

Analyzing News Interviews: Aspects of the Production of Talk for an Overhearing Audience

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INTRODUCTION

Despite strong sociological interest in the content of broadcast media news output and the institutional frameworks of its production (Altheide, 1976; Burns, 1977; Cohen & Young, 1973; Epstein, 1973; Frank, 1973; Gans, 1979; Glasgow Media Group, 1976, 1979; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Kumar, 1975; Schlesinger, 1978; Tracey, 1977; Tuchman, 1978), the news interview has attracted little systematic analytical attention. This is unfortunate for, in both television and radio output, the news interview is a significant locus for the in situ creation of news content. Correspondingly, the detailed investigation of interactional conduct within news interviews should illuminate a considerable range of constraints and considerations that may influence the immediate, interactional generation of on-air news and opinion.

This neglect of news-interview conduct in the past has undoubtedly derived from the lack of a coherent analytic framework with which to handle such materials. In the absence of detailed analysis, information on the news interview and its institutional background has been restricted to the anecdotal, though valuable, comments of professional broadcasters (e.g., Day, 1961, 1975; Wyndham Goldie, 1977), politically informed commentators (e.g., Wedell, 1968; Whale, 1977), and to what can be gleaned from primers of television technique (Tyrrell, 1981; Yorke, 1978).

More recently, however, the development of conversation analysis had made available powerful new techniques of analysis that permit both

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the detailed investigation of news-interview conduct and its systematic comparison with natural conversation and other forms of institutional interaction. Work in progress on interaction in a variety of institutional settings (e.g., courtrooms, classrooms, medical consultations) is demonstrating a mass of detailed differences that are specific to each setting and that differentiate institutional talk in general from natural conversation.¹ Some of these differences can be briefly exemplified by contrasting question-answer sequences in conversation with their counterparts in courtroom and news-interview interaction. Subsequently, an aspect of news interview conduct is treated in more detail.

QUESTION-ANSWER SEQUENCES AND THEIR THIRD-TURN RECEIPT

A common use of questions in conversation is as a device to elicit "news" reports. Such questions nominate a newsworthy topic and frequently get responses that develop the nominated topic to a greater or lesser extent (Button & Casey, 1982). When such questions are asked and answered, questioners may engage in a variety of third-turn responsive actions. They may assess the news they have previously elicited, as in (1).

(1) (NB:1:6:11)

C: How's yer foot.

A: Oh it's healing beautifully:

→ C: Goo::d.

They may receipt the news with a 'newsmark' (Jefferson, 1981) prior to assessing it, as in (2).

(2) (NB:IV:7:5-6)

M: How many cigarettes yih had.
(0.8)

E: NO:NE.

→ M: Oh really?

¹ See Atkinson and Drew (1979) and Mehan (1979) for monograph length studies of courtroom and classroom interaction respectively. For work on a range of aspects of news-interview conduct, see Greatbatch (in prep.). All three domains of institutionalized interaction are generally characterized by a form of preallocated turn-taking system (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, pp. 729-730) that is managed through turn-type preallocation. See Atkinson and Drew (1979, pp. 61-81) in relation to courtroom interaction, McHoul (1978) for classroom interaction, and Greatbatch (1982) for news-interview interaction.

E: No:
→ M: Very good.

Alternatively, where the response to the initial question is designedly adumbrative of further elaboration, questioners may—as in (3) below—receipt the answerer's initial response with a 'continuer' (Jefferson, 1983; Schegloff, 1982) such as *mm* or *mm hm* (arrow a) and receipt subsequent items of information with topicalizing newsmarks (arrow b) that promote further elaboration.

(3) (WPC:1:MI(1):2)

M: 'hhh (.) °Um:° 'Ow is your mother by: th'wa:y.
(.)

J: We:ll she's a bit better,

a → M: Mm:;:

J: 'eh- She came: do:wn on Satidee:evening ↑
b { → M: 'she::: ↑
→ J for the fir¹:st ti:me.

Or again, continuers and 'oh receipts' the latter treating prior talk as news (Heritage, 1984)—may be used to respond to an unfolding answer to a question segment by segment, treating each segment as either background information or as news, as in (4).

(4) (Frankel:TC:I:1:2-3:simplified)

S: = 'hhh Uh:m, 'tch 'hhh Who w'you ↑ta:lk:ing to.

...

G: I: wasn't talking to a:nybody. Bo-oth Martin'n I slept
until about noo:n, =

→ S: = Oh.

G: 'hhh An' when I woke up, I wanted to call my mother.

→ S: Mm-hm,

G: 'hhh An' I picked up the pho:ne, a:n' I couldn't
dial out:n I thought our phone was out'v order.'n I-
→ S: 'Oh: () , 'Yeh,

Or, yet again, *oh* receipts may be combined with assessments as components of third turn responses to unfolding answers to questions:

(5) (Her:I:11:3)

N: = 'h have Are: you- are you ex:pecting any (puppies)?

I: 'h Well I hope:so: =

- N: °Oh. How e xcit:ing.
 I: = [u h : : m] U h : :] m: Tessa was mated um (0.3) oh
 about three weeks ago:
 → N: hhOh: ()
 I: A n d (.) Kizzy was mated about two weeks
 ago:
 → N: [°Oh my goodness you do a.sk for it,

In each of these cases the questioner, by the production of a question, shows an initial commitment and interest in the to-be-reported information. Similarly in all of the cases, the questioners—who have thus cast themselves in the role of uninformed recipient—subsequently reconfirm their occupancy of that role by means of third-turn receipt objects that are produced after significant chunks of information. These third-turn receipt objects (e.g., news receipts such as *oh*, newsmarks such as *did she* and assessments such as *good* or *how exciting*) serve, whether singly or in combination with one another, to align the questioner to the answerer as a recipient of reported information. They accomplish this alignment by responding to prior answers as new information and by their affiliative responses to the activities and persons reported on.

In sum, in question-answer sequences in conversation, an alignment is routinely achieved, maintained, and reconfirmed between the local roles of reporting and report-receiving parties. The objects described above are mainly used to receipt reports as news or to respond to reports as news. Even the continuers, however, which do not respond to prior talk as news, nonetheless reconfirm the report recipient's role as a recipient to a reporting while withholding the news response until specifically newsworthy information is deployed.

Turning now to courtroom and news interview interaction, any gross inspection of relevant materials will readily establish that the objects discussed above, through which reciprocity to a report and affiliation with the reporter are established and maintained in conversation, are massively absent. It is possible to search through hours of courtroom and news-interview interaction without encountering a single *mm hm*, *oh*, newsmark, or affiliative assessment.² Instead, the interaction is conducted almost

² Compare the question-answer-receipt sequences exhibited in (1)–(5) with the question-answer-question sequences in the news-interview data presented in this chapter and the question-answer sequences presented in Drew's discussion in this volume of courtroom interaction, especially extracts (6) and (7), which are representative of cross- and direct examination respectively.

exclusively through chains of questions and answers. By this means, narratives are elicited step by step, or opinions are developed and elaborated component by component. Thus in these interactional contexts, both receipt and assessment of prior report components are systematically avoided. Questioners characteristically avoid overtly responding to reports as news and even avoid continuation receipt of report components. Instead they display their alignment to prior talk largely by designing next questions so as to tacitly presuppose the truth and adequacy of prior reports or to undermine them (see Drew, this Volume, Chap. 10).

In considering this notable lack of alignment work between reporting parties and their questioners in courtroom and news-interview interaction, three general issues may be raised.

1. While in conversation the local roles of reporter and report recipient may shift between the speakers in a relatively ad hoc way during the course of the talk, these roles are preestablished with the institutional identities of the participants in courts and news interviews. A witness, whether undergoing direct or cross-examination, is a participant in the proceedings solely as the reporter of firsthand experience. Similarly, a news interviewee is given access to media time by virtue of an antecedent decision that he or she has some personal experience, activity, or opinion that is newsworthy. Since much of the alignment work in conversational reportings—as illustrated in (1)–(5)—is occupied with establishing and maintaining the local conversational roles of reporter and report recipient, it can be dispensed with in circumstances in which the roles are institutionally preestablished. In these institutionalized contexts, the relevant role alignments can be maintained by restricting some participants to asking questions and others to answering them.

2. It can be noted that most receipt objects (including *oh*, assessments, many newsmark usages, but not continuers) propose some commitment to the truth or the adequacy of the talk they receipt. Since in both courtrooms and news interviews the task of a questioner is to elicit information but not to judge its adequacy, the avoidance of routine conversational receipt objects may be managed so as to achieve a posture of formal or official neutrality with respect to the testimony of witnesses or interviewees. The same condition holds a fortiori with respect to the production of talk (e.g., assessments) that directly affiliates or disaffiliates with such testimony.

3. Perhaps most significant, the talk that takes place in courtrooms or news interviews is centrally produced for “overhearers”—either a judge and jury who must decide a case or a news audience. In this context, it can be noted that most of the receipt objects discussed above accomplish

two related tasks. First, all of them, except continuers, treat the prior talk as news while, second, identifying their producers as the primary addressee to whom, and for whom, the talk is news. Thus, in the context of an overhearing audience, it may be suggested that a questioner's production of these receipt objects would be doubly inappropriate. First, their production would identify prior talk as news for questioners (who are usually fully briefed beforehand or may be required to appear so) rather than the overhearing audience for whom the talk is being produced and for whom it is, putatively, news. Second, by their production of these receipt objects (including continuers), questioners identify themselves as the primary addressees of the talk they elicit. Judges, juries, and news audiences could, under such circumstances, come to view themselves as literally the overhearers of colloquys that, rather than being produced for them, were being produced and treated as private.³

In sum, the absence of alignment work between questioners and answerers in courtroom and news-interview interaction is itself a major component of the complex institutionalized footing (Goffman, 1981) maintained by the participants to these interactions. Through the avoidance of the third-turn receipt objects characteristic of question-answer sequences in natural conversation, questioners decline the role of report recipient while maintaining the role of report elicitor. This footing, which permits overhearers to view themselves as the primary, if unaddressed, recipients of the talk that emerges, is managed—at least in part—by the questioners' withholdings of the many small gestures of alignment and solidarity characteristic in question-answer sequences in conversation.

It is against this general background that this chapter considers a particular aspect of news-interview conduct as it manifests itself in a corpus of data collected from United Kingdom sources over the past several years. This conduct, termed "formulating" by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) and Heritage and Watson (1980), involves summarizing, glossing, or developing the gist of an informant's earlier statements. Although it is relatively rare in conversation, it is common in institutionalized, audience-directed interaction. (See Atkinson & Drew, 1979, on courtroom interaction and Edwards, 1976 on classroom interaction.) Formulating is most commonly undertaken by questioners in such contexts. In complex ways, which have yet to be fully explicated, formulating utterances are more directly addressed to the overhearing audience than are the majority of

³ 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.

questions and answers that make up a news interview. In what follows, we examine the role of formulating utterances in news-interview events, illustrate their specialization to the news interview context, explicate their relationship to the background constraints on news production in the United Kingdom, and sketch their place in the evolution of the U.K. news interview.

FORMULATING THE NEWS

In the following case, the "slimmer of the year" is describing her experiences as a fat person prior to going on a diet. The interviewer's utterance formulates those experiences.

(6) (WAO:Slimmer of the Year)

Sli: You have a she:il (1.2) that for so long protects you. (0.7)

But sometimes: things creep through the shell and (.) then you become really aware of (.) of 'ow awful y'feel. 'hhh I never ever felt my age or looked my age, = I was always (.) older, = people always took me for older. 'hhhh And when I was at college I think I looked a ma:tronly fifty. 'hh And (.) I was completely alone one weekend and I got to this stage where I almost jumped in the river(hh). = I just felt life wasn't worth it anymo:re, = it hadn't anything to offer (.). 'hhhh and if this was living I had had enough.

→ Int: You really were prepared to commit suicide because you were a big fatty.

Sli: Yes, 'cuz I-I (.) just didn't see anything in life that I had to look forward to . . .

Here the interviewer's formulation, *You really were prepared to commit suicide because you were a big fatty*, stands in a complicated relationship to the slimmer's prior description:

1. It maintains the slimmer's reported experiences as a topic for further talk by
2. representing selected elements of the slimmer's report for reconfirmation in the slimmer's next turn.
3. It is neutral in avoiding any comment or assessment of these experiences.
4. It is inferentially elaborative of the slimmer's reported experiences in such a way as to
5. draw them to a focus or make something more of them than was originally presented in the slimmer's prior turn.

We briefly deal with each of these aspects of the interviewer's turn.

1. We begin with the obvious point that the interviewer's formulation, in summarizing the gist of the slimmer's prior turn, maintains the slimmer's reported experiences as the focus of a further current turn. This activity stands in contrast to, for example, moving the narrative along with a next question directed to such matters as when the slimmer determined to go on a diet, what the diet consisted of, or how long she was on it. The interviewer's formulation thus preserves, and stretches out the talk to, the phenomenology of the slimmer's prior weight problem over one more turn at talk. In this way, by developing on rather than passing over this component of the slimmer's report, the interviewer emphasizes this aspect of the slimmer's experiences.

2. In summarizing the slimmer's prior talk, the interviewer's formulation re-presents knowledge and experiences that are originally and primarily "owned" by the slimmer. In virtue of this (Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Pomerantz, 1980), it minimally invites the slimmer to confirm or deny the interviewer's re-presentation of her experiences and, more generally, serves to solicit further information. The interviewer's formulation thus preserves the slimmer's experiences as its topic and topicalizes these experiences as the focus for the slimmer's next turn. In this context, both the questioning aspect of the interviewer's utterance and the incorporation of *really* into its construction might seem to imply some doubt about the slimmer's account, were it not for the fact that—as in the case of newsmarks—this is hearable as ritualized doubt. Nonetheless, the interviewer's formulation draws forth a fresh and elaborated accounting of her feelings from the slimmer: *Yes, because I-I just didn't see anything in life that I had to look forward to. . .* In sum, in re-presenting elements of the slimmer's reported experiences, the interviewer's formulation projects their topicalization over a further turn.

3. It can be noticed that, while it develops a cognitively adequate representation of the slimmer's prior statement (which the slimmer confirms with *Yes*), the interviewer's formulation does not exhibit any empathy or affiliation with the troubled circumstances and feelings that the slimmer details. The utterance thus preserves the neutrality that, we have suggested, is a general feature of the posture sustained by interviewers throughout interview events. (On the relevance of such affiliation in the context of "troubles-tellings," see Jefferson & Lee, 1980).

4. The interviewer's formulation is selective in re-presenting a range of elements from the slimmer's prior description while discarding others. Thus many of the particulars of the slimmer's experiences—for example, those concerning her not looking or feeling her age—are not taken up

or dealt with, while their outcome, almost jumping in the river, is preserved and focused upon in the interviewer's next turn.

Moreover, the interviewer is in various ways explicit about matters that the slimmer had left implicit or delicately referenced. Thus while the slimmer refers to never looking or feeling her age and looking a matronly fifty, the interviewer re-references these elements in terms of the slimmer having been *a big fatty*. Or again, while the slimmer says she *almost jumped in the river* and *if this was living I had had enough*, the interviewer re-references these statements in terms of the slimmer's being *prepared to commit suicide*. Additionally, while the slimmer's statement leaves the relationship between being fat and the contemplation of suicide inexplicitly stated, the interviewer's formulation explicitly portrays them as causally related.

Thus, the interviewer's formulation is inferentially elaborative in that it picks out certain elements of the prior report, re-references them, and explicitly depicts their relatedness to one another. It re-presents the details of the prior report in a more robust, explicit, and summary fashion.⁴

5. Finally the interviewer's elaboration of the slimmer's report focuses the latter's rather discursive utterance by re-presenting it as a single dramatic point. As a consequence, the slimmer's narrative is developed and advanced in the process.

In considering the differences between the interviewer's multipurpose utterance in (6) with the multiple small responses that may occur during a news telling in conversation, a number of points need to be kept in mind. The telling of news in conversation is beset by a variety of uncertainties. For example, an intending news teller may be uncertain as to the newsworthy status of what he or she has to say and may engage in a routine preannouncement checkout to establish the matter (Terasaki, 1976). Further, the teller may require reassurance that the tale is of continuing interest or significance to its recipients (Jefferson, 1978, 1983) and may produce adumbrative story components in the interests of being drawn out on the matter by recipients (Button & Casey, 1982)—the latter

⁴ It may additionally be noted that the interviewer's utterance, in the way it picks out certain aspects of the slimmer's statement and re-presents their relatedness to one another, also displays an understanding of the slimmer's story. But while displaying understanding is an activity routinely undertaken in conversation in contexts of potential or actual misunderstanding (Heritage, 1981), no such context exists in (6). At most the interviewer's utterance might be heard as displaying understanding for, or on behalf of, the overhearing news audience. In this way, the interviewer's utterance can be viewed as, once again, fitted to the news-interview context.

activities comprising the looked-for reassurances. Thus, through the variety and placement of their receipt objects, recipients have copious resources with which to assure tellers of their continuing interest and involvement in an unfolding telling. And, conversely, the withholding of the production of such objects may constitute a means of undermining or curtailing a telling.

In the news interview, by contrast, matters are considerably different. The Slimmer of the Year (or any other news interviewee) has arrived at a broadcasting studio, is talking to an interviewer and being overheard by a news audience by virtue of the news agency's decision that she has an interesting and significant tale to tell. Thus her initial report of her experiences as a fat person is far from being an initial or adumbrative statement produced in the interests of being drawn out. Rather, in its extensive proliferation, her account presumes on the newsworthiness of her story. Correspondingly, the interviewer's task is not one of promoting the elaboration of an unelaborated statement. Rather it is to narrow down and focus upon some of the elements already in play and to promote these as the elements to be elaborated in the slimmer's next turn.

In sum, interviewers' formulations both advance the prior report and propose a direction for interviewees' subsequent reporting activities. Formulations advance the prior report by finding a point in the prior utterance and thus shifting its focus, redeveloping its gist, making something explicit that was previously implicit in the prior utterance, or by making inferences about its presuppositions or implications. They propose a direction for subsequent talk by inviting interviewee response to what is formulated. Across all these activities, formulations can stand as news receipts that, in avoiding ordinary news-receiving practices, maintain the news audience—rather than the interviewer—as the primary recipients of the interviewee's story. Moreover, they avoid affiliating (or disaffiliating) with the talk to which they respond and which they develop. Formulations are, in short, a form of response through which prior talk can be treated as news and maintained as a topical focus while, at the same time, an institutionally appropriate footing is maintained in relation to the news audience.

SOME STANDARD USES OF FORMULATIONS IN NEWS INTERVIEWS

The Prompt

The most straightforward use for formulations in the news-interview context is, as already indicated, as a form of collapsed newsmark sequence.

In these cases, some minor inference based on prior statements is used as a means to prompt interviewees to reconfirm and elaborate their prior remarks. A clear instance is the following in which, in the preceding section of the interview, a 12-year-old boy has been describing how he was thrown over an embankment at his school, breaking both arms. The example begins with the interviewer turning to establish some explanation for the incident.

(7) (WAO:Initiation Ceremony)

Int: Now why d'you think they did it.

Boy: Well I don't know it's j'st a sort'v traditional:uh
↑cerem'ny that th'do. = It's ↑always 'appened at that
school. =

Int: = Did they do it to everybody?

Boy: u-Well all the newcomers ye:s,
(0.5)

→ Int: So there were other lads as well (·) being thrown up in
the air as well, =

Boy: = Oh yes, (0.4) quite a lot of them but not many of
them wer''urt. (·) hhh There w'z only:uhm me an' one
of me pals (·) Andrew u-Smith . . . (continues by detail-
ing the latter's injuries)

In the initial four turns it emerges that the boy's injuries resulted from an initiation ceremony reportedly applied indiscriminately to all newcomers to the school. This account contrasts with other possible explanations for injuries sustained at school—for example, malicious assault or bullying. The interviewer's formulation focuses on a specific implication of this explanation, namely, that the event was a mass event and that the boy was not the only recipient of this treatment. In the interviewer's turn and the boy's subsequent elaborate confirmation, the explanation is reconfirmed, given further emphasis and, to some extent, driven home to a news audience that might have assumed otherwise.

A closely related activity is observable in the following case in which an unidentified Welshman is being interviewed on the street about a proposal that Prince Charles should be made King of Wales.

(8) (WAO: King of Wales)

Int: Would you be happy to see Prince Charles become King
of Wales?

Man: heh Well I:(h) cou(h)ld(h)n' I- you know I just couldn't
care tup ↑pence who comes King and who don't like.
(0.5)

→ Int: You don't think it makes any difference to you.

Man: No:: = Not one bit. (.) Not one bit. (0.2) Same (weelbeein) anyway.

Here, as in the previous two cases, the interviewer's utterance re-presents the Welshman's statement in an inferentially elaborated form. The elaboration involved is, of course, marginal. But by means of its production, the interviewer is able to focus upon and preserve the Welshman's prior statement as a topic of further talk. Moreover, the Welshman is given a slightly revised version of his position to respond to and he does so with an emphatic and elaborated confirmation. By means of the interviewer's prompting formulation, an opinion that was previously and unproblematically expressed in a single turn's talk is stretched out as the focus for a three-turn sequence (statement-reformulation-elaborated confirmation) and, in the process, a question and its answer are collaboratively developed into a short interview.

In these cases then, the formulation is used straightforwardly as a means of prompting further talk to thematic elements that are actively drawn out and re-presented from earlier turns of interviewee talk. In each of them, the interviewer's formulation is inferentially elaborative of the interviewee's earlier statements. In thus establishing a renewed topical focus, the formulation provides the interviewee with something new to respond to. It thus prompts further talk to a topical focus that is maintained, tightened, or marginally shifted in the process.

The Cooperative Recycle

A second use for formulations in news interviews can be isolated by noticing that, in formulating an interviewee's prior talk, an interviewer may accurately and agreeably re-present the interviewee's stated position. Such a formulation occurs in the following example in which a British EEC commissioner is proposing an alteration of the Common Market's institutional procedures for determining the size of agricultural subsidies.

(9) (WAO:CAP)

Com: I'm all for having a common agricultural policy, (0.6) but I think it's absurd to suggest that decisions of (.) immense economic magnitude 'hhh should be taken entirely by 'hh (.) the ministers who are (.) most int'rested in one particular segment of the community, = I wouldn't want Ministers D-Defence to take all the decisions on defence and I wouldn't want Ministers of 'hhhh of Education to take all the decisions on education, =

→ Int: = 'hhh So you're suggesting there that the farm ministers

shouldn't decide this all entirely amongst themselves that it should be 'hhh spread across the board amongst all ministers.

Com: Exactly. = I'm saying that one must find some way of (.) of bringing other responsibilities uh (.) particularly those representing the tax payer and the consumer as well as the farmer 'hhh much more into the picture.

In this case, the commissioner has stated in his previous turn (data not shown) that the *final decision on agricultural prices are taken by agriculture ministers* and that this results in a *jolly trade off between all the farming interests*. In (9) he restates the point, taking an explicit position (*it's absurd*) and constructing an implicit analogy with national governments where, he suggests, budget decisions taken exclusively by Ministers in the particular fields concerned are undesirable, implying (*with I wouldn't want. . .*) that they are never taken in this way at the national level. The interviewer's formulation here simply re-presents this point by applying the analogy from the national Ministries of Defence and Education to the case of agriculture in the EEC, preserving in the process that the commissioner has taken a position (*You're suggesting there . . .*),⁵ and this is elaborately confirmed by the commissioner. Here the commissioner takes a position that is reformulated by the interviewer and confirmed by the commissioner. By this means, his position focused on and fixed in a series of turns in a process in which the interviewer cooperates with his interviewee to get the point across.

As similar instance is the following in which a trawler skipper has been complaining about the excessive cost of new government safety regulations for the inshore fishing fleet. The fragment begins with the interviewer shifting topic to the issue of whether the new regulations—which are to apply indiscriminately to offshore and inshore trawlers—are appropriate to the inshore fleet.

(10) (WAO:Trawlers)

Int: These regulations are said to have been:uh designed for the offshore fleet. = Nuh are conditions different for the inshore: boats here. =

Ski: = W'll we're virtually all day-haul boats here. = We go out in the morning we come back at night, (0.3) If there's a bad forecast we don't go out, (0.2) 'hhh If we're out there

⁵ The addition of the prefatory *You're suggesting that . . .* may be viewed as a further aspect of the interviewer's maintenance of a neutral position.

and the forecast is bad we come back in,

(0.7)

- Int: So you'd be working virtually within sight of land all the time,
 Ski: [We're within sight of land. = Yes we're within reach of port.

Here also the interviewer collaborates with the interviewee by producing a formulation that stretches out, over two further turns, the issue that the inshore fleet works very close to land (and, by implication, that the expensive new safety regulations are inappropriate for the inshore fleet).

In referring to these formulation sequences as cooperative, it is intended to distinguish them from sequences in which one party directly affiliates with the position taken by another, for example, by agreeing with or endorsing that position as his own. In (9) and (10) above, such affiliation is not taking place and, indeed, it is specifically avoided with the use of a neutral formulating utterance. The interviewer simply provides an adequate reformulation of the interviewee's previously stated position. The interviewer cooperates in developing and consolidating the interviewee's position over a three-turn sequence (statement–reformulation–elaborated confirmation), thus stressing and underscoring the position. In this context, it should be noted that the term 'cooperative' is used here only to refer to the strictly local events of the sequence. Plainly, a cooperative formulation may be used to "set up" another speaker. In news interviews, however, this is extremely rare.

The Inferentially Elaborative Probe

The previously noted cooperative uses of formulations contrast with cases such as the following in which a formulation is used to test or probe some aspect of an interviewee's actions, intentions, or attitude. This commonly involves thematizing some presupposition of prior talk that, the interviewer proposes, is implied in that talk or its real world context. In the following case, the Chairman of the Price Commission is being interviewed about his organization's report on tea prices.

(11) (TVN:Tea)

- C: What in fact happened was that in the course of last year, 'hh the price went up really very sharply, 'hhh and-uh the blenders did take advantage of this:-uh to obviously to raise their price to retailers. (0.7) 'hhh They haven't been so quick in reducing prices when the world market prices come down. (0.3) 'hh And so this means that price in the

sh- the prices in the shops have stayed up 'hh really rather higher than we'd like to see them.

(0.7)

- Int: So you-you're really accusing them of profiteering.
 C: 'hhh No they're in business to make money that's perfectly sensible. = We'r' also saying that-uh: 'hh it's not a trade which is competitive as we would like it. = Th're four (0.2) blenders which have together eighty-five percent of the market 'hhh and-uh we're not saying they (·) move in concert or anything like that but we'd like the trade to be a bit more competitive. =
 → Int: = But you're giving them: a heavy instruction (·) as it were to (·) to reduce their prices.
 C: 'hh What we're saying is we think that prices could come without the blenders losing their profit margins that they had 'hhh before the big rise in prices last year.

The interview segment opens with the C's description of the circumstances—the changing world price of tea—that have resulted in the current overpricing of tea by the blenders. It is noticeable that C's description is cautious in two main respects. First, he merely details the facts of the situation⁶ as a chain of events and their outcome and specifically avoids any overt criticism of the blenders and any characterization of their motives. Second, while the Price Commission during this period (1978) had statutory powers to enforce its recommendations, C makes no reference to any subsequent use of these powers. During this period, companies routinely complied with Price Commission recommendations on a voluntary basis in the expectation of subsequent compulsion. While C's statement that *the prices in the shops have stayed up 'hh really rather higher than we'd like to see them* amounts to an order for prices to be reduced, it avoids any overt reference to compulsion. C's statement, in short, describes the report he has just published in factual, almost technical, terms.

The interviewer's first formulation, in elaborating on C's statement, specifically introduces some of the unstated elements that could be inferred from C's remarks. C's position is formulated as strongly critical of the blenders in *So you-you're really accusing them* and as implicating a highly discreditable motive—profiteering. By means of this turn, C is invited to assent to a strong and overtly formulated criticism of the

⁶ For some analysis of talk in which speakers merely 'detail the facts' while avoiding drawing inferences from them, see Pomerantz (1978, 1981).

blenders, which he had previously withheld from stating. In his response, C rejects this formulation of his position in the first sentence of his next turn (*No they're in business to make money that's perfectly sensible*) and, having introduced a reference to the oligopolistic character of the blending business while rejecting any implication of cartel agreements, he returns to his earlier, cautiously phrased proposal with *we'd like the trade to be a bit more competitive*.

The interviewer's second formulation now elaborates this last remark by thematizing the inferred element of compulsion, which was neither referenced nor implicated in either of C's previous utterances. In his final turn, C avoids addressing, and hence resists, this formulation by producing a replacement statement that reasserts the substance of the Commission's report while avoiding all reference to compulsion.

Here the interviewer's two formulations, like the preceding examples, are inferentially elaborative. Moreover, they restate the interviewee's position by making overt reference to what might be treated as implicated or presupposed by that position. Unlike the previous cases, however, they are designed to commit the interviewee to a stronger (and more newsworthy) version of his position (in relation to the blenders) than he was initially prepared to adopt. Further, in this case and many others like it, the interviewee is invited to agree to a characterization of his position that overtly portrays him as critical of, or in conflict with, some third party. Since he has already had an opportunity to describe his position in more conflictual terms and has not done so, the interviewer's formulation probes his described position by testing how far he is prepared to go towards characterizing his position in overtly conflictual terms. In effect, C is twice given a version of his position that in view of his previous descriptive caution, he is likely to deny. In contrast with the previous use of formulations in cooperative recycle sequences, we speak of this probing use of formulations as uncooperative.

A rather similar case is the following in which a man acting for the National Association for Freedom (a right wing pressure group) is being interviewed after a successful legal action against a union boycott of mail to South Africa.

(12) (WAO:Gouriet)

Int: If occa:- if occasion 'rises again:n will you take similar action?

Man: W'll have never hesitated so far to uh (0.3) take action where (.) uh freedom is being abused.
(1.5)

→ Int: So there might be: (.) another occasion on which you will: use the law against unions.
(.)

Man: 'hh Not necessarily against unions but against any (.) body u:h which has become over mighty (.) uh and is abusing its responsibilities. = 'hh u:h If that happens to be a trades union so be it, = But we're not (.) I repeat not uh (0.2) looking out uh for trouble to- to ba:sh the trades unions. = u:h The unions have their proper role to play and I believe that to be not in the political field.

In this interview, the interviewee has consistently presented the legal action as a victory for the rights of the individual against *de facto* curtailment by unconstitutional action. The interviewer's opening question in this fragment shifts the topic away from the constitutional issues and towards the future activities of the organization—framing the latter in terms of *similar action* that, in this context, can only be understood as legal action against trade unions. In his rather veiled and indirect response to this question, the interviewee can be seen to resist this narrow characterization and to attempt to restore the theme of his earlier remarks by referencing the “abuse of freedom.” Here it can be observed that the interviewer's subsequent formulation, while proposing to clarify the sense of his previous question and the interviewee's response, accomplishes two related activities. (1) It invokes a persisting state of conflict between the organization represented by the interviewee and trade unions in an explicit and on-the-record fashion. In so doing, it (2) pursues the earlier focus on specifically anti-union action previously resisted by the interviewee. It thus implicitly competes with the latter's claim to be concerned with the general abuse of freedom. Again the interviewee resists this proposal by disavowing any implication that his organization is exclusively anti-union, restoring his earlier theme of the abuse of responsibility and generalizing the field of potential abusers from the interviewee's *unions* to his own preferred *any body that is over mighty*. Here the interviewee's formulation, which escalates the overt reference to conflict with trade unions and implicates hostility to the latter as the underlying motive of the legal action, is analyzed and treated as uncooperative, as giving the interviewee something to deny.

The uncooperative character of these formulations can, once again, be distinguished from interaction in which a speaker disaffiliates from the position of another by, for example, disagreeing with it or negatively assessing it. As we have seen, the formulation is a vehicle through which users inherently avoid taking an overt position in response to prior talk.

The uncooperative character of these sequences arises from the fact that, whether inadvertently or by design, the interviewer formulates a version of the interviewee's position that the latter might be expected to deny. It should be emphasized that the terms 'cooperative' and 'uncooperative' are being used here only to characterize sequences in which formulations are being expectably confirmed or rejected. The terms neither assess interviewer conduct nor characterize the global import of particular utterances. Just as a cooperative formulation may occur as a component in a sequence that is ultimately damaging to an interviewee's position, so an interviewee may benefit from the opportunity to reject a particular version of his position. Thus the successful litigant of the last example may have derived some advantage from the opportunity to reject the suggestion that his was an exclusively anti-union organization. Nonetheless, that opportunity was furnished by means of a locally 'uncooperative' formulation.

INTERVIEW TALK AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The news interview is a functionally specialized form of social interaction produced for an overhearing audience and restricted by institutionalized conventions. The latter effectively amount to a set of tacit ground rules that may be overtly thematized and contested within actual interview events and, in the wider society, as a topic of public interest.⁷ These ground rules have been predominantly shaped by the institutional position of the broadcasting authorities in the United Kingdom, the BBC and the IBA, which have remained free from direct political interference in their day-to-day running.⁸ Their enormous potential influence in political affairs has been controlled through a series of charters and licenses obliging them to maintain impartiality and balance in their coverage of controversial topics and, above all, to refrain from editorial comment on current affairs or matters of public policy. These obligations have played a major role in shaping the ground rules informing interviewer conduct.

Until the mid-1950s the broadcast interview was of little importance

⁷ Public controversies involving news-interviewer conduct are well discussed by Day (1961, 1975), Tracey (1977), and to a lesser extent by Wyndham Goldie (1977). The tacit ground rules for interviewing are occasionally thematized within interview events themselves—usually in the context of dispute between the interviewer and interviewee.

⁸ For discussions of the policies and practices adopted in United Kingdom broadcast coverage of news and current affairs in relation to legal and other constraints, see Wyndham Goldie (1977), Tracey (1977), Schlesinger (1978), and Whale (1977).

either as an instrument of journalistic inquiry or as a medium of political communication. In part this was a reflection of the fact that, up until the 1950s, broadcasting the spoken word was traditionally regarded as a matter of reading the printed word aloud (Whale, 1977). Moreover, the statutory requirement of impartiality in the coverage of current affairs was narrowly interpreted, during a period in which the BBC enjoyed a monopoly position in British broadcasting, as the provision of a balance of opinions and the reporting of available facts (Day, 1975). This interpretation occluded the use of the interview as a technique of investigative journalism. During this period, as Dimbleby notes, the interview was not yet

a means of extracting painful or revealing information; it did not test or challenge ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. The interviewer had not yet become an unofficial tribune of the people, or prosecuting counsel, or chat-show host.

His job was to discover some very simple facts: if he did more than that, it was chance, not design. It was not thought proper to enquire (even gently) into private lives, or social problems; to ask about money, or industrial relations, or politics. (Dimbleby, 1975, p. 214)

Thus interviewers were little more than "respectful prompters" (Wedell, 1968) who fed interviewees with "soft-soap questions" in interviews that were often manifestly prearranged and lacking in spontaneity (Day, 1961). The broadcast interview, in short, was a set piece interaction in which the function of the interviewer was simply to provide a series of topic headings "for the carefully prepared views which famous men and women designed to impart to their viewers or listeners" (Wedell, 1968, p. 205).

The advent of Independent Television, which broke the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, rapidly undermined this deferential style of news interview. The producers of its nationally networked news broadcasts adopted a less restrictive interpretation of their statutory obligations so as to include inquiry and investigation into news stories. Correspondingly, a more direct, searching, and penetrating style of interviewing was developed (Day, 1961). In the new kind of unrehearsed investigative interview, responses were no longer permitted to stand as stated by interviewers who simply moved on to the next question. Instead they were pursued, challenged, probed, and, where necessary, clarified and reformulated. As a result, the news interview became a more flexible, lively, and influential instrument of journalistic inquiry.⁹

⁹ The discovery by British political figures that surviving aggressive cross-questioning could enhance political reputations is generally dated from Robin Day's interview of Harold Macmillan on Independent Television's 'Tell the People' in 1958 (Day 1961:100). As Day himself relates, Macmillan had been given a more traditional interview earlier in the same

In this context, the formulation became, and continues to be, a significant weapon in the news interviewer's armory. In part, its value derives from the range of activities that can be accomplished with its production. As we have seen, formulations can be used to clarify prior talk, to draw points from talk that was unfocused or differently focused, to underline the significance of a prior response, or to probe or challenge earlier stated positions.

Across all these various activities, however, the production of formulations preserves two core aspects of the news interviewer's institutionalized stance. First, through the recycling or elaboration of talk that was already adequately intelligible, the interviewer preserves an overall, if tacit, orientation to the overhearing news audience. The latter serves as the ultimate warrant for the production of formulations, regardless of their degree of cooperativeness. Thus an interviewer who complains about or challenges an interviewer's conduct in formulating can always be met with the response that the latter was attempting to clarify the issue for the audience or was articulating an impression the news audience might have formed about the interviewee's position. Second, with the use of a formulation an interviewer can respond to an interviewee's stated position while avoiding the adoption of an overt or official position with respect to the interviewee's statements or arguments. Thus a formulation can be used to collaborate with, resist, or challenge what an interviewee has to say while maintaining the stance of formal neutrality legally required of broadcasting organizations in the United Kingdom.

It is these very features of formulative responses to prior reports that, on the rare occasions in which they are produced in conversational contexts, are routinely hearable as over-cautious, as in (13) below, or tacitly disaffiliative, as in (14) below. Thus in (13), E's inferentially elaborative utterance *You know where he is then* offers N an opportunity to tell more about the current state of her relationship with her estranged husband.

(13) (NB:II:2:17)

- N: I just uh, forward 'iz mail, stick it in 'n envelope, (0.4) send it all on up to 'im en, 'h h h h
 → E: You know where he is then. (0.8)

week but had made little impact. By contrast, the interview with Day had an enormous effect and greatly enhanced Macmillan's credibility as a politician. Blumler and McQuail's (1968) study of the 1964 General Election subsequently confirmed that interviews had become a significant medium through which voters evaluated the qualities of political leaders.

- N: I have never had any of it returned Emma,
 E: Oh:::
 N: At all.

Here E's utterance, which is virtually prototypical for the news interview context, is hearably cautious in the way it invites, without overtly requesting, N to elaborate further on the relationship.

Similarly, in the following exchange, J's response is inferentially elaborative of V's report implying that a third party (Jean) enjoys a record by Carole King.

(14) (Rah:B:2:JV(14):6)

- V: Jean said oh I didn't knew- (·) know you had the Tapestry record. of Carole King's which is a lovely record Jenny
 → J: Ah: she li:kes tha:t does she,

Here J's utterance, while formulating Jean's attitude from the statement attributed to Jean, noticeably fails to endorse that attitude as her own. Moreover, this attitude is explicitly adopted on her own behalf by V. J's formulative response manages to express neutrality—and hence tacit disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984)—on the merits of Carole King's record.

Here then we reencounter a core contrast between private conversation and talk produced on the record for overhearers. It appears that for an interviewer, whose task is to avoid adopting the position of the primary addressee of interviewees' reports, there is no such thing as an overly neutral utterance. Interviewers' formulations are not understood as specific withholdings of affiliation, since affiliation with an interviewee is no part of their task. Rather, formulations are understood as alternatives to going on to a next question, and it is in this context that they are routinely understood and treated as elaborations for an audience, promptings, focusings, recycles, probes, and the like.

Thus in eliciting reports, while avoiding the responsive displays of a report recipient, interviewers adopt the neutral stance of one whose task is to assist in the production of talk for overhearers. In turn, the use and treatment of formulations in news interviews encapsulates this stance. By their formulative activities, which both re-present prior talk and prompt its onward development, interviewers orient to the overhearing news audience and thereby invite their respondents to speak on the record. Simultaneously, they maintain the posture of official neutrality whose violation could amount to the editorial comment prohibited by statute in the United Kingdom.

The eliciting of talk for third parties and the subsequent formulation of that talk is not, of course, restricted to news interviewers. Indeed,

insofar as these features of news-interviewer conduct pervade the activities of others with institutional roles such as lawyers and social survey interviewers, they may constitute generic aspects of a more abstract speaking role: the elicitor of talk that is on the record.

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