Handling racism in a radio phone-in programme

Handling racism in a radio phone-in programme: Telling it like it is

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Abstract
It is widely acknowledged that broadcast programmes are produced to serve the public's interest. Presenting the programmes in a neutral and objective fashion, and engaging the audience in forming opinions, are common ways of achieving this. However, studies have suggested that there is a departure from these practices when the object of broadcast becomes societal problems such as racism. This case study examines how a presenter responds to a caller's abuse in two live radio shows, and how she sets out a programme - and a new conversation - using her personal experience of racism/xenophobia. Using conversation analysis and discursive psychology, we studied the *situated* use of language and the actions being brought about. We found that the presenter assesses the caller's abuse by rudeness on the spot, formulating the call as disruptive to an ongoing conversation. On the following day, the presenter revisits, and topicalises, this call as xenophobia and racism. Our analysis revealed that the presenter's shift in evaluating this call is grounded in, and licensed by, her drawing on and cultivating a sympathetic listenership, characterising the call as race-driven, and formulating her personal experience as of public's concern. Our findings spotlight the presenter's orientation to her moral accountability in talking about racism, and the potential of broadcast in leading conversations on anti-racism.

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A broadcast interviewer is expected to deliver a program in a neutral and objective manner (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; Rendle-Short, 2007; Scannell, 2007), and in the service of the public (Irvine, 2000; Scannell, 2000). On occasion the broadcast interviewer may set these practices aside. One occasion is when race-related affairs become the subjects of broadcast (Rafaely, 2021; Whitehead, 2018; Xie, 2023, 2024).

Discourse and conversation analytic studies have shown that talking about racism is a delicate business across interactional settings (Durrheim et al., 2015; Stokoe, 2015; Stokoe and Edwards, 2007; Zhang, 2023; inter alia). The stake is higher when the talk takes place publicly, in broadcast programmes (Xie, 2024; Xie et al., 2021). Interviewers play a crucial role in manoeuvring the broadcast talk on and about racism. Existing research flags their orientation to the moral responsibility as they, for instance, sanction hearably racist expressions (Whitehead, 2015, 2018), or collaborate with the interviewees/victims to talk their experiences of racism into being and produce a newsworthy story (Rafaely, 2021; Xie, 2023, 2024). Building on and expanding the current knowledge, we present a case study to explore how a broadcast interviewer deals with her personal experience of racism on the spot, and in retrospect, in live phone-in radio shows.

Below we outline briefly the contributions of discourse and conversation analytic research that lay the foundation for this case study.

Doing broadcast talk

This case study is guided by conversation analysis (CA; Sacks, 1992) and discursive psychology (DP; Edwards and Potter, 1992), wherein talk – in various forms – is the key object of enquiry. CA and DP see talk as the building block for organising social interactions, and the arena wherein myriad social actions are accomplished. The social actions can be as mundane as greeting or offering/accepting/rejecting a dinner offer, or as contentious as holding a politician to account. CA and DP research is hence inductive. The analysis is grounded in what is actually said (or written), and how the interlocutors manage their talks in an unfolding interaction. Starting with, and dissecting, the moment-by-moment unfolding talk, CA and DP scholars prioritise the interlocutors' agenda, and are able to uncover issues that the interlocutors treat as important, and thereby manage, as they go about their everyday lives (Potter, 2010).

Broadcast talk is a rich and accessible material for CA and DP researchers. One strand of inquiry has focused on turn-taking in broadcast talks. Dissecting the talk turn-by-turn, CA scholars have discovered how the interviewers practice and achieve neutralism. For instance, studies show that by systematically adopting a neutral footing, such as using 'we' in lieu of 'I', the interviewer's statement is delivered 'as an object that is issued on behalf of others' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991, p. 76; see also Clayman, 1992, 2006). Similarly, by invoking the public in their question turns, such as by saying 'for those people who watching the programme' (Clayman, 2006, p. 223; see also Clayman, 1992,

2013; Heritage and Clayman, 2010), the interviewer's question is designed to be heard as voicing for the public, as opposed to their personal opinions.

Evidence also highlights the interviewee's joint orientation to, and thereby collaborative accomplishment of, neutralism in broadcast interviews. For instance, by waiting for the interviewer to complete their question turn, and by returning the interviewer's turn with an account, explanation, or information, the interviewee rectifies the interviewer's institutional category as an information-seeker and thereby revives the interviewer's neutral stance (Clayman, 2013; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991).

Another strand of CA and DP research attended to the subject of broadcast. Drawing on radio phone-in shows, studies revealed that although programmes are designed to promote argumentative debate and strong opinions (Cameron and Hills, 1990; Hester and Fitzgerald, 1999; Hutchby, 1996), some issues are treated as indisputable. Racism is one. For instance, Burford-Rice and Augoustinos (2018) showed that speakers repair their racist slurs. By denying racism, or apologising in the immediate next turn, the speakers treat their speech as problematic, if not hearably racist (see also Bolden et al., 2022). It is through these repairs that the speakers frame what they just said as accidental mistakes, or mishaps that do not reflect their character or intention. A potential accusation of their speech as racially driven is pre-emptively fended off. Their culpability is in turn mitigated.

Radio presenters are also found to challenge and sanction callers who make hearably racist statements. This is shown by Kevin Whitehead (2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2020), whose work draws on recordings of roughly 120 hours of radio phone-in programmes in post-apartheid South Africa. Whitehead's findings show that sanctioning racist expression is an intricate business. Instead of directly accusing a caller for racism, a host incorporates assessments such as 'generalising' or 'you're just incorrect' (Whitehead, 2018: p. 294) to disagree with the caller. The host can also display a resistance to align with a hearably prejudiced expression by not taking a turn when a caller's account reaches a possible turn completion (Whitehead, 2015). Whitehead's investigations, along with much DP and CA research, reflect that whilst there is a norm against racism (Billig, 1988) in modern society, it is met by a norm against accusing racism (Durrheim et al., 2015).

These CA and DP investigations bring to light that broadcast programmes are treated as a discursive space wherein expressions of racism are unacceptable and sanctionable. By challenging or not aligning with expressions of racism (Whitehead, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2018), broadcasters orient to, and put into practice, their interactional and institutional responsibility to police opinions and discourse that can be heard as racist.

This is further supported by the latest studies that examine how people retrospectively account for their experiences of racism in broadcast interviews. Rafaely (2021) studied one South-African news interview wherein a Ugandan climate activist, Vanessa Nakate, was interviewed about her experience of being 'cropped out' in a photograph reported in a US news article. As Rafaely observed, Ms Nakate's does not explicitly accuse the press that cropped her out of the photograph of racism in her initial accounts. The interviewer helped by inviting Ms Nakate to consider the incident as racially motivated. Xie (2023, 2024) examined instances wherein victims of racism are invited to speak about their

experiences in broadcast interviews. Her investigations also spotlighted the collaborative role of the interviewers in helping the interviewees (who are also victims of racism) to report their experiences of racism retrospectively. It is through such media coverage, and co-management of the accounts, that an auspicious environment to report racism is built and fostered at both an institutional and interactional level (Xie, 2024). Sanctioning racism is thus worked up, and treated, as a broadcastable matter.

The current investigation focuses on one radio presenter. We ask two research questions: (1) how does the presenter respond to a caller's abuse, on the spot and on the following day; (2) how does the presenter set out a new programme using her personal experience of racism/xenophobia, and hence lead a conversation with listeners and potential callers. Our inquiry is partly intrigued by the radio station's own agenda and interest in these discursive moments. As these segments of the shows were video-recorded and shared on the radio station's social media (see the next section for more information). This suggests that the radio station treats these talks as watchable and clickable (Richard Fitzgerald, 2023, personal communication). Indeed, both videos sparked heated discussion on Twitter (now X). Understanding what is actually said in these two shows will give us insights into the legacy of broadcast talk within and beyond live shows. Guided by conversation analysis and discursive psychology, we will examine the talk as it unfolds and find out the *situated* functions of utterances. We will show how the presenter manages, and overcomes, the delicacies of reporting racism from reporting to rallying call, and presenting a personal experience as a matter of public concern.[1]

Methods

Data

Two videos were sourced from LBC's official YouTube channel. LBC, short for *Leading Britain's Conversation* (once known as the London Broadcasting Company), is Britain's biggest commercial talk radio station (Chignell, 2007, 2011). Today its programmes run digitally and globally 24/7. As of February 2024, 'LBC sticks with three million weekly listeners' (Martin, 2024). LBC programmes are normally hosted by a presenter every 3 hours. Most of these shows consist of speaking with callers or interviewing guests on a headline topic.

Xie became aware of both videos on 29 August 2022, as they appeared in her Twitter feeds (she follows LBC). One video clip shows how the presenter, Sangita Myska,[2] receive and handles a problematic call during her show on 28 August. This caller questions Myska's right to comment on issues such as free school meals on 'UK radio' and 'UK TV', and asks Myska to 'shut up' (detailed transcript is presented below in the Analysis). The other clip shows Myska's opening talk on 29 August, as she addresses the problematic call in retrospect.

Xie then sought the full video clips on YouTube by searching 'Sengita Myska LBC'. Both videos appeared at the top of the search result. One video is entitled *'This is my country': Sangita Myska's awe-inspiring response to LBC caller's bigotry*, and the other

'I'm of this country': Sangita Myska's powerful reflection on what bigoted LBC caller said to her.

Analytic procedure

Informed by conversation analysis and discursive psychology, our analyses begin at transcribing. To capture and reproduce the speaker's actions, Jeffersonian transcription system (Hepburn, 2004; Jefferson, 2004) was applied. This transcription system allows us to recreate how words are uttered (e.g., by annotating the speed, loudness, intonation, and so on of the speech) and the interaction between speakers (e.g., by marking over-lapping talks or measuring the length of a pause between and within conversational turns).

Specifically, we paid attention to the sequential organisation of the talks (e.g., the order of which people take turns, and of which things are said), the resources being incorporated (e.g., membership categories, assessments, etc.), and what action is being delivered (e.g., dis/agreeing, blaming, etc.). Our observations also took into account the institutional context in which the talk is situated, that is, in radio phone-in programs. The talk is thus inspected as being produced for an overhearing audience, as opposed to a private conversation (Hutchby, 1991).

We shared our initial observations at data sessions, which is an important procedure for CA and DP analysts to validate their analysis (Wiggins and Potter, 2017).

Analysis

In this section, we present transcripts of segments of the programmes and take readers through our observations. We will first show and compare how the presenter responds to the abuse on the spot and revisits the incident on the following day. We will then focus on the opening speech on the second day, tracking how the presenter's talk unfolds, and exploring the functions that her talk serves in legitimising her revisiting the call, characterising and assessing the call negatively, and constructing her story as worthy of the public's concern.

Responding to and assessing a problematic call

The extract below displays the beginning and climax of the conversation between this caller and Myska, and Myska's response to the caller.

Extract 1. Sangita Myska's response to a caller's abuse on the spot

Accessed on 29 August 2022, https://youtu.be/NpNszhlJLdQ
  Segments displayed: 00'00"–00'08", 00'32"–01'30", 02'24" –02'49"
  M: presenter, Sangita Myska
  A: caller, Anna

```
 1   M:   ↑anna in widnes he↑llo .HHuhh
 2   A:   ↑HAllo [there:
 3   M:          [huhhuhhehe
 4   A:   °yea° i'm >not gonna agree with [↑ya<
 5   M:                                   [↑AWW
 6        .HHhehehehe £go on£ go for it=
      ((17 lines omitted. Anna talks about her
      growing up.))
23   A:   i don't believe all: this: what you're
24        saying let's all sit together n' <have
25        a meal> n' all >that kinda stuff i don't
26        believe any of ↓that< n' the reason why
27        i'm saying that is because <you're:: on
28        u:k: radio>=
29   M:   =mmhm
30   A:   how are the kids doing in ¿afrika: do
31        they <¿get> free school ??meals
32        (1.0)
33   M:   well for <som:e> childr- >it depends on
34        where you're in afrika< actually >i was
35        born in afri¿ka< >so i can tell you a
36        little bit [about it<
37   A:              [>i know< you ↑were:
38   M:   [hhehehhhe
39   A:   [↑↑yeah: i know you- [exactly you ↓were:
40   M:                       [>°i mean°<
41        [↑yeah: >i mean<=
42   A:   [↑yeah            [what the likes of ↑you:
43   M:                     [=>i think it depends
44        where you< are: in afrika: [n-
45   A:                              [the likes of
46        ↑you:: and Marcus Rashford come on uk tee
47        vee telling on radio=
48   M:   =°um::°=
49   A:   =telling us oh wha:t the government should
50        do n' your own country <don't provide
51        any-> >not even a national health
52        ser↑vice< so do us a favour and <shut
53        up>=
54   M:   =okay hang on anna >listen if you wanna
55        have a conversation that's totally< fine:
56        but please don't be rude to me >↓oh< >can
57        we not get her ba:ck i think she'°s:°<
58        ↑oh she's hung up that's a real shame
59        actually because >i would like to talk to
60        you< anna in a bit more depth
      ((28 lines omitted. Myska claims her
      membership category as a British and
      accounts for her immigration background.))
88        i would say t' suggest that i: am not
89        allowed to: have an opinion on: uhm::
90        issues of deprivation or: issues o:f
91        levelling up (.) uhm: society .HH or:
92        advocate for people that perhaps aren't
93        as >well off as i'm i'm very grateful to
94        have a job< uhm i think it's wrong: n' i
95        think it short-sighted an:d uhm i'm sorry
96        you rang off anna cos i would- actually
97        like to have conv- a conversation with you
```

A disagreement is declared and underway from the outset of this call (L4).[3] The caller, Anna, invokes and frames Myska's ethnic origin as the grounds of her disagreement. This is first observed as Anna makes relevant 'the kids in Afrika' (L30) in her accounts. After

Myska avows her place of birth ('I was born in Afrika', L34-35), Anna cuts off Myska's turn in line 37 and claims her knowledge of this information and formulates it as pre-existing ('i know you were: […] exactly you were:', L37-39). This basis of Anna's disagreement is also observable as she invokes a category 'the likes of you' (L42, L45-46) and elaborates it by juxtaposing Myska and a public figure 'Marcus Rashford',[4] and categorises them as non-members of the UK (e.g., 'come on uk tee vee', L46-47; 'your own country…' L50-51).

The caller's abuse deserves a thorough investigation of its own. Our interest here is Myska's response to Anna's directive ('do us a favour and <shut up>', L52-53), which is delivered against the backdrop of presenting a radio talk show (Hester and Fitzgerald, 1999; Hutchby, 1996). This is observable as Myska takes the next turn immediately, annotated by the ' = ' sign. Beginning her turn with 'okay' (L54), Myska marks this moment as an appropriate point for her to interrupt. Along with a request, 'hang on anna' (L54), Anna's speech just now is constructed as interruptible, and needing mediation from Myska. Myska's mediation also directs the listeners to a potential trouble in this conversation (Sacks et al., 1974).

Myska next assesses and characterises Anna's call. She achieves this by, first, stating, '>listen if you wanna have a conversation that's totally< fine: but' (L54-56). In this request, Myska packages what she is doing here, on air, as 'have a conversation'. Juxtaposed with a positive evaluation, 'totally< fine:', having a conversation is constituted as an expected, therefore acceptable, activity on the programme. The use of extreme case formulation 'totally' (Pomerantz, 2021) and the stretched utterance of 'fine:' emphasise this construction. Nevertheless, formulated as a conditional statement (i.e., begins with 'if'), and succeeded by a contrast marker 'but', listeners are invited to hear what Anna just said as the opposite of having a conversation, and as not 'fine:'.

Second, Myska makes a request, 'please don't be rude to me' (L56). Embedded in this request is Myska's orientation to her institutional task right here and now, that is, speaking to both this caller as well as the overhearing LBC listeners (see Hutchby, 1991). This is evident as Myska uses 'please' to initiate her request, displaying her orientation to the use of broadcastable or appropriate language during the show. By requesting Anna, 'don't be rude to me', listeners are invited to judge what Anna just said by politeness. This assessment-laden request in turn serves to legitimise Myska's interruption and mediation of Anna's call. It is through this request that Myska's ongoing engagement with Anna in this phone call is enacted. Myska's statement in lines 58-60, 'that's a real shame actually because>i would like to talk to you< anna', reinforces her treating this 'conversation' as ongoing. At the same time, Anna's departure from this call is portrayed as unexpected, and therefore problematic. Anna's reason for leaving is called into question.

This way of assessing Anna's call is observable again in lines 88-97. Here, Myska first reformulates her sense-making of Anna's call, 't' suggest that i: am not allowed to: have an opinion'. The invocation of 'opinion' locates what Myska is doing within the routine of presenting a radio phone-in show. In Fitzgerald and Housley's (2002: p. 583) words, 'the emphasis in [radio phone-in] programmes is upon airing and debating opinions on current political issues and government policy'. Listing three items on which her opinions are based ('issues of deprivation', 'issues o:f levelling up society', 'advocate for people that

perhaps aren't as >well off", L90-93), Myska portrays her action as institutionally and interactionally appropriate and quotidian. Anna's call is in turn framed as a challenge to such a routine practice.

It is on the basis of having constituted and enacted having-a-conversation in this programme that Myska assesses Anna's call, 'I think it's wrong: n' I think it short-sighted' (L94-95). The subject-side assessments ('I think') allow Myska to produce these assessments as her opinions, whilst the object-side assessments package these as observable and shareable by many people (Edwards and Potter, 2017; Potter et al., 2020). The combined use of subject-side and object-side assessments thus move the issue from the protagonist, Myska, to the general public, whilst inviting affiliation from the listeners (Potter et al., 2020). Moreover, the fusion of these assessments, according to Potter and his colleagues (2020), serves to conclude and summarise the speaker's speech. Indeed, after producing these assessments, Myska recycles the formulation, 'have conv-a conversation with you' (L97-98), and highlights again Anna's accountable, premature and regrettable departure from this conversation ('i'm sorry you rang off anna', L96).

On the second day, the 29 August 2022, Myska returns to Anna's call. Extract 2 below displays a segment of her opening talk, wherein she assesses Anna's call from the day before.

Extract 2. Sangita Myska's opening speech on 29 August 2022

Accessed on 29 August 2022, https://youtu.be/oWpA8JuDxWA
  Segments displayed: 00'37" – 00'51"

```
19   something happened yesterday:: .HHH that was
20   really difficult it wa:s HHHHhow do i describe
21   it (.) it was a- a very .hhh i think a
22   shocking and an ugly:: experience of
23   xenophobia <li:ve on air>
```

In alignment with her assessment the day before ('please don't be rude to me', 'it's wrong and it short-sighted'), Myska assesses Anna's call negatively here ('a shocking and an ugly:: experience', L22). However, the objects of Myska's assessment are transformed from Anna and her call to Myska's 'experience'. In addition, Myska topicalises Anna's call as 'xenophobia', which was absent in her speech the day before. This topicalisation characterises, and upgrades, Anna's call as a societal and immoral problem that is driven by asymmetrical categories (Bolden et al., 2022; Schegloff, 2005). It is worth noting that Myska is yet to identify Anna up to this point in her opening speech. Anna's call is simply referred to as 'something happened yesterday' (L19). Myska's troubled speech, and the unidentified incident (i.e., the use of indefinite pronoun 'something'), encourages and entices the listeners to look for 'something' and find out what it is (Pomerantz, 2021). Manifested in this intricate topicalisation is Myska's orientation to the sensitivity and challenge of naming xenophobia, or problems that are grounded in historically and culturally asymmetrical membership categories (Durrheim et al., 2011, 2015), and that might reflect a person's (im)moral character (Bolden et al., 2022). This challenge is

elevated by Myska's doing this single-handedly, and doing it in and for the public on a live radio programme.

Shifting the objects of her assessment from a caller (and her problematic call) to Myska's personal experience, and upgrading her assessment from 'rudeness' to 'xenophobia', are bold and risky moves. On the one hand, Myska's ostensibly inconsistent assessments of Anna's call, and reporting a personal experience, could be seen as violations to the expected journalistic practice of neutralism. One prevalent agenda is to report and cover newsworthy events that are of the public's interest (Clayman, 2006; Irvine, 2000; Montgomery, 2008, 2010; Scannell and Cardiff, 1991), or 'for-anyone-as-someone' (Scannell, 2000). On the other, naming 'xenophobia' is a precarious and challenging business. As many discursive psychologists and conversation analysts have demonstrated, the notions of racism, prejudice, and their variants, are contestable across cultural and discursive environments (Augoustinos and Every, 2007; Durrheim, 2012; Durrheim and Dixon, 2000, 2004; Wetherell and Potter, 1992; inter alia). This is especially prominent when an individual talks about their own experiences. Their character and motive are at stake (Whitehead, 2009; Xie, 2024). This orientation is enacted and observable in Myska's broken-up and breathy utterances (e.g., her audible inhalations '.HHH' and '.hhh', and exhalation 'HHHHhow'). Despite Myska's 'risky move' to topicalise Anna's call as xenophobia, and to talk about her personal experience in a live radio phone-in programme, her speech received praises and support from social media users. In the following section, we will zoom in on Myska's opening talk on the second day, and look for the resources that she incorporates to legitimise this 'risky move'.

Turning a personal experience of racism into a broadcastable matter

In this section, we will explore what Myska does on the second day, and how, that licenses her to change, and elevate, her comments and assessments about Anna's call. Extract 3(a) below exhibits segments of Myska's speech, as she introduces the topic and agenda for her show today and accounts for what happened off-air.

Extract 3(a). Sangita Myska's opening speech on 29 August 2022

Segment displayed: 00'15"–01'49"

```
  8  M:   >i'm ↑gonna do something that i< wouldn't
  9       do: normally i- i want to reflect back on a
 10       programme: >HHuh< >that i did< yesterday::
 11       uhm: °y-:° you can usually find me on the
 12       weekends >here< at el bee cee between one and
 13       four: .HHH an::d i've loved every mi<nute> of
 14       joining in this radio station
          ((8 lines omitted. Myska reflects her
          experience of working at LBC positively, and
          introduces the incident as shown in Extract 2
          above))
 23       xenophobia <li:ve on air> TCh uhm that was
 24       then clipped up >and it was put < on social
 25       media an::d i would like to:: before i do my
 26       big introduction as we do here: at LBC i'd
 27       like to take >a minute< just to thank
 28       <thousands and thousand:s> .hhh o:f >people
 29       that saw that c¿lip< and listeners who use
 30       <twitter> to offer me their: <support> >it< is
 31       <very> very >very< much appreciated .HH am::
 32       so- thank you >from the bottom of my he~ar:t~<
 33       (2.2)
 34       ~i'm doing the thing i promised not >to do<~
 35       which is well up in ~tears:~ .HH uhm: tch so
 36       ~right give me a second to reset will ¿you~
 37       (.) ehh >HUH< .hh deep breath (0.8) i:: >i
 38       toyed with the idea< of playing <back> (.)
 39       <what> a <caller called> >Anna from Widnes<
 40       said to me on air li:ve yesterday >but<
 41       actually:: >.shih< >had a chat with my
 42       producer ((name?))< >you know< we both came to
 43       the conclusion >that it wasn't< wor:th it
 44       because the problem i:s you end u:p >kind of<
 45       giving these people's <voice> um: tch more
 46       vitality than they actually deser:ve
```

The first business that Myska attends to and accomplishes, after introducing and top-icalising the problem, is to construct this 'shocking and an ugly:: experience of xeno-phobia' as newsworthy. This is evident as Myska reports, 'that was then clipped up >and it was< put on social media' (L23-25). The use of passive voice makes hearable that the call was treated by a third party (presumably LBC) as newsworthy and clickable on social media (Richard Fitzgerald, 2023, personal communication). Delivered without identi-fying an agency, the newsworthiness of this incident is framed as objectively observable. This in turn inoculates Myska from being heard as personally invested or interested in pursuing this experience as a topic for today's programme (Rafaely, 2021; Xie, 2024; see also Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Her reporting this 'shocking and an ugly:: experience' is thus managed and presented in alignment with her institutionally-bound duty, that is, presenting newsworthy stories in the service of the public (Scannell, 2000; Scannell and Cardiff, 1991).

The second, and a pivotal, business that Myska accomplishes is to invoke and fortify a sympathetic listenership. This is observable as Myska cuts herself off ('i would like to:: before I do my big introduction', L25-26) and inserts an acknowledgement (L27-32). As she utters her acknowledgment, she invokes '<thousands and thousand:s> of >people' (L28). And these '<thousands and thousand:s>' of people are categorised as 'people that saw that c¿lip< and listeners who used <twitter> to offer me their: <support>' (L29-30). This is functionally and pragmatically significant. By describing what they did, these '<thousands and thousand:s>' of people are portrayed as interested listeners, and as a

community. In other words, not only are these people concerned about what happened in Myska's show yesterday, but they are also inclined to sympathise and affiliate with Myska. It is through this categorisation of sympathetic listeners, and acknowledging their support, that Myska is licensed to 'reflect back on' her own experience, in today's programme. The stretched and emphasised utterance of '<thousands and thousand:s> of people' (marked by '<>', ':', and the underlines) serve to depict and highlight the scale of this large sympathetic community. Covering this experience in today's programme is therefore framed as a service for, and a response to, LBC listeners' and social media users' concerns (Clayman, 2006; Fitzgerald and Housley, 2007; Montgomery, 2008).

Myska's talk here unveils her orientation to, and management of, the delicacy of talking about a personal experience of racism in a live radio programme. As outlined in the introduction, news presenters collaborate with their interviewees by building and fostering an auspicious environment for reporting experiences of racism (Xie, 2023, 2024). In this case, Myska is both a victim and a presenter of a phone-in programme. Myska therefore has to introduce her experience, topicalise it as xenophobia or racism, and work it up as newsworthy single-handedly. Myska's talk in lines 23-32 is thus pivotal in "personaliz[ing]' the relationship between the content of radio […] programmes and their effect on listeners' (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, p. 4), which grants her the ticket to talk about her experience of racism on a live radio show.

In addition to topicalising Anna's call from yesterday as xenophobia, Myska also evaluates Anna's call as unworthy of '<voice>' (L45). Whilst Myska expressed her willingness to have a conversation with Anna the day before (see Extract 1), in her opening speech here, Myska mobilises people's varied entitlement to call and speak on a broadcast programme. The sanction of calls by 'these people' is packaged as a decision made collectively, for example, 'had a chat with my producer' (L41-42). By reporting and invoking the production process, Myska's presenting her personal experience and sanctioning Anna's call here are warranted legitimacy and credibility. She is in turn emancipated from being heard as personally invested in covering her personal story on a live radio programme.

It is on the basis of having worked up a sympathetic listenership that Myska 'recap what happened' (L53), as shown below.

Extract 3(b). Recapping what happened

Segment displayed: 01'58"–03'47"

```
53  so let me just< recap what happened ↑so:: Anna
54  from Widnes °w-° that's certainly what she
55  Anna called herself tch <called me up> uh an:d
56  <said that Britain was her: country> (.) and
57  the <li:kes of me::> (1.0) and Marcus Rashford
58  who >of course< is a very successful black
59  footballer had no right comment on public
60  policy (.) no:r >did we have< a right to have
61  a platform of any kind .hhh in this country
62  (1.0) >for those that don't ¿know< i was
63  <advocating for: free> school meal:s <for: all
64  primary schoo:l children> in England (1.7)
65  she <said> (.) it was unnecessary (.) and that
66  i didn't have a right (.) to comment on
67  tha:t .hhh Anna from Wid?nes then went on to
68  say that >the fact that i was born in
69  Tanzania< east Afrika meant that i <should> in
70  her word:s "shut up" (.) because i'm not
71  British (.) now it's worth noting >as ~many of
72  you on Twitter did~< that Marcus ↑Rashford was
73  in fact born: in Manchester tch so: let's
74  try n' dig into >a little bit< of <what> Anna
75  <really meant> (.) >i wanna be< rea:lly
76  crystal clear >with you all::< when Anna told
77  me that >this is< her:: country (.) not my::
78  country (.) what she meant <was> (.) <Sangita
79  go back ho:me> (1.0) .HHH the:se are: xenopho-
80  xenophobic and racist <tropes> (1.5) Anna in
81  Widnes truly belie:ves that because ¿me:: and
82  Marcus Rashford are not <white> we're neither
83  English (.) nor:: >are< we:: British (1.5) you
84  might like to ↑know: she continued to text
85  later >after putting the phone down< on me to
86  ram home this point
```

This 'recap' licenses Myska to make another 'risky move' in lines 74-86. Her talk here is risky in two aspects. First, Myska dissects, '<what> Anna <really meant>' (L74-75), 'what she meant' (L78), and 'Anna in Widnes truly belie:ves' (L80-81). Digging into someone's inner thoughts departs from the journalistic practice of presenting stories in a neutral and objective fashion. Second, Myska upgrades the topicalisation of what Anna in Widnes said to 'xenophobic and racist <tropes>' (L80). This is elaborated as she categorises herself and Marcus Rashford by invoking race, ethnicity and nationality, 'me:: and Marcus Rashford are not <white> we're neither English (.) nor:: >are< we:: British' (L81-83). These categorisations are also delivered as what 'Anna in Widnes truly believes'. As discussed in the previous section, the explicit naming of 'xenophobia' and 'racism' is risky because the notions of racism/xenophobia and their variants are contestable and deniable. Naming racism and xenophobia unequivocally could jeopardise Myska's credibility, and listeners could call and challenge her judgement, or even question her motive (e.g., is Myska calling racism out, or having a go at Anna? See Xie, 2024). Note also that these 'risky moves' are absent from Myska's talk the day before, when she responds to Anna's abruptly ended call on the spot. Myska has moved way beyond her institutional role of enforcing conversation norms of politeness on broadcast radio to now reporting contentious personal experiences, and making an arguably personal attack in place of conversation with or even hearing what Anna said.

This leads us to the last, but not least, significant business that Myska manages and accomplishes in her opening talk, which is to transform her personal experience into a topic 'for-anyone-as-someone' (Scannell, 2000). To complicate this further, Myska needs to turn her experience, and a problem, that is 'characterized by structural relationships of inequality and oppression (such as poverty, racism, […] involve segments of the population defined by category membership' (Schegloff, 2005: p. 449), into a topic of which all 'segments of the population' could potentially give an opinion on (see Fitzgerald and Housley, 2002). This is achieved through Myska's laying out her sense-making of why Anna called.

Extract 3(c). Myska accounts for Anna's call

Segment displayed: 03'48"–05'04"

```
87    (0.8) .hh now i thought a lot about what she
88    said <and> why she said it (1.4) >n' this is<
89    my conclusion (0.5) Anna called me to project
90    her irrational fear (1.5) of people that
91    <don't look like her:> (1.0) >but< <why is she
92    so: full: of fear> that's the question
93    (.) .SHIH (.) n' i think >it's because< she
94    cannot comprehen::d nor make sen::se of why
95    successive governments °'ve° failed to level
96    this country up (.) .HH she also cannot
97    comprehend or make sen:se of the <real causes>
98    of a crumbling en etch aese that she may well
99    be experiencing .shih the postcode lottery of
100   schooling that affects every >single family in
101   this coun↑try< .hhh she probably doesn't
102   understand the causes of the inflation
103  ⌈(1.2)
104  ⌊((wipes her nose))
105   there's now ripping through our <economy> and
106   making her life more expensive for all i know
107   she's on a- .hh a very challenged budget
108   (1.0) >she doesn't understand< the
109   causes of climate chan¿ge and how we are
110   all: >contributing to it< (.) and yet our
111   governments .hh >°a- a-°< are >probably
112   likely< to- (.) fail to meet their own climate
113   change targets (.) >n' she certainly doesn-
114   doesn't understand necessarily< <what that
115   mean:s> (.) >in terms of the impact< on the
116   way we live (.) >and the big changes we're
117   going to have to make< coming down the
118   road .hhh (.) and i think Anna in Widnes (.)
119   and i'm sorry to use this phrase back at you
120   Anna >because i imagine< you're listening .hhh
121   people like you Anna (.) are struggling to
122   understand the social <rapid change> that is
123   happening in this country .hhh and i
```

As shown in Extract 3(c) above, Myska accounts for Anna's motive to call, through which she produces a lay (social) psychological explanation for xenophobia/racism. She accomplishes three important actions in this part of her speech. First, Myska explains

Anna's action on the grounds of 'irrational fear' (L89-90). This formulation projects, and invites the listeners to look for, the opposite, that is, rational reasonings. Indeed, in Myska's following speech, she lists a number of reasons for '<why is she so: full:: of fear>' (L92-115). In Myska's list, timely and societal problems within the UK are invoked – 'successive governmentso've o failed to level this country up' (L94-95), 'a crumbling NHS' (National Health Service; L97), 'the postcode lottery of schooling' (L98-99), 'inflation' (L102), and 'climate change' (L106). The recurrent uses of cognition-oriented verbs, 'comprehend' (L93, L96) and 'understand' (L101, L106, L111), portray Anna characterologically (Alexander and Stokoe, 2020; Edwards, 2008). It is thus made hearable that Anna is dispositioned to not understand or comprehend these societal problems. Her irrationality is hence reinforced.

In laying out these (possible) reasons, whilst upgrading the epistemic strength (i.e., from a hedged 'i think >it's because<' (L92-93), to 'she probably doesn't understand' (L100-101, L105-106), to 'she certainly doesn't understand' (L110-111)), Myska provides the listeners and listener-to-turn-callers with a pool of resources to hear Myska's speech in a certain direction. That is, listeners are invited to judge Anna's character and her call as irrational. Furthermore, this list makes available, and thereby recyclable, discursive resources for listeners and callers to use, tweak with, and dis/agree with in the subsequent conversations.

A second and intertwined action that Myska accomplishes in this speech is to artfully transform her personal experience of racism to a public concern. This is observable as Myska invokes the membership category, 'people that <don't look like her:>', and frames them as the target of Anna's call (L89-91). In doing so, Myska shifts the target of Anna's abuse from herself, and Marcus Rashford, to a wider community. Making available 'look', or the visible means by which people could be recognisable and recognised, Anna's action is constituted as driven by race, or a (mis)recognition of people's race categories (Xie et al., 2021).

Last but not least, Myska's speech, especially the ways in which she dissects Anna's phone call, index (and invite) agreement and affiliation as the preferred responses from listeners and potential callers. On the one hand, agreement is preferred in interactions (Pomerantz, 2021). On the other, by agreeing with Myska's assessments, a listener would align their opinions and stance with that of Myska's, instead of Anna's or 'people like you Anna' (L118). As Fitzgerald and Housley (2002: pp. 591-592) remarked, '[w]ithin any particular call, the opinion advanced within that call will indicate implicitly, or more often explicitly, the position of the caller on the topic at hand. Such positioning can be said to categorize callers in relation to the topic - as 'for' or 'against''. This topic-opinion-relevant categorisation is particularly prominent as the topic in question here is named as racism and xenophobia. These are problems that are laden with moral accountability (Robles and Shrikant, 2021; Whitehead, 2012, 2013, 2018) and historically and culturally asymmetrical membership categories (Schegloff, 2005). By agreeing with Myska's assessment and opinions, listeners would align themselves with whom-Anna-is-not. That is, they would be a listener or caller who is able to comprehend and understand a range of societal problems rationally, rather than 'projecting their irrational fear' to Myska or Marcus Rashford.

Concluding Remarks

In this study, we examined how a radio presenter responds to a caller's abuse, and transforms her personal experience into a broadcastable matter. Our analysis brings to light Myska's orientation to the possible reception of her talk, and her cultivation of an auspicious environment to host a public conversation on and about race/racism on a phone-in radio. We summarise the main findings below and discuss their implications.

We observed that, on the spot, Myska assesses the caller's abuse by the routine practice of doing a radio phone-in show. By requesting the caller, 'please don't be rude to me', Myska formulates the caller's abuse as a violation of having a conversation. On the second day, in the opening talk of a new programme, Myska re-assesses the call and topicalises it as xenophobia and racism. This twist of assessment appears to depart from the expected journalistic practice of presenting news and stories neutrally and objectively (Clayman, 1992, 2006; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991). Delving into Myska's opening speech on the second day, we discovered that Myska incorporates and manoeuvres a variety of discursive resources, which in turn license her to launch this twist in her judgements and cover her own experience of racism/xenophobia.

One resource that Myska constructs and manoeuvres in her talk is the listenership. As we demonstrated, Myska creates and cultivates a sympathetic community by invoking 'thousands and thousands of people', and describes what they did (e.g., 'used twitter to offer me their support'). By acknowledging these listeners and thanking them for their support, Myska's returning to this abusive call, or covering her personal experience in a radio phone-in show, is framed as a response to the community's interest. In other words, she is addressing her experience in the service of the public. She is in turn inoculated from being heard as personally invested in pursuing this agenda live on air.

Second, Myska makes available explanatory resources for the listeners to hear and (re) judge Anna's call as xenophobia and racism. This is observable as Myska recaps Anna's call, and lays out the motives underlying Anna's call. Making available these resources allow the listeners, and listeners-to-turn-callers, to recycle and mobilise in their subsequent calls, and negotiate their opinions. We also demonstrated that Myska's 'recap' and her explanatory resources are done in such a way that invite alignment and affiliation from the listeners. Myska accomplishes this by invoking the category 'people like you Anna', and characterising them as irrational, if not racially motivated, in making sense of societal problems. 'People-like-Anna' is thus mobilised as a topic-opinion-relevant category (Fitzgerald and Housley, 2002), wherein agreeing with Anna (and what she said) would cast a listener/caller as a co-incumbent, as 'people-like-Anna'. At play in this categorisation is the moral order (Jayyusi, 1984, 1991) of racism/anti-racism, wherein anti-racism is projected as the preferred stance. Making available these resources thus license Myska to invite affiliation from the listeners and potential callers. An auspicious environment for having a conversation about racism is fostered.

Myska's delicate work, on forging an auspicious environment for a conversation on and about racism, unveils her orientation to, and management of, the possible reception and continuity of her talk on (and perhaps off) the radio. Her speech is not delivered as a monologue. It is, in CA terms, the first pair-part of an adjacency pair (Sacks, 1992). It

serves as the first-turn, or start, of a conversation. More crucially, it invites potential callers to contribute to the second pair-part, and in a way that would affiliate with, and thereby legitimise, Myska's agenda and moral assessment.[5]

Myska's talk in both programmes reflect the complexity of identifying and dealing with racism, as well as the intricacy of accounting for a personal experience of racism/xenophobia. These are complicated by the platform in which the talk is held, that is, live radio, and that the presenter herself was targeted. This is evident as Myska circumvents the reporting of her personal experience, and transforms it into a topic worthy of discussion on the radio. Nonetheless, Myska's talk implicates her recognition, and manoeuvre of, broadcast discourse in activating and mobilising people's shared concern and moral stance toward societal issues. Her personal experience is used, and treated as useable, as a specimen to lead a conversation about racism. This implies, and amplifies, the institutional and moral duty that the presenter orients to. By setting up her talk to invite the listeners to recognise and assess Anna's call as 'wrong', 'xenophobic', and 'racist', the listeners are encouraged to condemn Anna's call or even adopt an anti-racism stance. Due to the absence of the conversations between Myska and fellow callers,[6] this argument is restricted. Future studies can explore how the conversations continued beyond airtime by drawing on posts and comments on social media.

Our case study presents a real-life example of how a radio presenter, and a phone-in radio programme, could be the driving forces in manoeuvring the discourse and moral assessment, and in leading reflective conversations on and about racism. Out of many things that could be covered on the radio, Myska and the LBC production team chose to revisit a problematic call and make a new programme (and conversation) out of it. After all media discourse can reach the public at large (Van Dijk, 1992, 2012), and the 'immediacy' of radio programmes can 'influence, contribute to or set the early news and political agenda' (Fitzgerald and Housley, 2007, p. 160). Moreover, our analysis spotlights the legacy and recyclability of radio talk. In setting out a conversation informed by her personal experience, Myska acknowledges the existing (and positive) receptions of her talk from the day before. A contemporary phone-in radio does more than "speaking' to the listener' (Irvine, 2000, p. 39). It leads, and can potentially shape, public discourse and opinions on societal issues.

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Notes

1. Heritage and Clayman (2010), in Chapter 16, provide a cogent argument on distinguishing 'neutralism' from 'neutrality'. The latter is practically impossible. Conversation analysis enables researchers to explore the practices and achievement of neutralism in broadcast talk.
2. Before joining LBC in June 2022, Sangita Myska worked for the BBC (British Broadcast Cooperation). In LBC, Myska hosts weekend afternoon shows, between 1p.m. and 4p.m. She has over 89.8k followers on X, as of April 2024.
3. We use capitalised letter 'L', followed by a number/numbers, to locate the quote in the extracts.
4. Marcus Rashford MBE is a footballer, playing for the Premier League club Manchester United. He campaigned to end child poverty in the UK, and demanded free school meals for children during the COVID-19 lockdown.
5. Accessible via https://twitter.com/LBC/status/1563884595644334083?s=20
6. LBC only uploaded Myska's speeches to its Twitter/X and YouTube channel.

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