints of talk radio discourse.

What I have aimed for in this chapter is a more general treatment of 'interruption' which focuses on how the phenomenon observably operates as a feature of the social construction of arguments. In various of its aspects, 'interrupting' has been seen to be one among the many practical resources by which participants may frame a current activity as 'argument', or 'disputation' - or, in the setting of the controversial talk radio show, as 'confrontation talk'.

## Closing the Call: Structural Asymmetry in Conflict Termination

A feature that is often taken to be of overwhelming significance in the organisation of disputes in the talk radio setting is that hosts are always in a position to unceremoniously cut-off callers whose opinions they find particularly disagreeable. A recent journalistic profile of talk radio host Brian Hayes (from whose show most of the data we have been analysing in this study were drawn) made a feature of this potential for the unilateral termination of calls by hosts. Under the billing, 'The Rudest Man on Radio?' (Purves, 1991), we are treated to a jocular description of how 'for 14 years his reign of terror stretched across Greater London, as he daily pulverised Dave from Dalston and Janice from Walthamstow with terrifying put-downs and rebukes like, "A teeny bit muddled there" or "You keep on saying that" or, ultimately, "We've gone through this several times, and if you don't understand now you never will." Click.'

What is interesting about this picture is that it is manifestly not the case that hosts are in a structural position whereby only they are able unilaterally to terminate calls. Callers themselves are in a position to 'hang up' on hosts, should they choose to do so, at any point in the ongoing course of calls. And yet an examination of the database for this study reveals that, overwhelmingly, it is indeed hosts and not callers who effect the termination of calls. Of the approximately 100 calls that make up the database, only one unequivocal case of a caller 'hanging up' on the host can be located. A slightly larger number of calls can be found in which the termination in some way is 'negotiated' between host and caller. But in the overwhelming majority of cases the host apparently both (a)

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selects the point at which the call will be terminated, and (b) effects the termination on 'unilateral' terms.

In one sense, this fact returns us to a theme introduced much earlier in this study (in Chapter 2): that of talk radio discourse as a 'quasi-conversational' mode of institutional interaction. It was suggested that one way we could understand the institutionality of talking practices in settings where asymmetries are not provided for on the basis of predetermined constraints on participation opportunities for particular speakers, was to conceive of these asymmetries as 'emerging' out of patterns of interaction which the participants 'settle into' on the basis of a mutual but tacit orientation to specific activities connected to the roles they adopt within the situation. The fact that callers *could* conceivably initiate call closings themselves, but overwhelmingly do not do so, then may become treatable as an aspect of the 'locally achieved specifications' (Perakyla, 1990) in which the non-formal asymmetries of talk radio discourse are based. Hosts, we could say, systematically 'work towards' a state of affairs in which closing the call is a task accomplished by them on a unilateral basis; and callers at least 'comply with' that state of affairs by refraining from initiating call terminations.

However, a slightly different basis for this regularity emerges once we take account of the fact that, while talk radio opens up a public arena for the expression of personal opinions by private citizens, a basic disparity exists in the kind and degree of access to that public arena enjoyed by caller and host respectively. For the caller, the talk radio show represents a preexisting discursive arena which he or she enters *into*, as one-in-a-series of callers, and which is not only ongoing prior to their particular contribution but also continues after it. The host, on the other hand, represents a constant or 'focal' presence in this institutional discursive arrangement: he not only speaks to each individual caller in turn, but also addresses the audience between calls - at which points he is able to comment on callers' remarks while not allowing them any verbal channel for response.

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Linked to this is a further significant point. Calls, as we will see, appear to be relevantly terminated once an end-point for the arguments carried on within them can be established. But these end-points are not necessarily points of 'resolution'. Indeed frequently, arguments are terminated on argumentative or opinionated rather than conciliatory notes. In many cases, a move to terminate the call can itself operate as a move in an argument.

Within the terms of our main theme of calls as episodes of verbal conflict, then, a power differential emerges in the environment of closings, in that the caller who unilaterally terminates a call is placed in a disadvantageous position vis-a-vis the course of a dispute; whereas the host gains a tacit advantage in pursuit of his argument by unilaterally terminating a call. In short, because of the asymmetrical technological organisation of channels providing verbal access to the show, the caller who unilaterally terminates a call can only do so by *withdrawing* from that discourse, and so by withdrawing from the argument; while the host alone is in a position to 'banish' his interlocutor from their interactional arena while he himself remains in full verbal access to it. The reason why we find an overwhelming pattern in which calls are unilaterally terminated by the host and not by the caller may, then, have much to do with the fact that the strategy of unilateral termination is consequential in asymmetrical ways for the argumentative manoeuvring of host and caller.

Looking at how calls are closed, then, also allows us to address ways in which particular argument sequences between hosts and callers are terminated; and this in turn enables an insight into how the technological frameworks within which host and caller interact themselves can play a part in the social organisation of conflict talk on talk radio. This chapter focuses on the relationship between the termination of interactional encounters (calls) and of speech events (arguments) within a setting in which participation in interaction is asymmetrically organised technologically as well as culturally. The issues raised centre around the role that closings play in the management of arguments between hosts and callers, and

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also how orientations to 'controversy' are traceable in the ways that terminal turns are designed.

### **Closings as interactional achievements**

Beginning from the view that the closing of an everyday encounter is not something that occurs randomly due to an unaccountable decision by one party to cease conversing and engage in other activities, but a social event which exhibits distinctive properties of interactional achievement, systematic studies of the organisation of closing sequences in various types of everyday telephone conversations (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Davidson, 1978; Button, 1987, 1990) have focused on the ways in which calls as 'units of interaction' are brought to a close by participants. In these studies, stress is laid on the fact that, and the ways in which, taking leave of a ratified state of talk is as much a mutually coordinated achievement as that of entering into one (Goffman, 1971).

For conversation analysts the basic interest in closings has to do with the following issue:

[W]hile conversational openings regularly employ a common starting point - with greetings etc. - and then *diverge* over a range of particular conversations, conversational closings *converge* from a diverse range of conversations-in-their-course to a regular common closure with 'bye bye' or its variants. (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973:291, fn 3; my emphasis).

In large part, closing the conversation involves establishing that closing is relevant at 'this particular moment'; and that can, and very often does, involve the participants in manoeuvring to *warrant* the closing by making sure that no further topics, no 'unmentioned mentionables' (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973:303), pressingly await introduction into the interaction.

The need for negotiating the relevance and warrantedness of closing arises from a basic structural feature of conversation noted by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974): namely that this form of talk-in-interaction is not systematically constrained in terms of extrinsic limitations on the overall length of an encounter nor on

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the number and type of topics that can relevantly be introduced within it. In other words, how long participants talk for and what they talk about are matters that are decided, by the participants, on an intrinsic or local-management basis in conversation. This is different to the situation holding for institutional interactions such as service encounters (Clark and French, 1981; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992), where the talk is focused on dealing with a circumscribed set of matters; or broadcast news interviews (Clayman, 1989), where encounters are temporally constrained in terms of having to fit within the broadcasters' predetermined schedules.

Schegloff and Sacks (1973) described a canonical format for conversational closings, in which the problem of the relevance and warrantedness of closings is negotiated by designing closing sequences so that mutual disengagement from the encounter is accomplished across a series of turns rather than in a single turn. The format comprises two types of component: (1) 'Preclosing' turns such as *Okay* and *All right* - these operate to establish a 'close-implicative environment' in which the participants each pass on the opportunity to raise further topical matters. (2) 'Terminal' turns - *Bye*, *Cheerio*. These operate to complete the encounter's termination.

Examples of this 'archetype closing' (Button, 1990:94) can be found in the following extracts. In each case, speakers use preclosing components such as *Okay* and *Right* to signal to each other that neither has anything more to say on this occasion; and in this way they bilaterally establish the warrant for termination, effected next with an exchange of *Byes* (preclosings are marked with arrows 1, and terminals are marked with arrows 2).

(1) [NB: IV:14:26]

Emma: And, u-uh I'm w- I'm with you,  
Nancy: Yeah,  
1→ Emma: A'right,  
1→ Nancy: Okay [honey,  
2→ Emma: [Bye, dear=  
3→ Nancy: =Bye.



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(2) [Holt:1:1:20-1]

Mum: Do I speak all right with my new dih- teeth in?  
 Mary: eh!h! (.).hh Yes yer coming over loud an'  
 clear  
 Mum: ( ) Good.  
 Mary: hheh huh .uhhh .hh  
 Mum: hu:h .uhh .uhh .uhh .uhh  
 Mary: .hh-h  
 1→ Mum: Okay love,  
 1→ Mary: R-i:ght nh  
 2→ Mum: ↑Bye::: =  
 2→ Mary: =↑↑Bye:,

(3) [Holt:C85:4:6]

1→ Mary: Yah. .p.h ↑Okay then Jean  
 1→ Jean: .khh Okay then Mary  
 1→ Mary: See you  
 later.  
 1→ Jean: We'll see you yes.  
 2→ Mary: Yes Bye:,  
 2→ Jean: Okay bye:,

In (1) and (2), both preclosing and terminal components are produced as single pairs of utterances (e.g., in 2, 'Okay love'/'Right' and 'Bye:::'/'Bye:'). Note that the conventional nature of the format enables the participants to accomplish the exchange of turns with a good degree of collaborative overlap: indeed in (2), Mum's first terminal component (first arrow 2) is begun only momentarily after Mary has begun the enunciation of her reciprocal preclosing 'R//i:ght' (second arrow 1). An additional feature is observable in (3), where the preclosing sequence is extended by an exchange of *See you* following an exchange of *Okay then*. This suggests that the canonical format is subject to variation; and indeed as Button (1990) has shown, in actual interactions the variations on the canonical format available to and used by speakers are manifold.

It is also worth noting that the issuance of a preclosing by one speaker by no means automatically leads to the termination of the conversation. Button (1987) discusses a number of ways in which speakers may 'move out of closings', ranging from 'minimal' to 'drastic' movements. Minimal movements occur when a preclosing offered by one speaker is responded to with a turn which temporarily suspends the proffered close-implicative environment, for instance by checking on arrangements (e.g., *So it's Thursday we'll be meeting*

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then?). Drastic movements involve the abandonment of the close-implicative environment, effectively attempting a conversation restart by soliciting or proffering further topical talk.

But the basic point for our purposes lies not in the details but in the general pattern whereby speakers in conversation negotiate to establish the relevance and warrantedness of closings bilaterally. This involves accomplishing mutual disengagement from the encounter across a series of turns rather than in a single turn.

That is not to say, of course, that single-turn closings may not occur. But the social power of the (Preclosing + Termination) format is traceable in the way that such unilateral closings may well be oriented to as illegitimate by their recipient, or used as the basis for inferring that 'something is up' with their producer:

#### (4) [JG:1:9]

Ronald: .hhhhh What- Whaddiyou want fer dinner.

Maggie: I won'- I::, jist I'll take care of myself you do  
→ the same. Goodbye.

Ronald: Whaddiyou mea:n.

Here, Maggie unilaterally moves to a termination of the conversation by appending a terminal component to a response to Ronald's enquiry about dinner ('jist I'll take care of myself you do the same. Goodbye.'). The basis for Ronald's part-argumentative, part-dismayed rejoinder, 'Whaddiyou mea:n', lies not just in the rather brusque nature of Maggie's response itself, but more broadly in the fact that no close-implicative environment has been set up in which her terminal move might relevantly and warrantably be made. Maggie's first terminal component, 'Goodbye', is unilateral in the sense that she thereby proposes the relevance of closing without having first 'consulted' Ronald by offering a preclosing component, which would enable him either (a) to signal that he has no further matters to raise by producing a reciprocal preclosing component, or (b) to decline the offered move into closings by seeking to raise further matters.'

In sum, for conversation analysis the basic issue involved in closings is this: while openings provide a standard starting point from which a wide variety of topic-initiations can be launched (we

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discussed this in Chapter 3), closings address the corresponding problem of moving from in-course topical talk to a point at which no further topics will be initiated. The mutually relevant suspension of topical talk is achieved in mundane telephone conversation by the exchange of preclosings prior to the terminal exchange.

### **Call closings: Preliminary observations**

A number of studies of closings in institutional encounters have noted the ways in which, in relation to conversation, closing segments are systematically modified in terms of how interaction in such settings is configured and focused. In service encounters such as calls to directory enquiries (Clark and French, 1981), calls to emergency services (Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987; Zimmerman, 1992), or academic counselling interviews (Erickson and Schultz, 1982; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992), plain *Thank you*-type exchanges may serve as mutually satisfactory terminal components, with *Goodbyes* being redundant or at best optional. This is because in such effectively single-topic interchanges it is the delivery of the 'service package' (i.e., the number requested, the ambulance, etc., required, the signed registration ticket) which makes for the relevance of the encounter's termination.

Although the closing segments in these encounters thus represent modified (in general, compacted) versions of the canonical format described for conversation (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), there are still important ways in which the encounter's termination may be negotiated bilaterally between participants (Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). A slightly different case holds for broadcast news interviews (Clayman, 1989), where, typically, closing is unilaterally managed by an institutional agent (the news interviewer) by means of a single *Thank you* addressed to the interviewee. In this setting, the relevance of termination is linked to the temporal constraints within which interviews as scheduled items take place, awareness of which rests principally with the interviewer as institutional agent: this places him or her in the position of having to terminate the

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interview at a given moment, even if it means 'interrupting' the interviewee in the course of a turn.

Turning to the talk radio data, we find that institutional warrants for closing are much less clear cut. While inevitably a few calls in each broadcast are terminated just before commercial breaks or scheduled news bulletins, scheduling constraints do not tend to be cited explicitly by the host as a reason for terminating the call, in the sense of cases discussed by Clayman (1989) in which news interviewers may deploy an 'out of time' device to warrant closing the interview.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the majority of calls are in fact succeeded not by prescheduled items but by next calls. At the same time, since these calls are not the kind of service encounters in which specific 'goods' are requested by the caller, calls are not relevantly terminated upon the delivery of any service 'package'.

On what kind of basis, then, are calls brought to a close? Two principal patterned features of call closings can be noted to begin with. A first point to note is that, unlike in conversation, but in a similar sense to the news interviews studied by Clayman (1989), calls in our data are terminated unilaterally, and overwhelmingly on the initiative of the host, as institutional agent. And one thing we can see in these unilateral terminations is the host managing the various 'institutional' features of talk radio discourse: providing for smooth transitions from one caller to the next, dealing with scheduled items such as news bulletins, reminding the audience 'out there' of future radio happenings (e.g. upcoming programmes) or of events running concurrent to the talk radio show (e.g., 'phone votes' in which audience members are invited to phone in with straight *Yes* or *No* answers to a question such as *Do you think the Queen should visit Cuba?*).

In the following excerpts, the host accomplishes termination of the call by extending an acknowledgement to the caller of the general form *{Thank you + (Name)}* (marked with arrows 1). Following this (arrows 2), he either (a) turns to address the audience (extracts 5 and 6) or (b) moves to introducing the next caller (extracts 7, 8 and 9):

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(5) [H:21.11.88:14]

Caller: I just think that...thee:: er, .h methods of collecting money and so forth, .hh was just terrific.

1→ Host: Okay thank you very much indeed erm, Myra.  
2→ .hh Erm, last warnin:g to take part in the phone vote...

(6) [H:21.11.88:6]

Host: It's actually not a very difficult thing to (.) wrk out.

1→ .hh Thank you very much,  
2→ it's: twenty seven and a half past ten.=Just before the traffic new:s, .hh erm Q:n to this business of whether the Quee:n should go: to Moscow...

(7) [G:26.11.88:3]

Host: ...you'd be much better off if you could in fact marshal your protests in- in a- in a more peaceful way but there you are.

1→ Thank you very much Martin,  
2→ now Liz of Camberwell...

(8) [H:21.11.88:9]

Host: The system that you introduced was still charity it makes no difference.

1→ .hh Thank you Charlie,  
2→ Jim:: now good morning.

(9) [G:26.11.88:2]

Caller: I: think they're dis::gusting.

Host: Uh [thank-]

Caller: [I really do.

1→ Host: Thank you Margaret,  
2→ Ma-Martin from Stockwell...

On one level, these extracts illustrate the ways in which hosts manage the continuity of the broadcast as a discourse involving a series of calls punctuated at certain moments by scheduled news bulletins or commercial breaks. The termination of each call more or less seamlessly leads into some form of 'next business', which can consist of remarks addressed to the audience as a collective ('last warnin:g to take part in the phone vote'), introducing scheduled items ('Just before the traffic news'), or cueing in a new caller. In this way, hosts routinely manage transitions between various performative 'frames' (Goffman, 1974, 1981c; cf. Tannen and Wallat, 1987; Montgomery, 1986b; Brand and Scannell, 1991) at the boundaries of

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calls: for instance, those involved with addressing the caller as an individual, addressing the audience as a collective, and speaking as a professional broadcaster managing the preset schedules of his show.<sup>3</sup>

A further point to note is that in none of these extracts is there an exchange of *Goodbyes*. Indeed in only one case, extract (5), do we even find anything resembling the kind of 'preclosing' components used in conversational excerpts (1)-(3) above, when the host precedes his acknowledgement, 'thank you very much', with 'Okay'; although this does not itself form part of an *exchange* of preclosing turns. The here-and-now relevance and warrant for closing is not 'negotiated' in any overt sense between host and caller, then: the pattern (recursive throughout the data corpus) is one of unilateral terminations, carried through by the host by means of a *Thank you*-type acknowledgement addressed to the caller, and without the exchange of *Goodbyes*.<sup>4</sup>

A second kind of pattern is discernible, however, if we focus on the utterances *preceding* the terminal *Thank yous* in these extracts. Here we begin to see a distinctive kind of environment in which call-terminal acknowledgements are initiated. Looking at the excerpts again, we can note that in each case the host's terminal *Thank you* is preceded by a specific type of utterance or utterance-component: namely, an assertion of a speaker's opinion. In Schiffrin's (1990:244) useful definition, an opinion is 'an individual's internal, evaluative position about a circumstance.' In extracts (5) and (9), the utterance immediately preceding the host's terminal move is the caller's evaluative position about some circumstance:

(5) [H:21.11.88:14]

→ Caller: I just think that...thee:: er, .h methods of  
collecting money and so forth, .hh was just  
terrific.

Host: Okay thank you very much indeed erm, Myra.  
.hh Erm, last warnin:g to take part in the phone  
vote...

(9) [G:26.11.88:2]

→ Caller: I: think they're dis::gusting.

Host: Uh [thank-]

Caller: [I real-ly do.

Host: Thank you Margaret,  
Ma-Martin from Stockwell...

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In both cases the evaluative and position-taking nature of the callers' assertions is marked by the use of the preface 'I think'. This feature combines with their character as 'strong' assessments ('just terrific', 'dis::gusting') to make them at least formally similar to the kind of position-taking 'summative assessments' discussed previously in the context of our analysis of call validations (Chapter 4).

In extracts (6), (7) and (8), by contrast, what precedes the host's terminal move is a statement of his *own* opinion on the matter in question:

(6) [H:21.11.88:6]

→ Host: It's actually not a very difficult thing to (.)  
work out.  
.hh Thank you very much,  
it's: twenty seven and a half past ten.=Just before  
the traffic new:s, .hh erm q:n to this business of  
whether the Quee:n should go: to Moscow...

(7) [G:26.11.88:3]

→ Host: ...you'd be much better off if you could in fact  
marshal your protests in- in a- in a more peaceful  
way but there you arè.  
Thank you very much Martin,  
now Liz of Camberwell...

(8) [H:21.11.88:9]

→ Host: The system that you introduced was still charity it  
makes no difference.  
.hh Thank you Charlie,  
Jim: now good morning.

In each of these cases, the host terminates the call with *Thank you* immediately after taking up a position on his own behalf.

In all of the instances so far cited, then, the final moves prior to the host's unilateral terminations consist of positions taken up in debates or disputes on issues; whether the position is that of the caller, or of the host. We've noted before (in Chapter 4) how position-taking evaluations and assessments can operate as recognisably terminal components in a variety of speech activities: stories (C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin, 1992), complaints (Drew and Holt, 1988), rhetorical arguments (Schiffrin, 1985) and platform

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orations (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). In this sense, it's conceivable that the host links his judgement of when to terminate a call to his judgement of when (by what kinds of formulations) a call's spate of topical debate or dispute can conveniently be terminated.

In sum, the end of a call is 'arrived at' with what can somehow be established as the *end of the argument* that has been carried on within it. The 'end of the argument', however, does not necessarily mean the *resolution* of that argument. We've seen in the instances cited so far that call terminations can follow upon the production of overtly contentious (as opposed to, say, conciliatory) assertions, such as 'I: think they're dis::gusting. I really do', or 'The system that you introduced was still charity it makes no difference'. Thus the termination of the call can itself be a move in an argument.

In fact, this sense of 'ending the argument equals ending the call' is also available in the single case provided in the data corpus of a caller unilaterally terminating a call:

- (10) [G:3.2.89:9]
- Caller: Women are very like that Geoffrey I'm a woman  
myself I know them they don:'t like (0.3) members  
of their sex to be highly successful.
- Host: Mm hm-:.
- Caller: They just don't like it they're very  
jealous creatures.  
(.)
- Host: .pt .hhh We'll-]
- Caller: And- and- and as I said, (0.2) th-  
the:y, you know they sa:y these things=fancy saying  
Missis Thatcher is totally inhuman. (0.3) That's  
nonsense. (0.3) Absolute nonsense=.h=That's a:ll  
I've got to sa:y Geoffrey thank yih ve:y much,  
Host: Ye(y) all right thank you very much Jessica,=an'  
an:d we go to Alan...

Again, the termination of the call, carried through this time by the caller, follows immediately upon a 'strong' position-taking assessment: 'That's nonsense...Absolute nonsense'. Furthermore, the caller's final sentence itself - 'That's a:ll I've got to sa:y Geoffrey thank yih ve:y much' - neatly formulates the point that the end of



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the call is relevant once the end of the argument, what there is to 'say' on the matter, has been established.

In short, in analysing the closing segments of calls to the talk radio broadcast we are not just analysing how calls as 'units of interaction' are brought to a close. We are also analysing how particular verbal conflict episodes between host and caller are terminated. In the following sections, I take this point as the focus of attention and consider the various systematic ways in which the termination of calls and the termination of arguments are interrelated in our data.

### **Terminating conflict episodes**

In a study of the closing segments of arguments in family settings, Vuchinich (1990) identifies some of the systematic ways in which disputants accomplish the termination of an argument. The formats he locates can be arrayed on a continuum ranging between 'cooperative' and 'confrontational' poles. For instance, in a 'compromise' pattern, one speaker may offer a concession to another, acceptance of which will close down the dispute by establishing a consensus on the disputable matter between disputants. Alternatively, one party may shift from disagreeing with another's statements to an agreement or compliance with the opposing stance. Thus the conflict can be closed by means of one disputant's 'submission' to the other. In a third, more confrontational pattern (most frequent, in fact, in Vuchinich's recordings of family disputes), episodes will be terminated in the shape of a 'stand-off', in which 'oppositional turns continue until the topic is changed or until participants withdraw from interaction...[so that] a conflict terminates with participants continuing to maintain opposing positions' (Vuchinich, 1990:130). Finally, in the 'withdrawal' format, one disputant unilaterally declines to continue arguing, either by responding to a codisputant's moves with silence, or by physically leaving the scene.

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The analytical differentiation of these types of dispute-termination formats centres upon two basic issues. (1) What kind of relationship exists between the penultimate and the ultimate moves in a dispute sequence? (2) What kind of 'outcome' to the dispute is being decided upon, tacitly or overtly, by the participants? Applying a similar set of questions to the talk radio data, we can find that dispute terminations in this setting too range between 'cooperative' and 'confrontational' forms; although, as we will see, the interactional dynamics of both cooperative and confrontational formats are linked in particular ways to the talk's institutional setting - and especially to the fact that, as we've already remarked, the terminal moves in caller-host dispute sequences also operate as moves in the termination of calls as interactional encounters.

Here a basic asymmetry in the participation status of host and caller comes into play. When a caller is accessed to the air, s/he thereby gains verbal access to the public discursive arena of the broadcast. This means that she or he can address both the host and, albeit in a more indirect fashion, the audience, with comments on a topic of his or her choice. However, while the caller's access to both host and audience is delimited by the same interactional boundary, that marking the end of the call, the host remains in verbal access to the audience even when he is not in contact with any particular caller. The closing of the call, then, not only marks the point at which the discourse between caller and host is brought to an end; it also marks a point at which the participation configuration of the broadcast as institutional discourse shifts, from one involving caller, host and audience to one involving host and audience only.

This means that the issue of who gets the 'last say' in a conflict episode can take on a particular salience in the talk radio context. In other kinds of disputes, such as family arguments, where the participants are physically copresent and have a more equal access to the discourse arena in which the argument takes place, conflicts can, as Vuchinich (1990:131) points out, proceed almost indefinitely, 'with participants trying to "get in the last word". Opposition moves can become redundant...as a conflict develops....

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[At] the same time each party does not want to make a submission move.' This situation is what results in a stand-off, in which 'conflict terminates with participants continuing to maintain opposing positions' (Vuchinich, 1990:130). In a stand-off, who gets the last word is a locally managed matter. But on talk radio, the asymmetry in access to the discourse arena for caller and host means that even after a caller has left that arena, the host has the potential to get in the last word on the matter.

It seems, in fact, that the only policy the caller has for trying to 'ensure' that they get the last word is to 'hang up' on the host, as the caller does in extract (10):

(10) [G:3.2.89:9] (Detail)

Caller: ...Absolute nonsense = .h = That's a:ll  
I've got to sa:y Geoffrey thank yih ve:y much,  
Host: Ye(y) all right thank you very much Jessica,=an'  
an:d we go to Alan...

But even here, of course, once the caller has withdrawn from the interaction the host remains in contact with the audience, and could in principle (even though in this case he doesn't) use that contact to make a final, and technically unanswerable, counter to the caller's position.

On talk radio, then, institutionalised control rests with one participant, the host, over what will count as the 'outcome' of the call's debate or dispute - i.e., whether it will be the caller's position which gets last say (as seems to be the case in 10), or an alternative position put forward by the host. These different types of outcome are connected in various ways to what I will describe as 'cooperative' or 'confrontational' terminal segments. In the remainder of this chapter I want to explore the ways in which cooperative and confrontational outcomes are established in terms of the different techniques used by hosts to manage the termination of calls.

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**'Cooperative' call closings**

By 'cooperative' closings I mean to refer to cases in which calls end on a note of assent between caller and host as regards the matter at issue in the call. In one sort of cooperative closing, the host manages the call's termination in such a way that he 'lets the caller have last say'. In a second type, 'last say' is taken by the host; but his final turn, at least formally, takes the shape of an agreement with the caller's position.

*i) Letting caller have last say*

In one set of closings, the host ends the call with a simple acknowledgement, {*Thank you + (Name)*}, following a statement of position by the caller:

- (5) [H:21.11.88:14]
- Host: An' did you think the same of the telethon,  
when that was on: th<sup>e</sup> one on I-]
- Caller: [I beg your pardon?]
- Host: Did you think the same of the I.T.V. one?  
(0.8)
- Caller: E::r I'm talki- Yes:. (0.5) Yes. I- I- I just  
think that e:r, .hh the spirit behind it, an'  
the way er people 'ave thought of er thee:: er,  
.h methods of collecting money and so forth,  
.hh was just terrific.
- Host: Okay thank you very much indeed erm, Myra. .hh  
Erm, last warnin:g to take part in the phone  
vote...

- (9) [G:26.11.88:2]
- Caller: It- it is it's really it is the poor, the  
poorer pensioners that've had it taken away  
from them. (0.4) Because of this er money  
that's been e:r the means allowance money.
- Host: So you don't think the government's being all  
that marvellous and generous about th<sup>is</sup>.
- Caller: [I: think  
they're dis::gusting.
- Host: Uh [thank--]
- Caller: [I real-ly do.
- Host: Thank you Margaret, Mar-Martin from Stockwell.

In these two cases, the caller's point of view is allowed to act as the 'outcome' of the call. That is to say, by terminating the call with a simple acknowledgement, the host neither adds to nor detracts

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from the caller's statement of opinion, but moves on without ado to next business.

We might additionally notice, in extract (9), for instance, how the host appears to 'create an environment' for a cooperative call termination in the turn preceding the caller's position-statement, by 'formulating' (Heritage and Watson, 1979; Heritage, 1985) the caller's point: 'So you don't think the government's being all that marvellous and generous about this.' Heritage and Watson (1979) have pointed out that formulations such as this, in summarising a discussion, can work as moves to bring discussions to a close. The host's formulation here, by offering the caller a version of her argument to which she can assent (cf. Heritage, 1985:106-112), sets up an environment in which the call can be ended on the caller's (emphatic) assertion of her position.

A further aspect of 'cooperativeness' in a call closing where the caller's position has last say is observable in (11). Here, it seems, both host and caller collaborate to bring the call to a close on an assertion of the caller's point of view.

(11) [H:30.11.88:2]

- Caller: Then it gives people the choice as to whether they want to shop on a Sunday.
- Host: .t Okay, .h [thank-
- Caller: [I mean those who want to keep Sunday special by all means let them I'm not against that,
- Host: Yes.
- Caller: Those that do. But I mean we must move wi- with the times I think, .hhh in my opinion.
- Host: Mmhm,
- Caller: [[Anyway I- aka:y Brian. ]
- Host: [[Okay. Thank you very much] uh, Thank you very much Roy, .hh er:m coming up to quarter past ten it's Derek now from Stoke Newington.

In the first turn of the extract the caller reiterates a line he has maintained throughout the call: that allowing shops to open for business on Sundays would 'give people the choice as to whether they want to shop on a Sunday'. The host next produces a canonical 'preclosing' move, 'Okay,' (first arrow); but his tagged call-terminal acknowledgement, 'thank-' is overlapped as the caller appends further

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details to his position. Subsequently (second arrow), the host again makes a closing move following a position-taking statement by the caller ('we must move wi- with the times I think, in my opinion'), with 'Okay. Thank you very much'. It turns out, though, that the caller himself has elected to offer a close-implicative move at the same moment ('Anyway...aka:y Brian'); so that in this case, ultimately (and uncommonly), host and caller simultaneously establish the appropriate terminal point for the call.

A slightly different kind of case is provided in (12). The caller here is taking issue with a prior caller's objections to what the latter saw as a biased TV documentary on the death of a suspect in police custody. (The prior caller had described how the programme showed 'the mother cryin' and made much of the fact that the victim had been 'in the Boys Brigade movement'.)

- (12) [H:30.11.88:8]
- Caller: But all we saw was a woman's grief,  
→ Host: Okay well erm::,=  
Caller: =A[nd an ordin[ar]y y[oung] man who was in=  
Host: [ Yi- yi- ] [Yeh.]  
Caller: =the boy scou[ts] and who: was 'whatever.]  
Host: [Right I understand,  
I understand Ivy and er understand m- the point  
you're making particularly fr- from the your  
starting point which was that .hh you will see  
.hh controversial programmes from .hh a  
particular (.) point of view, .hhh and we've  
had two of those particular points of views .h  
er yours and earlier Steven's. Thank you very  
much indeed for calling us,=to Morris next in  
Tooting...

Here, again, what appears to be the host's first move to close the call, 'Okay well erm::,' (first arrow), is cut into by the caller as she adds further components in her assessment of the TV show's treatment of its topic. Following this the host cuts back in with a second try for a termination; only here, prior to closing the call in the standard fashion with *Thank you*, he himself produces a 'summary' of the caller's point. Notice, however, that the summary produced actually selects a *particular* point from the caller's argument to act as 'outcome' of the call: 'particularly...your starting point which was

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that you will see controversial programmes from a particular...point of view' (second arrow). So that while it is possible to say that the 'caller's point of view' gets last say in this extract, it does so in a form expressed by the host, instead of by the caller.

What we find here, then, is a sort of 'selective' agreement between caller and host. The host allows a viewpoint put by the caller to act as the outcome of the call, but at the same time uses his selection of that particular point to formulate his own assenting view. Indeed it's noticeable that his first, abandoned attempt at a closing move, 'Okay well erm::', itself presages this selective agreement, in so far as the item *Well* routinely operates as a 'disjunct marker' (Schiffrin, 1987) or disagreement preface (Pomerantz, 1984).

*ii) Host 'agrees' with caller*

In a second group of cooperative closings, the utterance immediately preceding the terminal *Thank you* is one in which the host expresses an opinion on his own behalf, though one in which, at least formally, he 'agrees' with the caller's point of view.

A relatively straightforward case is provided in (13). The topic of the call is a proposed official visit by the Queen to Russia (the then Soviet Union). The caller supports such a visit, and opposes those who object, for instance, on the grounds of the Soviet Union's lax record on human rights.

(13) [H:21.11.88:16]

Caller: I mean there could be:, e:r there's lots of other countries which ha:ve er records which, .hh yihknow don't- aren't clean all the time ei:ther. But, .hh I- I think e:r something like, the Queen going over there could be good. And .hh

→ Host: Yes I s'ppose if we do use the argument of human rights it erm, leaves very few countries, in: the wq:rld that would be: erm, good enough for the Queen to visit. .hh Thank yih Gary,

Note that the final turn of the call (which again follows a position-taking statement by the caller) begins with the host assenting to the

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view put by the caller; then proceeds to a terminal *Thank you* without any further intervening talk from the caller. But in this case the host is not proposing to formulate a position expressed by the caller, as in fragment (12) above, but is agreeing with the caller's position through expressing a stance on his own behalf ('*I suppose if we do use the argument of human rights it...leaves very few countries...*'). In this case, then, as in the 'letting caller have last say' cases, the call ends with no argumentative 'residue' as between the stances taken by host and caller.<sup>5</sup>

Extract (14) presents a slightly different phenomenon. Here, again, the last turn of the call comprises a lengthy utterance by the host in which he moves from an expression of agreement with the caller (note that the turn again begins with 'Yes') to a termination of the call ('*Thank you Bill*') without any further intervening utterance from the caller.

(14) [H:21.11.88:7]

- Caller: Of course if all of us could claim er a tax  
(.) deduction, .h for any charitable donation,  
.h I think it's a fair point to suggest that  
erm (.) the country in general terms=.h=or  
charities in general terms, .h would get  
massive (.) e:r sums coming .h e:r coming in:,  
.h which don't come in now.
- Host: Yes it would be a way that thee (.) government  
could help .hh e::rm the- the sick and the poor  
I'm just trying to m- (.) .hh yihknow put it  
into a cun- uhn f- a convenient phrase, but  
without necessarily doing it itself. Now that  
→ would go against the argument that was put .h  
by an earlier caller that there shouldn't be  
any charity collecting at all anyway because  
the .hhh government should provide the money.  
.hh Thank you Bill, Peter in Lewisham next.

However, in agreeing with the caller the host does more than the kind of straightforward assent which we find in extract (13). Beginning at the first arrow he puts forward an assenting position which nonetheless places a different emphasis on the point in question: instead of the caller's focus on the extra amounts of money that tax deductible charitable donations would generate, the host focuses on how such a policy would allow the government to 'help...the sick and



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the poor...but without necessarily doing it itself' (i.e., without legislating to turn charitable organisations into direct state-funded bodies). This way of putting it allows him (at the second arrow) to pit this argument *against* 'the argument that was put by an earlier caller', which he formulates as being 'that there shouldn't be any charity collecting at all anyway because the government should provide the money'. So that while on one level the host's closing turn expresses 'agreement' with the present caller's position, that agreement has superimposed upon it an orientation to 'disagreement' or controversy, in that the host uses it to carry on a dispute with a prior caller, whose position the present caller's argument (assented to by the host) would 'go against'.

To summarise: the cases discussed in this section can be described as 'cooperative' since, broadly speaking, the relationship between the final turns in the closing segment is one of assent, rather than opposition. Closing moves instigated by the host follow upon position statements by callers; but whether those closing turns take the form of simple acknowledgements, i.e., (*Thank you* + (Name)); or, alternatively, have the format (Host's opinion + Terminal acknowledgement), the host does not take issue with the stance expressed by the caller.

However, in terms of the 'outcome' of the call, there does begin to be traceable, in certain of these 'agreement' cases (e.g., 14), an orientation on the host's part to the argumentative or controversial nature of calls to the show. In this sense the policy of agreeing with the caller at hand can be used by the host in a wider pursuit of controversy in the issues and themes of shows.

#### **Confrontational closings: The 'power of the last word'**

We have already seen that calls may end on a note of opposition rather than assent between host and caller. In these cases, a sense of confrontation between host and the caller at hand is preserved, both in terms of the relationship between the final turns of the call and on the level of the 'outcome' of the call. Hosts' terminal

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utterances in various ways are discernibly oppositional: constructed as oppositions to prior turns by callers in a final (Action-Opposition) sequence. Moreover, they are simultaneously call-terminal and argument-terminal moves: in having the last say in the call, the host also gains the last say in an ongoing dispute over some issue.

In extract (15), the final turn of the call is one in which the host first dissents from a view put by the caller (first arrow), then moves directly to a terminal acknowledgement (second arrow):

- (15) [H:21.11.88:111  
Caller: ...what I think is that these telethons are educating people but they're educating them in a certain way they're educating them to give money. What they should be doing is educating them to take an interest in their community.  
.hh Instead of just giving money which can in fact, .hh stop them being interested [because-  
→ Host: Well I don't think the job of the telethon is to educate people to do anything, .h er it gives them an opportunity, .mhh e:r throu:gh a kind of entertainment if you like .hh to give money. Now you may not like that, .hh I don't find it, terribly entertaining to watch, .hh but I certainly wouldn't prevent people who do enjoy it, .hhh er from seeing it, .h being entertained and at the same time giving money, .h whether it salves consciou~~snes~~-=uh  
→ consciences or not. .hh Thank you Phillip, .hh it's: er twelve minutes to eleven...

The host's turn begins as a straightforward disagreement with the caller's position that 'telethons' are 'educating people' in the wrong kind of way: 'Well I don't think the job of the telethon is to educate people to do anything'. Subsequently the host puts his own dissenting view on the matter, i.e. he describes what, for him, is the real function of telethons; before ultimately working to close the call with a terminal *Thank you*, leaving no space for a further response from the caller.

In this case the call is ended on an outright opposition. The host negates the caller's stance in a position-taking utterance of his own; and this oppositional move occupies the entire terminal section of the call. Again, then, as in the 'cooperative' closings

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(with the possible, partial exception of extract 11), we do not find host and caller first establishing a terminal point for their argument, then moving to terminate the call. The host's disagreement is followed without a gap by a call-terminal acknowledgement, so that the end of the argument and the end of the call are accomplished coterminously.

A similar pattern is observable in (6). Host and caller have been arguing over the caller's complaint that charities operate as a form of 'psychological blackmail', inducing people to contribute more money than they can actually afford. The caller has also proposed that much of the money that is donated by citizens in fact is spent on administration.

(6) [H:21.11.88:6]

- Host: I mean you can't do anything on that scale, .h  
erm un-unless there is administration.
- Caller: { Nearly  
everyone that contributes to ay: charity,  
(0.9) is giving probably as much as they can  
afford.
- Host: { Well all you do then Kath is just say  
well to hell with them, they spend it all on  
administration so I'm not going to give any  
→ money to them. .hh No if you're watching erm  
a telethon .h and you don't particularly .h  
want to give money, .h well then you simply  
don't give money. .hh It's actually not a very  
difficult thing to (.) work out. .hh Thank you  
→ very much, it's: twenty seven and a half past  
ten.=Just before the traffic new:s, .hh erm  
Q:n to this business of whether the Quee:n  
should go: to Moscow.

The call's last turn consists of the same three components: the host's opposition to the caller's position (first arrow), followed by an expression of the host's own view (second arrow), and ultimately a tagged call-terminal acknowledgement (third arrow).

In these cases the host's institutional role as 'focal presence' in the broadcast's discourse arena enables him to get in the last word on the matter without allowing the caller any opportunity for a comeback. This 'power of the last word' is, of course, connected to the technological framework within which host and caller interact. By

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virtue of the technologically mediated nature of their interaction, the host has at his disposal a particular resource for disallowing any opportunity for the caller to respond to his 'last word'. He can close off the caller's channel of access to the arena in which the dispute takes place, while retaining access to that arena himself. So that, as we've remarked before, while the caller's only means of trying to ensure the last word involves him or her in withdrawing from the arena through the strategy of 'hanging up', that policy has no guarantees - unlike the host's 'cutting off' strategy which can solidly guarantee success in getting the last word.

A particularly graphic illustration of this 'power of the last word' is provided in excerpt (16). Here, prior to the closing of the call, the host's attempts to put a counter-position are repeatedly overlapped by the caller pursuing his own line. (The caller is complaining about 'bias' in a TV documentary about the death of a suspect in police custody.)

(16) [H:30.11.88:51]

- Host: But you do have to come to your own conclusion when you watch things, .hh erm, quite often things are biased the other way, .phh e:r you know the- the the- (.) .ph
- 1 → Caller: constantly put opinion] that [the police are] ]  
1 → Host: =wonderful] [I: just fail- [u:h a:- absolu]=  
1 → Caller: [I fai] to see what- what 'is antecedence in the church 'ad anything to do with it. Or or [or i]s it in the Boys Brigade=  
2 → Host: [Well,]  
Caller: =movement.  
Host: [Yeh] but that's understandable.]  
3 → Caller: [.hhh An' they kep' sh-owin' you the funeral the mother cryin' .hh th- the everybody wailin' over the grave I mean i- was totally unnecessary.  
4 → Host: Okay Steven thank you very much indeed, erm:, it is understandable how- however if you, bi- have the ki:nd of view that you're suggesting that programme (.) had, .hhmhh e:::rm, that they should e:rm, .hh (.) talk about thee- the character, of the victim. .thh Thank you Steven, a:::nd Gerald, good morning...

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At arrow 1 here the caller interrupts the host's attempt to argue against his line that the programme was biased against the police: 'quite often things are biased the other way...(the) consta//ntly put opinion that //the police are won//derful'. Having gained the floor, the caller then pursues his line of complaint about the programme. The host, at arrow 2, appears to make another attempt at arguing; but the disjunct marker, 'Well,' that signals this attempt is talked over as the caller adds another sentence onto his complaint. A further attempt is made at the end of this sentence: 'Yeh but that's understandable'; but this too is overlapped by the caller (arrow 3) as he adds yet more points to his complaint.<sup>6</sup>

In fact it is only once the caller has summarised his argument with a position-taking formulation ('I mean i- was totally unnecessary'), thus opening up an environment in which a move towards closing may be relevant, that the host manages to come back in with his own argument. However, what is noticeable here (at arrow 4) is that the host *precedes* the resumption of his argument with a terminal acknowledgement: 'Okay Steven thank you very much indeed, erm:, it is understandable how- however...'. It thus seems that, faced with a 'recalcitrant' caller with whom he wants to disagree, the host deploys a strategy of getting in the last word *post* a call termination, thereby using his 'focal presence' status as a means of soundly ensuring that his own line can be expressed in the clear.

Confrontational closings can thus be an arena in which asymmetries in participant status between host and caller become particularly salient. This is clear also in the following kinds of case, where the host unilaterally closes the call on an oppositional note, either (a) by pushing through to a termination in the face of apparent *objections* by the caller to the closing move (extract 8), or (b) by summarily *dismissing* the caller's argument out of hand (extract 17).

In extract (8), the caller had earlier proposed a 'system' aimed at superseding charitable donations, based on a personal tax levied by the government which would then be redistributed to the various organisations currently reliant on charitable giving. As the extract begins the caller has moved to complaining about the number of

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mailed requests for donations which he claims to receive from such organisations.

(8) [H:21.11.8:9]

- Caller: But then course y- you do get eventually you find yourself about thirty or forty different charities comin' thru your post an' you can't donate to all of them. .hhh It's such an expense isn' it when people .hhh [these ( ) (send out)]
- Host: [Well you don't haff- n-a hold o:n, a m- a moment ago: you were saying we should give to all of them, now you're saying .h it's too difficult to give to them, .h er the s:-]
- Caller: [N- no ] the-
- Host: [the
- Caller: system that you introduced [was still] charity=
- Host: [It ( )]
- Host: =it makes no difference. .hh Thank you Charlie, Jim: now good morning.

The host here moves towards closing the call by arguing that the caller's contribution has become incoherent: 'a moment ago: you were saying we should give to all of them, now you're saying it's too difficult to give to them'. Notice however that the caller begins to take issue with this characterisation of what he is saying, with 'N-no the-' (first arrow). But the host holds the floor through this attempted objection, going on to state his opposition to the caller's principal point: 'the system that you introduced was still charity it makes no difference'. In the process he talks over a second apparent objection by the caller (second arrow); and ultimately terminates the call on this expression of his opposing line.

Extract (17) represents perhaps the grossest example of the 'power of the last word'. In this case, the topic of the call is the issue of canine defecation on public walkways.

(17) [H:2.2.89:7]

- Caller: It is a complicated problem but e::r what I'm saying is ey::uh, socia:l- sociolo:gists should examine the problem an' it's eh- it's connected with feminism, .hhhh e:r insecurity, =l [o:neliness ( ) (tj:me)]
- Host: [t I think you're talking a load of tosh but never mind we heard some of it, =it's ten thirty we have news a:fter the traffic.

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Here the host straightforwardly dismisses the caller out of hand: 'I think you're talking a load of tosh'. He does not advance any line counterposed to the caller's, but rather ends the argument by producing a negative *assessment* of that line, which is thus construed as discreditable, 'a load of tosh'. It is also worth noting, perhaps, that the host terminates the call with a move into a scheduled news item, whose imminence may have provided something of the warrant for initiating closing at this point. However, in terms both of the combativeness of the closing move itself ('I think you're talking a load of tosh') and of the fact that (in data not shown) the host had given no prior indication to the caller that a news bulletin may be coming up, this case is quite different to the cases analysed by Clayman (1989) in his study of closings in news interviews, discussed earlier.

To summarise: in most of the cases in this section the final turn of the call is one in which the host moves to terminate the argument by expressing an opinion directly counterposed to that of the caller. For instance, in (15), the caller opposed the way in which telethons are 'educating people'; but the host countered that telethons do not educate people in any way but do something altogether different. In (6), caller complained about the persuasive strategies of charities; but the host maintained that if one does not want to contribute one is not forced to do so. In (16), caller complained about the TV programme's focus on the victim's positive attributes; host however opined that that's a perfectly reasonable strategy for the kind of programme it was.

The host may also refrain from putting a counter-argument of his own, and simply dismiss outright the position advanced by the caller (as in 17). In either kind of case, confrontational closings involve the host closing not only the argument, but also the call, by overtly disaffiliating from the caller's stance. In these cases, moreover, the host may be seen to use his control over the technological channels through which callers gain access to the air to exercise discursive power by 'getting in the last word'. Finally, the oppositional nature of the 'last word' in these instances

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preserves the sense of controversy that is routinely generated in calls to the talk radio broadcast, by projecting a combative rather than a conciliatory 'outcome' of the call.

### **Structural asymmetry in conflict termination**

In a number of studies of disputatious talk, aspects of how arguments are brought to a close have been treated in relation to various social settings: among children at play in environments both experimental (Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981) and naturalistic (M.H. Goodwin, 1990:163-177, 214-218); among family members in the home (Vuchinich, 1990); or alternatively, in more institutional forms of talk, among interviewees on televised panel interviews (Greatbatch, 1992:287-198); and between a patient and an examining board in a psychiatric hospital (Mehan, 1990). A principal concern in these studies has been with different ways in which conflictual or consensual 'outcomes' can be established for dispute sequences (i.e., whether the argument ends on a note of assent or dissent); and relatedly, with how transitions between conflict episodes and next activities can be managed. Eisenberg and Garvey (1981), for instance, focused on how children resolve conflict episodes in order to resume 'interrupted' play activities (although both M.H. Goodwin (1990) and Vuchinich (1990) later emphasised the often heightened, unmitigated and unresolved character of conflict terminations in conversations, where arguments in fact frequently end in 'stand-offs' which do little more than allow participants to 'save face and move on to another speech activity' (Vuchinich, 1990:137)).

The question of how conflict episodes are terminated can be complicated, especially in institutional encounterings, by features of structural asymmetry - constraints emerging from the broader social contexts in which interaction is embedded. In many types of institutional encountering, what counts as the outcome of a conflict episode can depend on power and other structurally-based status relativities between participants. A good example is Mehan's (1990) study of a psychiatric out-take interview. In this paper, Mehan shows



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that while competing, and equally coherent, versions of reality are propounded by a psychiatric patient and a professional psychiatrist, these versions ultimately have unequal status in the social context in which they are argued over.

The patient's definition of his sanity is not on a par with the psychiatrist's definition of his insanity. The doctor's definition prevails. Despite the vehemence of his protestations and the admitted logic of his presentation, at the end of the meeting the patient is led from the examining room and returned to his lodgings, still convinced that he is healthy, there to await the decision and subsequent treatment recommended by the examining board. (Mehan, 1990:172)

Mehan's analysis highlights the way in which 'some persons, by virtue of their institutional authority, have the power to impose their definitions of the situation on others, thereby negating the others' experience' (1990:173). The fact that the last say in the dispute over the patient's mental health lies with the psychiatrist and not the patient rests on an institutionalised asymmetry between doctors and their patients in terms of the relative distribution of knowledge about illness and control over treatment decisions. Such an asymmetry is generic in doctor-patient interactions (Davis, 1988; Fisher and Todd, 1983; Silverman, 1987); and its salience is, of course, only heightened in situations such as this, where the patient is physically incarcerated on the basis of the doctor's diagnoses.

Mehan emphasises the ways in which such features of structural asymmetry are visibly used as resources in the talk by which the institutional decision making process gets accomplished. In stressing the corresponding cogency and coherence of the competing versions put forward by patient and physician, then showing that ultimately the decision about the patient's health is based not in the cogency of his argument but in the institutional authority conferred on the psychiatrist by virtue of his relative positioning within the social structure, Mehan illustrates the ways in which 'features of the larger social structure, such as power, can be found in the analysis of talk, whereas the act of talking reveals this structure and displays how talking helps to sustain it' (Fisher and Groce, 1990:225).

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In this chapter I have offered an analysis of conflict termination in calls to the talk radio broadcast, considered as another institutional context in which structural asymmetries between participants come into play in a significant way. The chapter explores further the ways in which talk acts both as an interactional resource for the instantiation and reproduction of institutional authority and power, and as a strategic site for the analysis of this instantiation and reproduction. Our concern, broadly, has been with how interactional processes involved in terminating disputes interlock with institutional features of the discourse in calls to the talk radio show. On talk radio, private citizens enter a public realm of discourse - the broadcast stream of talk that is 'the show', in which the host interacts with a series of callers. But they enter this realm via a technological device - the telephone line into the studio - which has particular consequences for the organisation of 'outcomes' of their disputes with hosts. These consequences appear as a structural asymmetry in the participation status of host and caller.

We began by wondering on what kind of interactional basis, and by what kinds of procedures, are calls in our data brought to a close? - and we came to see that there is a relationship between the termination of calls as interactional encounters and the termination of calls as episodes of verbal conflict. Typically callers and hosts do not first negotiate a resolution of their argument, and then proceed to the closing of the call. Rather, both the point at which a call will be terminated, and the kind of 'outcome' to the encounter which will be preserved (i.e., whether the call ends on a note of assent or dissent), are managed coterminously, and unilaterally, by the host.

The technological framework within which the participants interact plays a significant role in this. Access to the public arena in which arguments can be engaged is asymmetrically organised, in that the host is the only participant in the call who can close off the electronic channel allowing his codisputant access to the argumentational arena while himself remaining in full contact with that arena and its audience. It is by virtue of this institutional and

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technological siting that the host has the 'power of the last word': the power to determine whether the call-cum-argument will end 'cooperatively', with the caller having last say or the host agreeing with the caller at hand; or alternatively, whether it will end 'confrontationally', with the host disagreeing with the caller or summarily dismissing the caller's position.

The way in which call closings are organised not only allows us to see the way in which the 'institutional' character of talk radio discourse is available in the consistently unilateral management of closings in our data, as opposed to the bilateral closing procedures at work in conversation. We have also examined systematic ways in which spates of conflict talk between host and caller are brought to an end. And in the ways in which hosts manage to establish the 'end of the argument' that has been carried on within a call, we can trace an orientation to the 'controversial' nature of the discourse of calls. By moving to end calls coterminously with position-taking statements which either support or negate the stances taken by callers, that is, the host systematically preserves, in the closing environment, the character of the talk radio show as a setting for 'opinionated discourse'.

## Conclusion

In this study I have sought to maintain a balance between two broad thematics: on the one hand, the study of argument as a social process; and on the other, the application to an element of broadcasting of a distinctive method for analysing institutional interaction. I believe that the contribution of the work lies not so much in what it says about any one of these thematics, but in what it has shown about the interrelationships between them.

On the first level, we looked at the kinds of conventionalised speaking practices used by persons in 'making', as well as 'having', arguments. Argument is principally a speech activity;<sup>1</sup> and the sequential approach to analysing verbal interaction developed by conversation analysis was used to describe the interactional dynamics of disputes constructed in real time on the basis of ad hoc, or contingent, opposition.

On the second level, the conversation-analytic approach to the interactional construction of context was used to explore how the discourse patterns of talk radio recursively shape and are shaped by the practices and mutual knowledge of the participants. Talk radio, like all forms of broadcasting, centrally involves talk;<sup>2</sup> and the matrix of interactional structures underlying the production of talk which forms the object of conversation-analytic investigations is there to be analysed in broadcast talk, as well as in conversation and other forms of 'institutional' discourse.

In pursuing this interactional matrix, three basic questions have underpinned my analyses of the data: (1) How do people argue when they encounter each other on talk radio? (2) How do the

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organisational imperatives of that setting frame, enable and constrain their argument practices? and (3) In what ways are conventionalised speaking resources used, in modified forms perhaps, in the conduct of conflict talk on talk radio? These questions, it turns out, connect with what Brenneis (1988) has identified as three general themes in recent research into conflict in interaction. First of all, the question of the processual aspects of conflictual discourse: how do arguments begin, how are they sustained, and how are they terminated? Second, the articulation of features of social context, asymmetry and power with the micro-details of talk. And third, the issue of the 'hows' of conflictual talk: 'the argumentative forms, stylistic devices, and other communicative resources upon which disputants...rely' (Brenneis, 1988:221).

Taking the first theme first, I began by developing a framework in which to consider arguments as dynamic interactional accomplishments. The 'Action-Opposition' sequence represented a model for analysing not only the emergence of arguments out of oppositions to 'arguable actions', but also the ways that disputes can be sustained by chaining of Action-Opposition sequences. The notion of oppositional moves as fundamental to argument sequences led to a description of the parameters of opposition in both conversational and institutional disputation. And this in turn enabled me to locate the argumentative talk found on talk radio at an 'intermediate' point between the conversational and the more formal institutional cases: talk radio disputation involves the unconstrained exchange of personal opinions on issues, but at the same time is constrained in various ways by institutional imperatives and structural asymmetries.

Subsequent chapters detailed ways in which the conventional organisation of interaction within the framework of calls itself is central to the emergence of these asymmetries. We saw how the opening sequence of the call not only is designed to set up an environment in which topics are to be introduced by callers, but also places the participants on what turn out to be significantly asymmetrical footings vis-a-vis those topics. The fact that callers are required, and can be constrained, to 'go first' by expressing a point of view on an issue, means that hosts systematically get to 'go

### Conclusion

second', and hence may critique or attack the caller's line merely by exhibiting scepticism about its claims, challenging the agenda-relevance of assertions, or taking the argument apart by reference to minor 'inaccuracies' in its details.

The asymmetry between 'first' and 'second' positions in an argument, then, provided a means by which the Action-Opposition framework could be linked to structural aspects of the organisation of participation in talk radio shows. In this way we could begin to see in empirical detail how institutional asymmetries and structures of interaction are intertwined. This theme was evident in my exploration of the *You say X, but what about Y* device as a way that hosts could use the 'power of second position' to construct controversy in callers' contributions to the show. Taking on board Harvey Sacks' remarks about the different resources and procedures involved in going first and going second, I sought to treat the *You say X* device as a 'second position' resource which enables hosts to undermine callers' positions without necessarily developing a counterposition of their own, by getting callers to account for 'faultables' in their arguments. The identification of this device also led to points about the interactional uses of related argumentative forms such as contrastive devices, extreme case formulations and citations of another's words or actions, in the argumentational process of building and undermining cases for a point of view.

The issue of argumentative forms was raised again in relation to the phenomenon of 'interruption', when we looked at the uses of interruptive and incursive talk for 'doing confrontation'. And the question of structural asymmetries returned to the fore when we considered the procedures by which calls are brought to an end. Here, I remarked on how differential channels of access to the show's public arena translated into differential consequences, for the host and the caller, of initiating termination of the call-cum-argument. The technological mediation of talk radio discourse sets up a particular kind of power relation in the environment of call-terminations: the 'power of the last word'. Yet in considering how hosts may use the power of the last word to establish various types of 'outcomes' for calls, we again found ourselves exploring the

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processual aspects of conflictual encounters, as we examined some of the procedures by which arguments may be terminated (even if not 'resolved'). Once more, then, the intertwining of institutional asymmetry and power with interactional practices, the micro-details of talk, became a central theme.

#### *Envoi*

Anthropologists have shown how members of a culture, through the developmental process of becoming 'competent members', acquire knowledge of appropriate modes of behaviour in the various social settings in which they come to present themselves (Ochs, 1988). Often, presenting oneself in a specialised, or occasional social scene involves using language in particular, restricted ways (Levinson, 1992). The facts of social structure and the practices of talking are thereby inextricably, and reflexively, intertwined. By talking in particular ways, we show our awareness of where in the culture we are; while our awareness of where in the culture we are recursively informs our choices of mode of verbal (and nonverbal) behaviour.

On these lines, interactionist sociology has long been known for its attempts to reveal how social structures are constructed by, or at least intrinsically connected to, the micro-features of interactions and transactions in social settings. In the foregoing I have sought to demonstrate how that project can be pursued by looking in detail at the use of language, and considering how social institutions are 'talked into being' (Heritage, 1984a). To be sure, participants on some kinds of talk radio shows argue, and argue routinely. And we have some sense that the fact that they are arguing 'on talk radio' has some effect on the ways they argue. But it is only by looking closely at the talk itself, and considering it analytically in regard to the constraints of its setting, and in relation to talk in other kinds of settings, that we can begin to explicate that 'sense'. It is that kind of explication that the present study has aimed to achieve.

## Appendix A

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### Transcription Conventions

The system for transcribing recorded speech used by conversation analysts, and adopted in the present study, was developed by Gail Jefferson, and is intended to capture in fine detail interactionally salient aspects of talk on dimensions of speaker sequencing, gaps and pauses, audible breath and laughter, and characteristics of speech delivery such as stress, enunciation, intonation, and pitch. It is, of course, a *selective* system (Psathas and Anderson, 1990): it does not capture, nor does it aim to capture, all the possible distinctions that any recording of talk might yield. Rather, the system aims to provide the reader with a detailed but accessible rendering of those features that, for researchers working within the CA paradigm, prove to be the most relevant for the analysis of the organisation talk-in-interaction.

#### Conventions

##### *1) Speaker sequencing*

When a speaker starts to talk in overlap with another, the onset of overlap is marked by a single left-hand bracket:

[ Barb: Will you be home early?  
Bill: Yes I'll be home early.

When speakers start to talk simultaneously, this is marked by the use of a double left-hand bracket:



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[[ Barb: [[When will you be home.  
Bill: [[I'll be home about eight.

The end of a spate of overlapping talk can be marked by a single right-hand bracket:

] Barb: Will you be home ea[rly?]  
Bill: [Yes] I'll be home early.

] Barb: [[When will you be home.]  
Bill: [[I'll be home about] eight.

When utterances are 'latched' together - i.e., occur adjacently with no discernible gap, but also no overlap - this is marked by equals signs:

= Bill: I'll be home about eight.=  
Barb: =Eight. Okay.

Equals signs are also used to link parts of a speaker's continuous utterance that has been carried over, on the transcript, to a next-but-one line in order to accomodate an intervening overlapping utterance:

= Barb: I only want to know in case [I have] to go=  
Bill: [Sure.]  
Barb: =out before you get back.

An alternative device to deal with latching and/or carry-over is a left-right bracket:

[ Barb: I only want to know in case [I have]  
Bill: [Sure.]  
Barb: [to go  
out before you get back.

A protracted spate of overlapping talk can be indicated by a combination of left- and right-hand brackets and equals signs, if for instance transcription constraints necessitate the extension of the spate of overlap across a number of lines on the page:

Appendix A

] = Bill: Well if you have to go out before [I get back]  
Barb: [I'm only] =  
=[ Bill: = [just make sure you turn the answering machine]  
Barb: [saying I might, I mean it depends on when you] =  
Bill: = [on.]  
Barb: [get] home.

An alternative device for indicating overlap onset, used when discussing extracts in the main text but not in transcripts themselves, is the double oblique marker:

// 'I only want to know in case//I have to go out...'  
'Well if you have to go out before //I get back...'

*ii) Gaps and pauses*

Intervals in the stream of talk are timed in tenths of a second, and these timings are inserted in the transcript at the precise point where they occur. They may occur within a turn:

(0.0) Bill: Sure, it depends on when I get home. (0.7) Well  
I'm leaving in five minutes.

Or they may occur between turns:

(0.0) Bill: I'm leaving in five minutes.  
(0.4)  
Barb: Five minutes?

Pauses that are detectable, but run for less than 0.2 of a second, are indicated by a dot between parentheses:

(.) Barb: Five minutes?  
(.)  
Bill: Yeah. (.) Why, is that a problem?

*iii) Breath*

Breathiness which is audible to the transcriptionist is marked by *h* for exhalation, and *.h* for inhalation. The longer the breath, roughly, the longer the line of *h* or *.h* given in the transcript:

*h* Bill: Why, is that a problem?  
Barb: hhhhhhhh Oh I don't know.  
*.h* Bill: .hh Well if it is tell me.

## Appendix A

Plosive aspiration within a word, as for instance in laughing enunciation, is indicated by placing the *h* in parentheses:

(hh) Bill: I mea(hh)n(h) I(h)'d really like to kno(hh)w.

### iv) Laughter

Laughter is transcribed using the symbols *heh*, *hah*, *huh*, *ha ha*, *hih*, *hih*, etcetera:

Bill: I mea(hh)n(h) I(h)'d really like to kno(hh)w.  
Barb: Heh he-h ha ha hih  
Bill: E-heh heh huh huh huh

### v) Characteristics of speech delivery

CA transcripts use punctuation marks in a particular way: not to indicate conventional grammatical units but rather to capture the characteristics of speech delivery. For instance, colons are used to mark a stretch or extension of a word or syllable in production:

: Barb: We:ll, maybe it i:s I don't know.

And as with aspirations, more colons roughly indicate longer extensions:

::: Bill: You don't kno:::w? Go:::d, why no:t?

A single dash indicates a noticeable and abrupt termination of a word or sound (a cut-off):

- Barb: I don't kno- Why should I tell you anyway?

Other punctuation marks are used as follows:

- . A period indicates a 'stopping' fall in tone (not necessarily the end of a sentence).
- , A comma indicates a 'continuing' intonation, i.e. a kind of fall-rise, or a fall slightly less severe than the stopping tone.
- ? A question mark indicates a rising intonation, not necessarily a grammatical question.
- ! An exclamation mark indicates an animated tone or emphatic enunciation.

Appendix A

Emphasis is marked by underlining, either the whole word or some particularly stressed part of it:

Barb: I don't kno- Why should I tell you anyway?

Upward or downward pointing arrows mark a noticeable shift in pitch, either upward or downward, in the immediately subsequent talk:

↑ Barb: I don't kno- ↑Why should I tell you anyway?

↓ Barb: You wouldn't tell me ↓would you.

Shifts in pitch within a word are marked by a combination of stress and extension symbols. A colon preceded by a stress marker indicates a drop in pitch during the word:

x: Bill: Su:re you should tell me.

A colon with a stress marker beneath it indicates a rise in pitch during the word:

x<sub>i</sub> Bill: If it were me<sub>↑</sub> I'd tell you<sub>i</sub> I really would.

Upper case letters are used to mark a pronounced increase in the volume of speech:

Barb: You WOULD NOT!

Degree signs (°) are used to indicate a marked decrease in amplitude in the immediately subsequent speech:

° Bill: Please don't °shout Barb.

Chevrons are used to show that the talk they bracket is spoken at a markedly quicker pace than surrounding talk:

> < Barb: I'm not shouting I'm just >getting a little<  
anxious that's all.

## Appendix B

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### Data Sample

This Appendix provides a sample of 8 complete transcripts of calls drawn at random from the database. My purposes in including it here are twofold. First, to enable the reader to further establish a sense of how calls are brought off as episodes of focused interaction. And second, since the reader will be able to locate in these transcripts exchanges that have been analysed in detail in the empirical chapters, to enable him or her to further contextualise such extracted exchanges in terms of their situation in ongoing spates of talk in caller-host interaction.

#### H:2.2.89:3

Host: It's Kaiy, next from: Marylebone:, good morning.

Caller: Yes guh morning I:'ve got a bit of a crq:ak so I  
cn-hope you (.) c'n understand me,

Host: [ 'I'll ↓try:.' ]  
Caller: [ .mhhhh ] Um: (.) I: want tuh talk about  
thu-ee thee report on LBC this morning about  
Diana's visi:t to::, America:? h [ .hh  
Host: [ The Princess

of ↓Wa:les.

(.)

Caller: Princess of Wa:le[s,

Host: [ ..yes..=

Caller: =Yah(m). .hh E::r th- her stay in a thou:sand  
pou:nds a night hotel plus VAT::, an' on her

Appendix B

- schedule she's visiting a home=p- place fuh the homeless. .hhh And there's going t'be a ba::ll, .hh where they're- uw- the Americans uh clam'ring fuh tickets at a thou:sand pounds a ni- ehr th- a thou:sand pounds each=I: think it's obsce:ne.
- Host: [Mm hm,]
- Host: .pt Which:, part is obsce:ne.  
(0.5)
- Caller: u-th- Both, u-the fact that she's staying in a thou:sand pou:nds a night utel plus VAT:;, and thee, .hh the price uv the tickets fuh the ba::ll. En e- a- w- added \*u-u- ee\* alongsi:dé all that she's visiting a place fuh the tho:meless.
- Host: Well, we:: would haff:: to: understand what that money fuh the ba:ll would be going to:, and I'm pretty su:re that it's going tuh charity.  
(0.4)
- Caller: Maybe: but a thou:sand pounds a night et e a he- at a hotel is:, (.) [I: think is still o-bscene.
- Host: [We- n- n- [S:o you  
think it's all right the:n, e::rm if: they pay a thousand pounds tuh go tuh this ba:ll,  
.h if it's fuh charity.  
[No:::,]
- Caller: I:, well if- Well I s'po:se so yes but I min if it go:es tuh charity but we're not told that.  
(.) .h Beh I min I [don't know the-
- Host: [Well what d'you think it's  
going to.
- Caller: I've no- 'aven't a clu:e.  
(.)
- Host: E:r, well if you haven't a clu::e, you might-
- Caller: [Ye:h well  
ahmin whe:re d'you [think it's going] to.
- Host: [you- you might've]
- Host: I think it's going to charity.

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- Caller: di-But you don't know do you.
- Host: Ehrm I'm almost su:re.  
(.)
- Caller: We:ll, [(al-)]
- Host: [But you had no idea.]
- Caller: ↑No I- well I [ 'm being honest. ]
- Host: [And you came to a ] con-=
- Caller: = [You don't ] know e:i-ther.
- Host: [You ha(d) yi ] [You came to a conclusion  
wuthahdenny- without any idea and without even  
taking it into consideration.
- Caller: Bud I ↑still think all right, weh- we don't know  
whe:re the- money's going t' (whether) charity bud  
I still thing a thou:sand pou:nds a night at a  
hote:l, .hhh and the fact that she's going on tuh  
visit (p) homeless peopu: [l, (e-)]
- Host: [Where should sh- where  
should she: be staying in New ↓York.  
(0.2)
- Caller: We:ll, u-th- at a cheaper place I don't think the  
money- .h WE're paying that money fuh her t'stay  
there en I: think it's ↓obscene.=
- Host: =Well we're not actually payin-g  
the e the th' money, ]
- Caller: [Wull who's paying for ] it.
- Host: Well thee:: e:rm I imagine thuh the:r the money  
that the Royal Family ha:s .h er is paying for  
it, .h or indeed it may be paid for by somebuddy  
else. .hh Erm but, .h yihknow if thee: Princess'v  
Wales lives in: (.) a palace, in: this country,  
w- w- why dih you think she should not live, in:  
something which is (.) comparable, .hh when she's  
visiting New York?
- Caller: Well I should think she could find something  
comparable that- that- e-or th- e-it could be  
fou:nd for her that doesn't cost that money. =

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Host: =And [B't] you're only imaginin:g, .h that (.) she's=  
 Caller: =payin: fuh herself you don't know either do you.  
 Host: Er:m, ↑well, .hh whether we know or not we-  
 should. have. at least tuh common sense to  
 have open mi::nds, to understa:nd thut- it would  
 be: possible, .hh e:r that the money would go tuh  
 charity, .h and that the money of cours:e fo:r  
 thee: uh hotel could be paid for, .h by: her  
 hosts: in tuh United States:..  
 Caller: [Oh well in that case  
 Brian I'm sadly lackin' in common sense.=  
 Host: =We:ll maybe you a: [re >bud I] wouldn'=  
 Caller: [Yi- Yeh,]  
 Host: =I: <w-ouldn' let-]  
 Caller: [An' ↑may-be you a:re [too.  
 Host: [I wouldn't let that  
 hold you back th-ough,  
 Caller: [No no I would'n't.  
 Host: [ .hh Er:m w- w-  
 Caller: [I wouldn't  
 ↓da:re.=  
 Host: =Wha: [↑Why] ↑Why have you not complained,=  
 Caller: [Bye,]  
 Host: =er when: the Princess of Wa:les, .hh er  
 living in a palace h:ere, .mh has also go:ne  
 tuh visit many of the ↓charities that she does.  
 Caller: .hhh Oh well I haven't complai:ned cuz ay:: I  
 haven' got ti:me, it's only the second time I've  
 ever rung you [I've ↑to:ld myself I]  
 Host: [We:ll you seem tuh have plenty uv-  
 ti:me this morn:ng bud I'll save you s'm mo:re by  
 saying goodbye an' good morn:ng tuh...

-End call-



Appendix B

G:26.11.88:5

- Host: We now have Edna, from Brixton.
- Caller: .hhh Erm:, I'd like tuh talk about the pensions.  
Now, uh they're givin' us two pounds fifty e:r a  
single person, fer .hhh fer:: er the pensions,  
next year. .h Well next year is nearly another  
year. Now, u-evrythink is going up, an' buh the  
time they give us back, .hh half the old age  
pensioners uh be dead. (.) With the cold, (0.7)  
an:d, an:d er, short of food.
- Host: That's a little bit of an exaggeration  
Edna, ha:lf the old } age pensioners?=  
Caller: [ No:, it isn't, ]
- Host: =Let's hope it's- let- let's hope it's an  
exaggeration anyway. =
- Caller: =We:ll, y-well they will:, .hh and, another thing.  
They've had, they've had, about four or five  
telecoms fuh the children. .hhh Now, I don't think  
the children uh going short o' much,
- Host: Mm-m?
- Caller: [ but, a lotta this money twenty two million,  
.hh e:r pounds last year was collected fuh the  
telecom. .h Besides other telecoms they 'ave.  
.h Now why ca:n't they have a telecom, .h fuh the  
poor old pensioners. .h that fought in the la:st  
war, .h made the country, .hh an' are walkin'  
about, an' can't afford to 'ave- go in an' 'ave a  
pinta beer or a packeta fags. [ .hh ]  
[ .hth ]
- Host: [ .hh ]  
[ .hth ]
- Caller: [ Now, I think  
it's disgustin'.
- Host: One of the complaints that's made Edna by a  
previous caller you probably hea:rd was that in  
fact the kin:d of increases that're now being  
proposed by the government, .hh come out of

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money that 'as already been taken away previously,  
 from: diminished, e: [r er] benefits tuh the old=  
 Caller: [Wuh--]  
 Host: =age pensioners. .h Have you found this?  
 (0.5)  
 Host: Have- has y[our pen-]  
 Caller: [Yeis, ]=  
 Host: =[[has your pension allowance bin cut?]  
 Caller: [[Yeis, uh they've taken ] two pound-  
 uh two pound sixty out of my money.  
 Host: When.  
 Caller: E:r e- April.  
 (0.6)  
 Caller: khh khhh ((throat clear))  
 Host: Em-: an:-]  
 Caller: [April.  
 Host: [that w- ]  
 Caller: [So I'm, ] I: we- I was no better off  
 if they gimme two pound fifty I'm no better off  
 than I was before April:  
 Host: [An' what was that for, r- a  
 reduced [housing allowance?]  
 Caller: [Wull that was f-] that was fuh the  
 rent, u-rent an' rates.  
 (0.8)  
 Host: So in fact [y-  
 Caller: [So:, d-really speakin', I'm no better  
 off, when they gimme that two pound fifty, .hh  
 next year, (0.5) I'm no better off than I was  
 before April.=An' I'm not the only one there's,  
 there's many like me, I don't grumble, .hh but,  
 (.) there's many like me,=an' when I see, .hh  
 the poor old men that u-fought in the last war,  
 (.) .hh an' can't afford tuh go in an' 'ave a  
 pinta beer, I gave my husband, e-tuh the la:st  
 war 'e got killed in the last war .hh an' it

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makes me bitter, tuh see all these people, .hh  
comin' over into this country .h that uh never  
put a penny in it, are gettin' a:ll-  
Host [That is- that  
i- that is not- that is not [the argument you  
Caller: [Oh yes it is, ]=  
Host: =should be putting of course Edna, ]  
Caller: [Theh:, ]  
Host: [is it.  
Caller: [They  
come over then they bring their mothers over  
then they bring their k-sisters over then  
they bring their,  
Host: [That is- that is a quite different  
argument Edna you're now sort of switching your  
argument from the issue of pensions, to something  
concerning .hh] immigration which is ay quite=  
Caller: [Ye:s, well, ]  
Host: =different, regard.=Thank you very much Edna,

-End call-

H: 2. 2. 89: 4

Host: And good morning tuh Lucy frum Bexley. Good=  
Caller: [ .hhh  
Host: =morning.  
Caller: [Good mor:ning Brian. .hhh  
We've godda real problem he:re with dogs fouling  
our footway,=  
Host: =Oh, something important now.  
Caller: [ .phhh ]  
(.)  
Caller: Pahdtn:?  
Host: Something important this time=right.=  
Caller: =eYe:s:.(h) Well i' i:s to us: anyway.=

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Host: =Yes:,

Caller: I'm: a-er mother of two small boys, .hh an' I've now got tuh the situation where we ca:n't (.) gedout uv our ca::r on the pa:vement si:de \*e-\* c- becu:z it's sq ba::d. .hhhh As I said we've gotta gra:iss verge \*u-u\* 's outside our house, °.hh° an' the local dog owners,=↑walk their ↓dogs ↑past my ↓house, (.) °.h° they ↑do: their bizni:ss, right outside, .hh an' ↓walk a↑way. (0.3) °.hh° (0.2)

| (1.0) |

One da:ly, I akchilly sa:w a lady=e-ow:ner, allow her dog, tuh do it's bizni:ss ↑right in the middle of my: gateway. .hhh An' when I remonstrated with the la:dy, .h she told me thut her dog ud got tuh do it's bizni:ss somewhe:re, it ↓might ↑as ↓well: ↑be ↑the:re.

Host: M:m-i,

Caller: .phhh (.) A-e(i)s you c'n imagine I wuz absolutely:=livvi-d(h),

Host: We:ll did you- did yih then ek- explain that- yew- un:derstood. that, yihknow do:gs have the call of nature just as: er as people do: .hh ] >an' they don't< have the same kind uv=

Caller: [eYe:is,]

Host: =contro:l and so the[refore th- s-sq-]

Caller: [No:i, but dogs] cun be t[r a i i n e d , ]

Host: (m-) I haven't fi-nished,=so therefore thee owner, .hhh er whether you train them or not is not rilly:, quite thuh point, but the owner, being theire has thuh responsibility and th[at's what] you should've pointed ou:t.=

Caller: [Ye:is,]

Host: =.hh That the:y should take the responsibility, .h for cleaning it up, if thuh do:g,

Caller: [Wull I did

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a:sk her,  
Host: [doesn'- isn' [able tuh have the responsibility.]  
Caller: [I did a:sk her if she would]  
please clear it up 'n she said No  
it's up t' you it's your gar:den,  
Host: [Ah well you didn'--]  
Host: Well you didn' tell: me thait. .hh E:rm:,  
e-sq:[::, y-qu:, just said erm, Oh all right then.  
Caller: [KHhhh!]  
Caller: No I didn't. I rang my local authority?  
Host: Mm:?  
Caller: .hh An:d I spent about half an hour on the  
telephone going round the whole bui:lding, .hhh An'  
they couldn't fi:nd anybody that wuz goin' tuh  
deal: with the subject, .hh but they told me thut  
if I twrite in,  
Host: Mm:?  
Caller: and got the na:me un address uv the owner, an'  
p'raps phut-photographic evidence, .hh they would  
prqsecute.  
(0.4)  
Host: (.t) Well acourse, y-yih do have to have evidence I  
mean it's a bituva nuisance I kno:w but I mean if  
you(r) really are going tuh take somebody, .hhh e:r  
to court or, .h have them fi:ned or whatever it is  
you do have tuh hev evidence.  
(.)  
Caller: Yes yo-u do  
Host: [So yih s-sho you shouldn'ta [been surpr]sed=  
Caller: [it's ver- ]  
Host: =by that.  
(0.5)  
Caller: It is very difficult tih gedit=en ow:ner should be  
maide- tuh be: responsible fuh their animals.=  
Host: =Yeh but- you have la:ws (.) e::rm which are  
intended to make them:, but- you- (.) (e)have a

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responsibility too:, if you're wanting tuh use those la:ws, .h tuh get the evidence.

(1.0)

Caller: .h'h '(1-)'

Host: [Of course you do.=I mean you ca:n't actually, .hh put somebody in jail fuh mur:der unless you get evidence.=It doesn' matter what it is.]

Caller: [No I know but ho:w d'you] suggest we get the evidence. [.hhh

Host: [Well they told you didn't they they said f-f-pho:tographic evidence: even.

(0.5)

Host: An' detai:ls of the name.

(0.6)

Caller: Yeah but- e- yi- ahmean id- u-apar:t frum following the lady ho:me an' gettin' her address how else can you do it.

Host: Yes but you ca:n't akchully:, take anybody: tuh la:ws, .h jus:t on:, an accusation.

(1.1)

Caller: '.p .hhh' (.) No I know I'm not just making accu-sa-tions Ah've got proof of my own=

Host: [.hh] [Well:- ↓e-well--]

Caller: =ey(h)huh beh hih(h)es! [.hhh

Host: [Well what is the ↑proof.

(0.7)

Caller: ('.hhh') (3.1)

(1.9)

Caller: Well I can se:nd it to: yuh if you li(h)hih hih(h)ke!

Host: u-dat- u-↑No u- yi- m: se- s:ending me (.) u-e:r offensive material is not evidence, .hh that that puhticular person wuz responsible.

(0.5)

Caller: .th No I know. I know what [yuh sayin'g,

Host: [Na- du--a- e- i- [Look- [I ↑know

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it's difficult but yihknow- you ↓do, have tuh  
 have evidence, (.hh) e:r that is supporta-ble.  
 Caller: ] .h But  
 don't you think that wrō:ng?  
 Host: Nō I ↑don't think it's ↓wrō:ng, it would be a-  
 Caller: ] Don't y'sh- think  
 that the own-ers ] themsel:ves should be made=  
 Host: ] Nō it-  
 Caller: =res-pōn-sible, ]  
 Host: ] ↑Well uv course they ] uv ↑course they should.  
 Caller: ] They should be made  
 tuh train the-ir animal:s, .hhh ]  
 Host: ] That's what the byelaw ] is ] about.  
 Caller: ] I mean  
 this lady's got her own garden, why can't he:r  
 animal .h soil he:r garden.=  
 Caller: =[[ Why is it allowed ] tuh soil=  
 Host: ] [[ We' you are jus' saying why d-  
 Caller: =[[ my garden . ]  
 Host: ] [[ you're jis saying why ]: d' people break la:ws.  
 People dō: break la:ws,  
 Caller: Yes ] but they shouldn't be allo:wed ]  
 Host: ] and in order tuh do anything about it, ]  
 (.)  
 Caller: They shouldn't- sh:e should not be allowed tuh  
 put my children's health at r:isk,=  
 Host: =I ↑KNOW a:ll ↓that,  
 (1.1)  
 Caller: Wull what dih you suggest (u-) should  
 happen ] then.  
 Host: ] Well- theh- you've been tol- by the  
 council: what should happen,=if you are going  
 to accuse somebody of something, .h eit  
 doesn' matter what it i:s, .h then you-=Ef  
 course! have got tuh have evidence. .hh An' you  
 ca:n't just then say, .h Oh well I ca:n't get

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that that's too difficult, .h e:rm, u(n)-what  
d'you expect me tuh do:, .h erm why d'people-  
e-why uh people allowed tuh get away with this=  
people should be made tuh do so and so. .h That's  
just avoiding the issue. You should concentrate  
m-mu- on what the council actually told you, .h  
you could do:. .h Thank you Lucy.

-End call-

H:21.11.88:11

Host: On to Philip in Camden Town, good morning.  
Caller: Yeh, guh morning Brian. Erm (.) really what I  
wanted to say was that I'm fascinated by watching  
these telethons by thee anuh- amoun' of c-  
contradictions that're thrown up by them. .hh I  
mean one of the a:rguments that're made by  
people who support them is that the sta:te ca:n't  
.hh sort of fill a bottomless pit, of need but  
when you look at e:r the childcare facilities in  
this country, .hh we're very very low:, (.) e- on  
the league table in Europe of (.) yihknow if you  
try tuh get a child into a nursery i's very  
difficult in this country. .hh An' in fa:ct it's  
getting worse.=  
Host: =What's that got tuh do with it.  
Caller: .phh Well I think whu- what 'at's gotta d-do with  
it is that there is sort of: e:r (.) .h ah ethos  
produ:ced by these erm- e:rm- e:rm- telethons that  
in fa:ct this country is very caring towards  
children. .hhh A:n' I see that as a vast  
contradiction becuz I think we're a very  
antichi:ld rr- sa- society. .hhh E:r I- I think  
this is a- a cle:ian way of giv- of getti- get-  
salving yuh conscience, to just pick up the credit



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- ca:rd and uh .hh t k pay tuh money.=.h There's a  
big contra-diction
- Host: [Well if people want to do that why not.
- Caller: .hh We:ll. (.) Yes uh I- I- (th-) the thing that  
worries me is that I think it actually creates a  
sense uh separateness between the people who're  
giving an' the people who get.  
(0.8)
- Caller: If you try: [to-
- Host: [Well there is a separateness without  
the telethon.
- Caller: Wel:l, yeah but e:r, I- I think we should be  
wo:rking at breaking down that separateness.  
I [think] these (.) these telethons actually=  
Host: [How?] ]
- Caller: =increase it.
- Host: [[Well,] what you're saying is that charity does.
- Caller: [[.hh° ]
- Caller: .h Charity do:es, ye::s I mean ]
- Host: [Okay we- so you ]'re (.) so  
you're going back tuh that original argument we  
shouldn't have charity.
- Caller: Well no I- um: I wouldn't go: that far,=what I  
would like to [see: is ]
- Host: [Well how ] far are you going then.
- Caller: Well I: would- What I would like tuh see instead  
of it being a money bas:ed, erm w-e:r sort of  
ethos, .hh that in fact what it should be is a  
time bas:ed, erm situation.=So instead of you  
encouragin' people to .hhh give money we sh'd be  
encouragin' people tuh give time.  
(0.7)
- Caller: And int'rest becuz there's a vaist contradiction  
between giving money, .hh the amount of money  
that these telethons bring in, .hh an' if you  
try tuh for instance put ay:: hostel in a

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- community w-with mentally handicapped children,  
.h the amount of aggression un hostility you  
ge:t becuz of people're gunna lose money they  
percei:ve on their houses,=  
Host: =An' how is giving ti:me going tuh get rid of  
that.  
Caller: .h Well giving ti:me would actually bring the people  
together.  
Host: Mbu- d- d- But you're suggesting they should be  
ma:de tuh do it?  
Caller: No:, no what I'm suggesting i:s-  
Host: [Well if the prejudice  
exists they're not going tuh do it.  
Caller: Well what I- what I'm: suggesting i- should be  
do:ne is instead of encouraging people tuh give  
mone:y, that thes[e telethons sh-]  
Host: [Yes you've said that.]  
(.)  
Caller: Well they should be enc-couraging people tuh  
give their ti:me,  
Host: [Yes >I know [you've s-<]  
Caller: [and in-t'rest,  
.hhh in the children that they want tuh help.  
Host: Yes but 'h heh' .hh er- (.) You say that you  
would not force people tuh do it, .h you do  
however accept that there is prejudice  
agenst .hh er certain kinds of, homes and  
er, [.hh] hospitals in communities [.hh] so .h=  
Caller: [Yeh] [Yeh]  
Host: =if: that prejudice exists people aren't going to  
gi:ve ti:me. Or money fuh that matte:r.  
Caller: [Well no I-  
What I think is that these telethons a:re  
educating people but they're educating them in a  
certain wa:y=they're educating them tuh give  
mone:y.=What they should be doing is educating them

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tuh take an int'rest in their community. .hh  
instead of ject giving moneey which can in fa:ct,  
.hh stop them being int'rested [becuz-  
Host: Well I don't think  
the job of the telethon is to educate people tuh  
do: anything, .h er it gives them an opportunity:,  
.mhh e:r throu:ugh a kind of entertainment if you  
like .hh tuh give moneey.=Now you may not like  
tha:t, .hh I don't find it, terribly entertaining  
or int'resting to wa:itch, .hh but I certunly  
wouldn't prevent people who do enjoy it, .hhh er  
frum seeing it, .h being entertained an:d at the  
same time giving money, .h whether it salves  
consciousness=uh consciences or no:t. .hh Thank  
yuh Philip,

-End call-

H:23.1.89:11

Host: .hh Quick word with Barry befo:re the traffic news  
hello Barry,  
(.)

Caller: Oh hello good mornin:g. (0.6) Erm, (.) I wanna  
talk about this: er machi:ne testing of erm er:m  
drink dri:ve, (0.7) thee alcohol conten:t, .hh I  
think e::r it would be wrong to abolish, erm  
(0.3) er blood tests. (0.8) which, (.) the  
government is planning now.  
(1.8)

Host: This is because of the case that you heard, erm:,  
discussed this morning.

Caller: .hhh Well it's (.) not just that e::rm (0.2) that  
was er discussed this morning but erm a\_lso from  
thee erm .hh e:rm, (1.0) peo:ple's personal

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experiences when, .h [ I don't ( )  
Host: [ Well becauz the breathalizer  
is imperfect and it's been known for some time  
that it needs this extra back up. .h I think many  
people would probably agree we'll have to wait and  
see: .hhh Thank you very much indeed erm, Barry.

-End call-

H: 21. 11. 88: 16

Host: Gary now, from Barnet.

Caller: .hh Yeah hello. I don't see the problem with the  
Queen going tuh Russia at all.  
(2.1)

Host: Mm?

Caller: I mean e- I've- we(h) heh uh- I don't understand  
I've got this thing where people that mind don't  
matter en people that matter don't mind=who the  
hell's gonna .hhh mind if we get on better with  
the Russians I mean, .hh people've been tr-  
saying the Russians've been e:r, .hh ba:::d an'  
the red- peril an' ev'rything for, (.) god knows  
'ow many years, an' now they're tryina do  
something, .h ev'ryone's saying, the Queen  
shouldn' go over [ I don' ] understand the problem.

Host: [ .hh ]

Host: Well when yuh say ev'ryone it it's: actually::=

Caller: =[[ (wuh- ) ]

Host: [ thee, ] it's actually Downing Street, e:r the  
Prime Ministe:r who's saying, that erm .h it is  
probably not a good idea, =mind you the invitation  
hasn't been issued yet. .h so we can't, erm,  
actually:, yihknow [ refuse an in]vitation that=

Caller: [ .Yes o'course. ]

Host: =hasn't been made. .h But they're actually saying

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things like, .hh erm if: the Soviet Union:, really shows evidence that it is changing, and will improve, .hh er matters: under the heading of human rights, .hh well then in: the fullness of time, then it will be reas'nable fuh the Queen tuh go there but not yet.

(1.7)

Caller: E:irm, Phh! .hh I think it can be looked at in many diff'rent wa:ys. I mean an:d uh perhaps another issue could be brought up. .hh I mean: yihknow li:ke e:r, .hh when they wen' into Afghanistan.

(.)

Caller:

[Er there-

Host:

[Yes that's] been mentioned as well.

Caller:

.h Ye:ah. I mean there could be:, e:r there's lots of other countries which hav:e er records which, .hh yihknow dqn't- aren't clean all the time ei:ther. But, .hh I- I think e:r something like, the Queen going over there could be good. And .hh

Host:

[Yes I s'pouse if we dq use the argument of human rights it erm, leaves very few countries, in: the wq:rd that would be: erm, good enough for the Queen tuh visit. .hh Thank yih Gary,

-End call-

G:26.11.88:3

Host: Ni:gel from Peckham.

(0.6)

Caller:

Hello:? [Yeh-

Host:

[Hello] Nigel.

Caller:

Hello.=Yeh ↑my name's Nigel Clay↓burgh. .h E:r I

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- was actually at the student protest yesterday,
- Host: [[Mm.]]
- Caller: [[An']] I just wannid tuh make it- (.) clear t' your listeners. .h e:r why we were actually, er doing what we were doing. (.) Uh what was s'pose tuh happen yesterda:y, it wz an org- it was an organised lobby of Parliament by: the National Union of Students.
- Host: \*M: mm, \*=
- Caller: =An' the idea was to make, .hh the public of England, an' Great Britain, .h aware, .h of: thee loans proposals. That, what they're try:in' t'do .h is to introduce top up loans, (.) freeze, student benefits, .h a:nd also, freeze the grant.
- Host: W-und- ah we und- understand that Nigel a- [puh-] perfec'ly clear.=
- Caller: [Yeh.]
- Host: =You say it was an organised demonstration by the National Union of Students.=
- Caller: [do y-] [No it wz']n or- it was an organised lobby. .hh A:nd a march, which was s'pose tuh go: [to ( )]
- Host: [Well, you] you c'n organise a lobby or a march it still amounts to a demonstration, =d'you think it got out of hand?
- Caller: .hh Well, I think the brea:kaway group got out out of hand. .hh But. .h what we were actually the:re for wz to ek- uh to explain. =An' what we didn't want was to: er, disrupt the traffic, an' have a riot. .h That was in fact thee: er, .h the Stwizz, organisers, =Socialist Workers', ↓Party. [.h
- Host: [Ar- w-] ar- Are you saying that they- they came in, uninvited?

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Caller: Er, no, well some o'them are students as well:  
yuh see. .hh Bu:t erm, (.) basic'lly, I don't  
think e:r the police- I think the police did  
rac- react ra:ther ba:dly tuh something, which we  
were trying tuh do, for the future of higher  
education fer England. .hh Wha- what the loans er  
going tuh do is tuh make higher education more  
elitist. .hh A:n' w-what I don't want tuh see  
is sor'of, any: er, .h backlash against tstudents  
because they're actually trying to act on beha:lf,  
fuh the future of higher education in this  
country. .h Cuz if the government, .h aren't  
going to: er, .h make it possible for a:ll people  
tuh go into higher education, it's going to have  
a dire effect on, .h the future of the country.=  
if they neglect, .h higher education,=This is  
why:, .h we felt we had to .h make- some action.=  
Otherwi:se this is the legacy, .h we're leaving  
fo:r, yihknow our kids an' future generations.

Host: .hh Fine,  
I c'n understand that an' it seemed a perfectly  
lej- l-legitimate point to make but, e- th:e  
point is don't you think you ought to make more  
precautions or the National Union of Students  
ought to take, greater precautions, .h tuh make  
sure that you don't get the kind of in:terlopers  
that you've been describing ye-? (.) yesterday?  
(0.4)

Caller: Er, (.) w-what d'you mean more  
precautions.=I me]an they did=

Host: [Well,]

Caller: =or:ganise [thuh ma:rch (well) ] a lot=

Host: [Tuh have- tuh have it prop-]

Caller: =of students we:re over there, .hh in the  
Hqu:ses of Parliament going through .h the  
c'rect procedu:re here. .h But I think, (.) what

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we're, talking 'bout today an' the phone in la:st night with Robbie Vinc- Vincent and here tuhda:y, .h is the diff'rence between student action.= Whether people feel, .hh students should just ta:ke erm e:r lobby action, .h a:h the argument's really between direct action which is something .h er Socialist Workers advocate, I mean they a:re a revolution'ry party an' they are a very small minority of the students,

Host:

[Well that's what I] mean by- by precautions=d'you think th- yo- that you- your demonstrations or lobbies or whatever you want to call them should be m- m-more effectively marshalled.

Caller:

.hhh E::r, Well, I would hope so.=Becuz then e::r we wouldn't ha:ve, any: sort of backlash against the s- the students which is the la:st thing we want. .hh I would advocate .h e:r better marshalling, .h but I'd like tuh know whether, .h er the viewers o:r yourself think, .h e:r th- if, athee, NUS ma:rch had continued an' there wasn't a disruption, .hh whethe:r, .h the media would've given publicity:, to what was, a lobby. or whether that's a more effective wa:y, of e:r arguing sensibly abo[ut the loans 'proposal.']

Host:

[That's a tvery, that's a] tvery dangerous argument becuz what you're saying that ungle- ah- uh that unless you demonstrate in a violent wa:y, .hh the media will not take notice.=If th[at is what you're saying,]

Caller:

[No. No I'm not--] I'm not advocating that an' I- an' I never ha:ve. .hh I'd just like tuh know, your opinion if you thi:nk, that erm, .h because this is somethin' I'm arguing, yihknow wrestling with myself,=whether,



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if we'd, gone through an' had the lobby, [.hh] as=  
 Host: [Mm.]

Caller: =I:- as I had, an' I had an appointment with my  
 MP: [.hh] but I couldn't get .h erm across the=  
 Host: [Mm.]

Caller: =bridge. An' the- an' the a:n' the ma- e:r the  
 ma:rch actually split up. .hh E:r an' I think  
 the mai:n, the main argument i:s, what is the  
 best wa:y, .h fo:r the public tuh be  
 awa:r[e, .h] that, e:r the government's=  
 Host: [.hhh]

Caller: =proposals er going tuh make the higher  
 education more elitist an' make it harder,  
 .h fuh people to go into: higher education ell  
 be less of an investment, .h in the future of  
 the country.=w( ), Yihknow the loans a:re=  
 Host: [Well, ]

Caller: =.hh going to restrict people going into higher  
 educa-tion (and simply:)( )

Host: [Well quite-I mean quite fra-quite frankly Ni-gel  
 you're tngt- you're not going tuh get public sympathy  
 if you dhave the kind of violent demonstration  
 or lobby or whatever you call it that >you had  
 yestuhday.< .hh It- it tmay have bin exaggerated  
 by the tabloids this morning no doubt it dwas  
 exaggerated. [.h] Nonetheless. The tpublic=  
 Caller: [Yes.]

Host: =imdpression the public perception is once  
 again, .h rightly or wrongly, .h of students  
 being violent, on an tissue which, i-s: ss:-  
 dcertunly: is perfec'ly l:-l-l:, l:-legitimate.  
 .hh I think that erm, .hh (.) (a)you:'d- you'd  
 be much better off if you could in fact marshal  
 you:r, protests, in- in a- in a more peaceful

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way but there you are. ↑Thank you very much  
Nigel,

-End call-

H:30.11.88:5

Host: Something now from: Peter in: Hammersmith, =Three  
two five three two double two: if you'd like to  
join us. .hhh Hello Peter,  
Caller: 'Ell. (.) E:r- r- erm Brian, =did you see the  
Boongdung File last night.  
Host: .mhth ↓No: I'm afraid (.) erm, that erm, w-we  
might as well:, 'm-m' settle this once  
and [fer all I didn't watch any television]  
Caller: [Right (y'didn') ( ) (hfnh)]=  
Host: =[[la(h)st] ni:ght okay, [.hmhh hfh ]  
Caller: [[.hhhh] [Q(h)kay right.]  
Caller: .hh Anyway I:'s appalled when I saw it. (0.2)  
Absolutely disgusti[n] programme.  
Host: [Na- d- this is thee, the  
Channel Fou:r programme, ei:r  
which is essentially about erm, Black  
affa:irs [right?]  
Caller: [Yes:.]  
Host: [[°Yus.°]  
Caller: [[°e-°] .hh °di-° u-er:m a- Well, ↑that's fair  
enough I mean that's a for:mat if they want to-  
duh °u:h° yih know give some ti:me tuh  
that [ kinda ] thing that's fair enough.=  
Host: [°Qoyes°]  
Caller: =But re- it sh:ould be: f:air, .hhh an' ei:qual.  
.hh um It dealt wi' the case of a you:ng ma:n 'oo  
entered a shop in: er Wolverhampton, and was  
erm, (d)arrested becoz of a credit ca:rd fraud,  
.mhhh or a suspected credit card fraud, .mhh I

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don' wanna fa:ll intuh their trap, (0.3) And  
 erm, (0.2) .khhh er a- 'd- d-' 'ee t- 'u-  
 tri:ed to erm (.) er le:ave the sce:ne, and e:r  
 three p'licemen, er pil- pinned 'im down on the  
 floor en as a result of the- of the- of thee um:  
 (0.4) 'm:-' ensuin' struggle, the ma:n ↓died. (.)  
 .hhhhh Un↑fortunate, theh-=>th-=th-=th-th-<=that  
 ↓wa:s.=B'then the programme wen- wen' on tuh- t-  
 t-to t-t- tuh look intuh the pahst of the- of  
 the- of the victim:=or rather the man 'oo- d-  
 yihknow thuh- the- (.) the cha:p 'oo died,=

Host:

Caller:

[ Mm, ]  
 [ .phh ]hh and uh they mentioned i- ss- s- that  
 'e attended ↑Sundee ↓school. (.) Tha' 'e wuz in  
 the ↑Bo:ys ↓Brigade. .h Thut 'e ↑s:ang in a  
 church ↓choi:r. (.) '.hhh' And e:r th- (.) they  
 didn' address the actual .p suh much the actual  
 events o:r what led up t'em or how many- people  
 .hhh went in:tuh the shop with 'im whether  
 th'e m'a:n wuz intimidat(ed) whether 'e tried=

Host:

Caller:

[ 'm' ]  
 =to es:cape, .hhh and e- i'wuz just an a:nti-  
 police- (.) it was a po↑lice bashin'  
 ↓exercise [ fuh (luh) ]

Host:

[ Well may ]be- maybe it wa:i:s >but I  
 mean< frum what you:'ve told me: I: must admit  
 I would be a bi-t erm, .hhh tuh say: the least  
 shocked by::, somebody being kill:ed under those  
 ↑circumstances,

Caller:

[ Right, oka:y so, I mean (.) the:re's  
 a way of dealing with that. You go: t- you go:  
 tuh the la:w, an- an- an- and you go, d-uh- you  
 er, rely on the coroner's evidence en things li'  
 'at,=

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Host: =w Well of course [b't- ]  
 Caller: [ .hhhhh [A:ll these things're done, ]  
 Host: [Yes b't that doesn't- ]=  
 Host: =That doesn't mean tuh say that it erm, shouldn'  
 be (.) discussed on a television programme does  
 it.  
 Caller: >No<=absolutely not, no. A:h um no bu' I mean,  
 e- w- it's 'ave some- let's 'ave it- evenly:  
 weighted on both sides ah mean l-u-et's- let's  
 erm lu- .hh f'r†instance, can I: give y'en  
 egza:mple,  
 Host: [[Yah(p)]  
 Caller: [[.phhh ] They said that thee 'u-uh' p'†lice  
 †officer, u-oo e:ad the- thuh- the:- (0.3)  
 the: 'hha'u-hold on the boy's neck, (.) .phhhh  
 erm, (.) wuz advi::sed by the police federation:,  
 tuh say nothink.  
 (0.8)  
 Caller: Now I mean, '.hhh' ('u:u:'') (0.7) †do we †know  
 that- uh any p'lice officer 'oo's cha:rged with  
 a serious offence, .hhh e-er \*u:h i- u-w-\* I, I  
 should imagine a-that they're a:ll advised tuh  
 say nothing at th[at ] point.  
 Host: [Ye:s.]  
 Host: Yes. Yeth a lot of people are  
 advised, [in: their own int'rest to- ]  
 Caller: [Yuh see what I mean b't the sinister-te:r,  
 the sinister w-way that they put it over in the  
 programme wuz th- th- .hhh wuz uh \*i-i-\* in some  
 way tuh tell yuh thut- thut thut thuh- officer  
 felt guilty an' there [for]e wuz tryina cover 'is=  
 Host: [ .m.]  
 Caller: =track-s:. (e- )  
 Host: [Okay so far as- far as you're concerned  
 thee, Bandung Fi:l[e last night was- ]  
 Caller: [Complete non-sequi]tur.

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Host: [[E::r, ] Yes and you're sayin' the- the-  
 Caller: [[Sorry?]  
 (.)  
 Host: the programme last night was-  
 was [loaded aganet im:, th- the police and was]  
 Caller: [Well I think a:ll those type a programmes]=  
 Host: =[[an >attack on the police.<]  
 Caller: [[Brian, '\*u:: a-\*' ] from a cert'n  
 sta:ndpoint, .h They come from a cert'n  
 standpoint en you 'aff tuh ta:ke 'em with a  
 pinch o' salt.  
 Host: .h ↑Well,=↓Well y-you c'n take, almost any  
 programme wi-th erm, [ 'u' a ] a pinch of salt,=  
 Caller: [ Mm, ]  
 Host: =erm, but y-you do have t'come t'your own  
 conclusion when you watch things, .hh erm,  
 quite often things are- biased the other wa:y,  
 .phh e:r(b) you know the- thuh the- (.)  
 .ph consta:ntly >put opinion< that the  
 Caller: [I: jist fail- (.) \*u:h\*]=  
 Host: =[[police are wonderful ( )]  
 Caller: [[a:- absolu- I fa:il t'see what-  
 what 'is a:ntecedence in the church 'ad  
 anything t'do with it. O:r- or [o:r i:s it in=  
 Host: [Well--]  
 Caller: =the Boys Brigade mo:vemen-t . ]  
 Host: [Yeh [but that's]  
 Caller: [ .hhh An' ]=  
 Host: =[[unders:andable.]  
 Caller: [[they ↑kep sh-o:win' you: (.) re↑peatedly  
 the ↑funeral the mo:ther ↑cryin' .hh th- the  
 ev'rybody ↑wai:lin' over the grave I mean ne-  
 was tot'lly un↓necessary.=  
 Host: =Okay Peter,=thank you very much indeed, erm:,  
 It is understandable how- however: if you, bi-  
 have the ki:nd of view that you're suggesting

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that programme (.) had, .hhmhh e:::rm, that they  
should e:rm, .hh (.) talk about thee- the  
character, of the victim. .thh †thank yuh  
Peter,

-End call-

## Notes

### Chapter One On Talk and 'Talk Radio'

1. The term 'discourse' is used in a whole variety of ways in modern social science (for a discussion see Potter and Wetherell, 1987). I use it here in a rough sense, to mean, broadly, 'verbal interaction'.

2. There are many different types of radio phone-in show currently in operation. The principal sorts are the 'open-line', the more orchestrated 'current affairs' shows, and various 'advice-lines'. The data for this study were taken from a long-running open-line show (the data source is described in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

3. It should be noted that I am using the word 'opinionated' in its conventional, dictionary sense here. That is, by opinionated discourse I mean to refer to the characteristic stubborn tendentiousness of the talk on opinions generated in the data on which the present study is based. I make no claim as to the representativeness of the opinions expressed on talk radio as a manifestation of 'public opinion'. Indeed nowhere in what follows do I refer to talk radio in relation to 'public opinion'. The term opinionated discourse is used to describe characteristics of the discourse itself, in which, as will become clear as we proceed, speakers typically exhibit an 'undue attachment' to their own opinions (Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, 1981).

4. As we see in the section below on the background context for calls, other interactional business goes on outside the boundaries of the broadcast exchange between caller and host: principally, for

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the caller, off-air encounters with switchboard staff. Analysis has been restricted to the talk that is actually broadcast for a number of reasons. First, on an entirely practical level, that talk was readily available for recording. More significantly, second, I took it that from the point of view both of callers, and of radio station staff themselves who rely on callers in order to have a show to broadcast, the encounter between host and caller represents the real, core interactional business, with any other gatekeeping or call-waiting exchanges being essentially peripheral. Callers called in so as to speak with hosts, and hosts were there in order to hear and respond to the opinions of callers. Perhaps most significantly, however, it was in the broadcast exchange that the principal activity in which I was interested (and which forms the central focus in the chapters to follow) - i.e., *argument* - took place.

5. The term 'synchronic' was used by Saussure to refer to his preferred version of structural linguistics which studied language in abstraction from its actual use, as a structure of signs and sign-relations. This approach contrasts with the 'diachronic' study of language in use, in which context, sequencing, and temporality must be taken into consideration.

6. As Baker and Hacker (1984) also show, this picture of language underlies Chomskian structural linguistics too.

7. Speech act theory is in fact best represented as a form of pragmatics. See the comprehensive discussion in Levinson (1983). Another version of 'discourse analysis' has been proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), in which various influences ranging from speech act theory, through structuralist semiotics to conversation analysis are synthesised, and the analytic focus is on how speakers 'account' for the versions of reality they put forward, usually in situations where they are being interviewed by the researcher. A seminal text for this form of discourse analysis is Gilbert and Mulkey's (1984) book on variability in scientists' accounts of their work. Wooffitt (1992) represents a related study of accounts of paranormal experiences which leans its methodology much more heavily towards the perspective of conversation analysis.



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8. The following section is a brief introduction to some issues in conversation-analytic research that are salient for the present investigation. It is my belief that the theory and method of conversation analysis are best introduced through exemplification, rather than formal presentation. CA is an empirical social science *par excellence*, and the best way to grasp what it is about is to watch it at work on its data. The chapters of substantive analysis presented in this work consequently are designed not only to present findings but also to exemplify the methods by which those findings were produced. There are available some good general introductions to the CA perspective, however, the best of which are: Levinson (1983: Ch.6), Heritage and Atkinson (1984), Heritage (1984a: Ch.8), and, with specific regard to the CA approach to institutional discourse, Drew and Heritage (1992b). Excellent overviews can also be found in C. Goodwin and Heritage (1990), Maynard and Clayman (1991), and Drew (forth). But the seminal source must be the recently published collected lectures of Harvey Sacks (Sacks, 1992). Sacks' lectures, till now only somewhat restrictively available in the form of mimeographs, are themselves marvellous examples of the method of instruction through exemplification, and a reading of them provides the best grounding in precisely how CA aims to approach talk, and what it does with it.

9. The question of how 'structure' and 'action' perspectives might be combined in a 'micro-macro integration' synthesis has been an important issue in sociological theory for many years now. Perhaps the most notable contributions on the theoretical plane have been made by Anthony Giddens with his 'structuration' theory. A basic account can be found in Giddens (1981). A much more extended version is Giddens (1984). Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel (1981) provide a range of papers on the integration of micro and macro perspectives, though none of them are enthusiastic about the contribution that conversation analysis might make to the debate. For a positive discussion of that contribution, see Schegloff (1987a).

10. Although as the name suggests conversation analysts have focused much of their attention on analysing the structural organisation of everyday conversation (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984),

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CA in fact has never been entirely restricted to that domain of social interaction. The earliest investigations of its founder, Harvey Sacks (Sacks, 1992), were into patterns of interaction in telephone calls to a Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Centre: in the very first of his seminal lectures at the University of California Sacks discusses two procedures by which an institutional representative (a counsellor) can attempt to solicit, without overtly requesting, a client's (the caller's) name, and related procedures by which callers can seek to avoid giving, without overtly refusing to give, their names (Sacks, 1992 [Fall 1964-Spring 1965, Lecture 1]). Other seminal work in conversation analysis, for instance Schegloff's (1968) study of sequencing in telephone call openings, was also based on data drawn from 'institutional' settings (calls to a city police department). Since these early contributions, the study of discourse in institutional settings has become a substantive area of conversation-analytic research in its own right (Drew and Heritage, 1992a).

11. Goffman's work on 'frame analysis' (1974) represents an extended exploration, albeit from a somewhat impressionistic perspective, of a whole variety of aspects of how societal members define and experience events in different social scenes through engaging in specific behavioural patterns and conventionalised processes of reasoning.

12. Scannell (1991a) is a significant interdisciplinary volume of studies explicitly taking broadcast talk as their topic.

13. There is evidence that the technical personnel of talk radio shows orient to the desirability of spontaneity from callers: see on this point the ethnographic remarks in the section on background context for calls, below.

14. For interesting analyses of the contradictory themes in popular discourse on the place of the Royal Family in British culture, see Billig (1988, 1989).

15. This represents a further difference between the *Brian Hayes Programme*, from which our data were drawn, and what I call 'current affairs' broadcasts such as *Call Nick Ross*. On the latter show, themes and issues are preestablished by the host, and tend to

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revolve around 'big' stories in the news. On the *Brian Hayes Programme*, which is an 'open-line' show, callers are expected to select the topical themes for their calls. As we see in Chapter 4, there are analytic issues that can be raised in respect of the particular ways callers have of pointing up the status of their topics as commentable 'issues'.

### Chapter Two Talk and the Management of Conflict

1. This point suggests that it may be possible to sustain a distinction, in the analysis of talk-in-interaction, between 'argument' and 'disagreement' as different kinds of activities involving the use of different (though related) linguistic resources.

2. This is an example of CA's general perspective on the structural features of verbal interaction. Conversational structures are viewed as standing independently of the psychological characteristics of individuals; yet at the same time individuals are viewed as knowledgeable agents who treat each other's actions as 'accountable', and so imbue the structures of interaction with moral force. For an excellent account of the theoretical background and empirical implications of this view, see Heritage (1984a). A fine example of how the 'relative autonomy' approach to conversational structure can yield a robust social constructionist account of an apparent 'lapse of memory' can be found in Drew (1989).

3. I refer in this paragraph to speakers 'wanting' recipients to come early/not come early. We might note that an alternative way of putting it would be to focus on the assumptions of common knowledge about when B is/may be coming which A is relying on. That is, the difference between 'Yuh coming down early?' and 'Yuh not coming early are you?' may be treated as based in differences in the speaker's knowledge or assumptions about B's intentions, rather than in A's own requirements. For a discussion of how 'intentions', 'wants' and 'common knowledge' may be fruitfully treated from a conversation-analytic perspective, see Mandelbaum and Pomerantz (1991). The classic statement of the importance of 'recipient design' as a general phenomenon in talk-in-interaction is Sacks and Schegloff (1979).

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4. Although we should add to this the caution that those 'positions' may not be advanced always in a 'rational' form - as we saw earlier, opposition can be done through the use of simple challenges, negations, disclaimers, and so on.

5. The points in these paragraphs refer mainly to these two settings - the court-in-session and the broadcast news interview - principally because it is here that not only the largest amount, but also the most influential, conversation-analytic research has been carried out.

6. On this point, see Moerman (1988: Ch.4) for a discussion of different ways in which talk is designed for overhearers in a Thai courtroom, where there is no jury present and the standard practice is for the judge to write down a version of the lawyers' examinations of witnesses as they are produced. Since these written versions constitute the principal evidence in any appeals procedure, lawyers are more than usually concerned to design their talk (and to direct their witnesses' talk) carefully so as to influence what it is that the judge writes down.

7. Of course, disputants in conversation may choose to be indirect in these kinds of ways: the point is that the corresponding choice is normatively blocked for institutional agents in courts and interviews.

8. I return to this issue of techniques for exhibiting and engendering scepticism in disputatious interaction in Chapter 5.

9. For a similar consideration of strategies for rebutting what is taken to be an implicit charge (though note the different context i.e., that of exchanges between pediatricians and the mothers of teenage diabetics) see Silverman (1987: Ch. 10).

10. The suggestion that talk radio might represent an 'intermediate' form of institutional discourse was first made by Heritage (1985) in a footnote: 'An intermediate case between talk that is produced as private and talk whose design exhibits its production for overhearers is perhaps to be found in radio shows incorporating a phone-in format. No comparative work on such shows has, to the present author's knowledge, been done' (1985:100, fn.3). Later, in a paper that is not entirely successful, I tried to explicate this sense

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of talk radio discourse as 'between private and public' by analysing recursive activity patterns in calls to a talk radio show (Hutchby, 1991).

11. For a slightly different perspective on how to account for persistent asymmetries in doctor-patient interactions, see Fisher and Groce (1990).

12. On this point, we might recall the following segment from excerpt (20):

Host:        Ask me: that question and see what happen:s.  
→ Caller:   Well I mean I- (.) u-w- I know 'ow perverser you are  
              Brian.

We noted in the text how the host's instruction to 'Ask me: that question and see what happen:s' adumbrates a 'controversial' action on his part: i.e. a move which goes against the caller's incipient line. We can notice here the way in which the caller's initial response, 'I know 'ow perverser you are Brian', not only shows that he recognises the host's intention to 'be controversial' at this point, but also exhibits a broader orientation to this host's professional role of generating controversy.

### Chapter Three   Organising Participation

1. Of course, as Kendon and Ferber (1973) point out, there are varying degrees of familiarity obtaining between different sets of interactants, and these may affect the precise trajectory of the greetings exchange. For instance, in the data set of greetings at a party on which their analysis is largely based, the authors point out that first greetings initiated by the hostess towards her guests frequently begin without any 'pregreeting' or distance-salutation. The same can often be observed in greetings between spouses.

From a slightly different perspective, Irvine (1974) provides an excellent analysis of how differentials in social relationships affect the form taken by greetings in a non-Western cultural context.

2. And not only 'our' culture (i.e. Western or, more specifically, Anglo-American culture), it seems. Schegloff (1986) also provides a short discussion of how the 'core sequences' can be

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discerned in call openings from an Egyptian corpus. But see for an alternative approach to cross-cultural data, Godard (1977). Houtkoup-Steenstra (1991) and Hopper (1992: Ch.4) also address the question of cultural, relational and situational variations in opening strategies, though from a more closely conversation-analytic perspective than does Godard, who works from within the anthropologically-oriented approach known as the 'ethnography of speaking' (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972).

3. Recall the discussion of the background context of calls provided in Chapter 1.

4. An instance of what happens when this kind of 'checking' goes on is provided in extract (11), discussed later in the text (p.95).

5. I derive the 'still-shot' metaphor from an interview with the veteran cartoon director Chuck Jones, broadcast on *The Late Show*, BBC TV, 17.3.92. Jones, talking about some of the techniques used in the making of his celebrated Bugs Bunny cartoon *What's Opera, Doc?*, pointed out at one stage his use of a slightly extended still shot to 'mark' the transition from an animated dance sequence into a song sequence. In Jones' account, this visual pause was quite strategically used in order to prepare the audience for the upcoming 'frame shift'. Jones' report of the strategic use of this technique seems to me to stand as a kind of 'lay version' of the general procedural efficacy of transition-markers in social interaction.

6. Jefferson (1989) provides an interesting analysis of silences of one second in length in conversation. In a characteristically complex, but incisive presentation, Jefferson seeks to show that 'the "tolerance interval" for some problematic interactional bit [in conversation] is just over one second, whereupon one of the participants starts to do some resolutive activity' (1989:170). In the process she extends work done on pause length in reading aloud, where for instance Butterworth (1980) had found that intersentential pauses in aloud reading tend to be of around 1.0-1.24 seconds, to the domain of 'spontaneous' conversation. Whatever the eventual significance of Jefferson's exploratory research might turn out to be (and it resonates interestingly with the notable work of

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Chafe (1979, 1985) on pauses and hesitations in speech), her observations render additionally noticeable pauses such as that found in our extract (9), where a clearly problematic 'interactional bit' is resolved after a one second gap.

### Chapter Four Call Validations as Opinionated Discourse

1. The point in this paragraph recalls a discussion in an early paper by Jefferson (1974), where the following piece of data from a traffic court session is cited:

[PTC:1:49]  
Bassett: En I didn't read that [description of violation  
the officer wrote on the ticket] When the  
→ ku- officer came up I s-  
Judge: 'Red traffic signal approximately thirty  
feet east of the crosswalk, when signal changed  
tuh red.'

Focusing on the defendant's self-repair 'ku- officer', Jefferson remarks that 'officer' is the appropriate term to refer to the police in this (American) court setting, but that the defendant's 'ku-' is hearable as a start on the 'unofficial' term 'cop'. She goes on:

While an occurrence like '...the ku- officer...' may not be subject to official complaint, it appears that the judge is making his unhappiness with it manifest in an alternative way; i.e., by interrupting the defendant mid word in her correction. Whether or not 'ku-' is an artifact of the 'cop/officer' alternation, or an anticipation error involving the subsequently appearing 'came', the judge may hear it as a gross but still unofficial instance of the former and hear it as an insult. He may deal with both its grossness and its unofficial status by, e.g. producing a rudeness, perhaps specifically a reciprocal rudeness to be heard as unofficially admonishing the defendant for her insult. (Jefferson, 1974:193-4)

2. The three-part structure of the caller's complaint here is perhaps of note in itself. A number of studies have remarked on the way that triads work rhetorically to convey 'completeness', to as it were cover the ground (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986; Drew, 1990; Jefferson, 1990; Potter et al., 1990). In this way the caller's argument may cover the ground in respect of the 'complaintworthiness' of Margaret Thatcher's views. Three-part lists

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are also effective in enabling an audience to project their completion, since a list of three appears to be an optimum-length list in conversational interaction (Jefferson, 1990). This feature makes the silence that follows the caller's listing in this excerpt all the more noticeable.

3. For a discussion of the relationships between 'position' and 'support' components seen as generic features of rhetorical arguments, see Schiffrin (1985).

4. A number of studies of the internal organisation of monologues and narratives have focused on patterned features of the management of content, and outlined distinctive 'stages' which can be traced in such extended utterances. Among the first were the studies by Labov and Waletzky (1967; Labov, 1972b) on the structure of narratives of personal experience. Montgomery (1991) developed this approach in a study of narratives told in letters, then read out on air by a DJ, in a popular British radio broadcast. Sacks (1978) considered the internal structure of a joke told in a peer group encounter.

5. The two 'trajectories' for call validations suggested here - one in which callers first make a case and then draw an evaluative conclusion on the basis of their case, and a second in which callers begin by stating an opinion and then offer a justification for that opinion - are interestingly consonant with what van Eemeren et al. (1987) identify as

the two ways in which a speaker can give a verbal presentation of the relationship between an opinion and one or more arguments:

1. he first gives a number of arguments and then draws a *conclusion* (opinion);
2. he advances a *thesis* (opinion) and then supports it by one or more arguments.

In the first instance, then, the arguments precede the opinion and we speak of a *progressive* presentation; in the second, the arguments follow the opinion and we speak of a *retrogressive* presentation. (van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Kruiger, 1987:22)

It is noteworthy that van Eemeren et al.'s study is, like many studies coming from a similar base in argumentation theory, based almost entirely on hypothetical examples of arguments which appeal for their



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plausibility to the intuitions of the reader. As conversation analysts among others have frequently pointed out (Levinson, 1983; Sacks, 1984; Schegloff, 1988) there are fundamental flaws in this approach as a strategy for analysing patterns of natural language use: 'Anyone who is familiar with [recorded naturally occurring] conversational materials or who examines the transcripts of talk used [by conversation analysts] will be vividly aware of the limitations of recollection or intuition in generating data by comparison with the richness and diversity of empirically occurring interaction' (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984:3). It seems, however, that in this case, the intuitively based proposals made by van Eemeren et al. do turn out to have a striking consonance with discovered patterns in empirical data (I emphasise 'discovered' since I only became aware of the ideas cited in the passage above after the completion of the empirical work on which the present chapter is based).

6. Note that this kind of introductory preface is only really feasible for 'open line' talk radio shows such as the one from which the data for this study were drawn. In these shows, it is up to callers to select the topic they wish to raise for discussion with the host. In other forms of call-in where the agenda is in some way preset by the host (e.g. the BBC's long-running *Call Nick Ross*), it is likely that systematically different types of 'situating' component will be used.

7. Shuy (1993:175-82) offers an interesting discussion of how this aspect of the use of the definite article can be used to reveal doctorings of interrogation tapes by unscrupulous police officers. For another perspective on how the definite article can work as an interactional resource in talk, which focuses on the two distinct *pronunciations* that speakers give the item (i.e., *thuh* and *thee*), see Jefferson (1974).

8. These remarks on intonation and prosody are highly rudimentary - for much more sustained and sophisticated investigations of the role of prosody in the interactional organisation of talk, see Local and Kelly (1986, 1989) and Local (1992a, 1992b).

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9. For some studies of how measurement and quantification terms are used rhetorically to convey speakers' judgements, rather than strictly as purported representations of some empirical reality, see Pomerantz (1987), Sacks (1988/9), and Potter et al. (1990).

10. This point recalls Pomerantz's (1986) observations on 'extreme case formulations', such as 'everyone does that', 'he stayed out *all night*', or 'she was *totally wrong*'. Such constructions, which use the extremes of dimensions for assessments, are conventionally deployed to warrant cases or legitimise claims. Pomerantz remarks that

part of the business of complaining involves portraying a situation as a legitimate complainable. This may take the form of portraying the offense committed and/or the suffering endured in a way such that it would not be dismissed as minor. So as to legitimise a complaint and portray the complainable situation as worthy of complaint, a speaker may portray the offense and/or the suffering with Extreme Case formulations. In both accusing and defending, speakers often present their strongest cases, including specifying Extreme Cases of their claims. (Pomerantz, 1986:227-8)

We might note that, in the extract discussed in the main text, the caller's use of formulations such as '*right outside*' and '*right in the middle* of my gateway' may be designed to do just this sort of work. (The issue of extreme case formulations, and particularly their use in argument sequences, is raised again in the next chapter.)

11. For a more detailed consideration of this fragment in respect of 'closure-marking' assessments, see C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin (1992:161-165).

12. For more on this device's interactional functions in political platform speeches, see Heritage and Greatbatch (1986:131-133).

13. As we saw in discussing this exchange in Chapter 2, the host indeed subsequently goes on to 'do disaffiliation' more overtly by stating the answer he gives to the caller's question in markedly *unshifty* fashion: i.e., 'N:Q:.'

Chapter Five The Pursuit of Controversy

1. The use of contrast structures to locate inconsistency and project doubt is analysed in depth by Smith (1978) in an excellent study of practical methods for the accomplishment of an ascription of 'mental illness'.

2. An excellent extended account of how citing a version of someone's words can be used to allocate blame, accuse, and argue with them is to be found in M.H. Goodwin (1980; revised version published as Chapter 8 in M.H. Goodwin, 1990).

3. I.e., before a speaker's turn has reached a recognisable 'transition-relevance place' (Sacks et al., 1974) - or some way after such a place has occurred (but before a next is projectable). In short, perhaps, 'interruptively': although we have to be careful with the concept of 'interruption' (Jefferson, 1986). This concept, its limitations, and some of its possible uses in describing arguments, represent the focus of attention in Chapter 6.

4. Some related remarks vis-a-vis news interview interaction are made by Heritage and Greatbatch (1991:78-81).

5. Recall our remarks in Chapter 1 on how hosts' prior knowledge of who callers are and what they want to say derives mainly from a short message from the production staff indicating callers' names and, perhaps, the general gist of their proposed topic (although note that these remarks were based on observations of a different programme to the precise one which served as the major data source for this study).

6. Note that extract (6) also exhibits this 'repair format':

Caller: ...but they object t'them being paid  
mone:y. .h [I me:h i's- i's-  
→ Host: [HQ:w do you mean a- n- er a- No:  
hang on a minnit you're saying no:body mi:nds...

Here the host begins his turn with 'HQ:w do you mean...', then subsequently self-repairs that, in order, eventually, to use a version of the *You say X* device.

7. *The Yellow Wallpaper*, BBC TV, 2.1.1992.

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8. I have located one case of an interviewee making use of the device:

[LRC:20.10.80]

- IR: Let's talk about the right to buy in terms of money though, er some tenants not a great deal but some have found that the: .hhh offers of discounts are very attractive but when they get into the owning market as they do (.) they find that repairs are not discounted and that they're something they really can't handle. This is a growing problem isn't it.
- IE: .hhh Well it u- it- it- I mean you talk about this as a growing problem I think it's something like .hhh you know between five and ten a week er- e:r are being asked to: .hh for the councils to buy their houses back. .hh I don't think that matters,

And casual observations of TV and radio news interviews suggest that, while indeed interviewers use the device pretty frequently, interviewees themselves deploy the device with more frequency than the callers in the talk radio data (though nowhere near as frequently as interviewers).

### Chapter Six Confrontation Talk

1. Beattie has been criticised by Bull and Mayer (1988) for not being 'rigorous' enough in his sub-categorisation coding scheme. My position would be, not that he's not rigorous, or technical enough, but rather that he's not 'functional' enough, given that his scheme is, as Talbot (1992) remarks, purportedly a functional scheme.

2. In this respect, as Paul Drew has suggested to me (personal communication), use of the word 'interruption' itself may be analysable as a members' evaluative resource in terms of how the word is involved as a lexical component in participants' displays of their orientations to the actions of interlocutors as, for instance, disputatious. The commonplace admonition, *Don't interrupt!*, as well as its apologetic converse, *Sorry to interrupt, but...*, thus may become analysable as resources which speakers use to 'formulate' (in the sense of Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970) an instance of overlapping speech as 'illegitimate', uncooperative, combative, confrontational, etcetera.

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The point is illustrated nicely by Talbot's paper, 'I wish you'd stop interrupting me!' (1992), which centres upon an occasion in which a husband aims just that admonition at his wife during his recounting, to friends, of an event from their recent holiday. In his use of the phrase, *I wish you'd stop interrupting me!*, the husband transforms his wife's remarks from what appear to be attempts at collaborative involvement in the telling of the story, into 'interruptions' of the husband's storytelling.

3. See Appendix B, Call 1, for a complete transcript of this call. Recall that we discussed some salient aspects of the argument put by this caller in Chapter 4.

4. The caller is here interrupting what is recognisable as a contrastive *if-then*-type formulation on the host's part. Lerner (1991) has explored some interactional properties of *if-then* statements construed as conventionally compound sentences open to 'collaborative completion', as in the following two instances where a second speaker provides a reasoned *then*-type candidate completion for a first speaker's initial *if*...:

[US]

Rich: If you bring it intuh them  
→ Carol: Ih don't cost yuh nothing.

[HIC]

David: So if one person said he couldn't invest  
(.)  
→ Kerry: Then I'd have ta wait

Of course, in excerpt (8) in the main text the caller is not collaboratively *completing* the host's compound utterance by offering a reasoned *then*-type second part to an *if*-type first part, as in the cases Lerner discusses. Rather, her interruption effectively blocks the production of *any then* to match the given *if*. We can safely assume, I think, that she has surmised that whatever the host is going on to do in the second part of this construction, it is going to be some kind of hostile riposte; and one of the things she can thus be said to be doing is forestalling such a put-down. At the same time, however, the conventionally compound nature of the *if-then* construction itself provides something of the warrant for the host's

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evident sanction, in his unwillingness to cede the floor, of the caller's incursion.

5. I have worded my claim carefully here: 'in none of the cases does the overlapped speaker *overtly* sanction their coparticipant...'. For it can be noted that in each case the topicalising particle ('Serious huh?', 'Ye:ah', etc.) is preceded by a tiny pause. Given previous work showing the potential significance of such small gaps in, for instance, adumbrating disagreement or other unfavourable responses (Davidson, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984), it may be possible that these little pauses comprise a fleeting but significant display of an overlapped speaker's negative evaluation of the overlap. The central points as far as the main argument is concerned, however - i.e., overlapped speaker's readiness to cede the floor, and subsequent production of a topicalising particle - stand.

6. The point I am making here goes directly against Beattie's (1983) argument about interrupted speakers holding and not holding the floor. In his account, if a speaker tries to hold the floor it renders the attempted interruption 'unsuccessful': a 'successful' interruption sees the overlapped speaker *losing* the floor. This is an example of the 'technical/practical' confusion I discussed earlier in this chapter. On my account, it is significant that overlapped speakers try to hold the floor through the interruption, precisely because this is a way they can display their own orientation to the 'interruptiveness' of their interlocutor's move.

7. This point bears on a claim often made in studies of interruption - that interruptions are intrinsically disruptive. In West and Zimmerman's (1977:527) words: 'the use of interruptions is *in fact* a control device, since the incursion...disorganises the local construction of a topic'. The discussion in this section suggests that the issue may be somewhat more complicated than this. Some interruptions - e.g. those packaging basically collaborative interactional moves such as offering to help, agreeing, joining in with a complaint - indeed appear to result in the 'disruption' of a current speaker's topical line, in the sense that interruptees tend to abandon their own utterance and topicalise the interruptor's. But the cooperative nature of the actions being done in such cases does not

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sit well with West and Zimmerman's other claim that interruption represents a 'control device'. Yet by contrast, in examples where interruptions package argumentative retorts or other aggressive actions, the incursions tend not to result in the terminal disorganisation of the local construction of a topic. Rather, interrupted speakers find little difficulty in fending off the interruption and retrieving their line, often managing restarts with extreme precision (on 'continuing and restarting' in conversation generally, cf. Schegloff, 1987b, and Local, 1992b).

The paradox, then, is this: In non-argumentative episodes, interactionally collaborative turns which are nonetheless sequentially 'interruptive' can often be topically disruptive; but such turns are not morally confrontational and do not seem to represent aggressive interactional moves. In argumentative episodes, on the other hand, interactionally combative turns which are sequentially 'interruptive' do not tend to be topically disruptive, even though these kinds of interruptions may represent aggressive moves through which a speaker can be seen to be confronting their interlocutor.

8. Although we should bear in mind caveats entered by Drummond (1989) and by Goldberg (1990) on the question of interrupting as a way of exerting institutional control in discourse. A relevant observation is made by Shuy:

In the case of [medical] interviewing...where the dominant speaker is in total control, the need to interrupt to establish power is less apparent [than in conversation - IH]. In addition, the entire point of the interview is to solicit information from the other person. If the patient is not allowed to finish a sentence, then the purpose of the interview is thwarted. For this reason, *we find very few instances of doctors interrupting patients.* (Shuy, 1983:197; my emphasis)

Shuy goes on to claim that in his data, 'there are, on the other hand, frequent interruptions of the doctor by the patient' (1983:197). Although, from my perspective, his notion of what an 'interruption' is, is at least as suspect as that of Beattie (1983) (discussed earlier in the text), Shuy does however conclude that, 'in our data, the doctor prevails and the patient's interruption, for all practical purposes, loses out' (1983:198).

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9. For further analysis of these features of this extract, see Bergmann (1992).

10. We might note the particularly 'strategic' use of the repeat of 'Didn't you know that?' in this extract. By constraining the caller to produce the specific affirmative - 'Yes I know that' - the host sets up the perfect environment for his follow-up: 'If you knew that why did you ask me?'.

### Chapter Seven Closing the Call

1. One kind of account for the normative power by which 'unilateral' closings in conversation can be subject to sanction along the lines of the exchange in this extract is that such moves are actions which are 'face-threatening' (Goffman, 1955; Brown and Levinson, 1987). The concept of 'face', as introduced into social theory by Goffman (1955) and used as the basis for a noted study of politeness in cross-cultural perspective by Brown and Levinson (1987), refers both to a social agent's maintenance of his or her sense of self-esteem and to the other-attentiveness by which individuals seek to sustain their coparticipants' sense of integrity and esteem. Unilateral terminations may go against this second sense of face, at least, by *not* being systematically other-attentive in not providing for the negotiated relevance of a terminating move. Preclosings, then, may be seen on one level as strategies of politeness.

2. Clayman's cases are ones such as the following, in which a news interviewer signals quite explicitly to an interviewee that the interview is running out of its allocated time slot (Clayman, 1989):

**[Nightline:7/23/85:71]**  
→ IR: All right Mister Wisner, final twenty seconds.  
How does America look in all this?  
IE: Well, I think America is looking good...

In our data the nearest thing to that kind of case seems to be this:

**[H:23.1.89:11]**  
→ Host: .hh Quick word with Barry befo:re the traffic news.  
Hello Barry.  
Caller: Oh hello...



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Here, the host appears to indicate that the call is being 'fitted in' in the last few minutes (or indeed, seconds: the call lasts for only about half a minute) before a scheduled item. Note that the status of the call as a 'Quick word' is announced at the very outset - i.e., it is a different kind of thing to the news interview case, in which time constraints are cited to prospectively signal to the interviewee that the upcoming question will be the last one. In this talk radio instance, time constraints are cited right at the beginning of the encounter. So that although the host's subsequent 'Hello Barry' appears to open up the kind of 'free' topic-initiation arena for the caller that we have described in Chapter 3, there is a significant sense in which a particular signal has already been sent to the caller: *Don't hang around, there's a news bulletin about to come up.*

3. It is worth noting here that, in many similar broadcasts to the one from which our data are derived, the host not only introduces periodic news bulletins, but also reads them out. This represents a further performative frame managed by the host on a routine basis. Again, in a data corpus of transcribed calls to a U.S. talk radio show recorded in 1968 (kindly supplied to me by E.A. Schegloff, UCLA), it is possible to find the host reading out sponsorship commercials himself - a phenomenon which does not occur in more contemporary broadcasts, since nowadays all companies send in prerecorded commercials produced by professional agencies for broadcast at designated times. The study of how different 'voices' may be used by hosts in negotiating these different performative frames within the overall framework of their professional work represents an interesting possibility, which resonates with a number of other recent studies on a similar theme. For instance, Tannen and Wallat (1987) have analysed different voices and registers used by a pediatrician to mark shifts between the different frames of examining the child, speaking to the mother, and recording her observations for the purposes of a training video. Montgomery (1986b) analyses how the monologues produced by DJs between records on chart music programmes incorporate a whole variety of registers as they are designed to address particular constituencies in an internally

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differentiated audience 'out there'. Brand and Scannell (1991) analyse the use of distinctive voice registers by a particular DJ to construct and sustain the fantasy world of his show, into which members of the audience are invited by means of phone-ins. See also, Scannell (1991c), Moss and Higgins (1984). These studies owe much to the original impetus provided by Goffman's work on frame (1974), footing (1981b) and voice (1981c, d).

4. In his essay on 'Supportive Interchanges' Goffman (1971) proposed that a social function of 'leave-taking' utterances such as *Goodbye* was to enable acquaintances to 'reaffirm' the continuing status of their relationship for an 'anticipated period of no contact' (1971:79). This view might be supported when we consider that two principal communicative functions served by the common terminal expressions in many languages are (a) indicating relationship continuity by anticipating future contact (*See you, au revoir, auf Wiedersehen*) and (b) well wishing (*Goodbye* ('God be with you'), *bon voyage, adios*). The use of these expressions, then, seems - at least as far as Goffman is concerned - to be a way for parting acquaintances to indicate that *My thoughts are with you, until we meet again*. Clark and French (1981) use this sort of account to propose that *Goodbyes* in telephone conversations are *optional* components of a terminal package, unlike preclosings (for reasons indicated above, note 1). In a study of closings in calls to directory enquiries, they seek to show that the use of *Goodbye* is (a) optional, and (b) linked to participants' sense of the level of acquaintanceship, or lack of it, that may have been established during the call. However, while their case on both counts is extensively made for the directory enquiries calls, the corresponding claim for the optionality of *Goodbye* in conversation is not supported with any empirical back-up.

5. Note also the way in which the phrase 'I suppose' in the host's turn operates to signal 'conceding' the point. This is a further sense in which we can say that 'no argumentative residue' remains at the termination of this call.

6. Of course, in light of the discussion in Chapter 6, on the use of interruption to 'do confrontation', we can observe that these

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uses of overlap themselves represent important elements in the way the caller's behaviour may be framed as 'recalcitrant'.

### **Chapter Eight Conclusion**

1. Though of course other media may be used to carry on arguments - e.g., letters (Mulkay, 1986).

2. As suggested in Chapter 1, this is a point that as yet is insufficiently appreciated by media studies specialists. For important contributions to the project of opening up 'broadcast talk' as an object of analysis in its own right, see Scannell (1991a) and Greatbatch and Heritage (frth).

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