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**“A GOOD OLD ARGUMENT”:
THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY
AND RESEARCH THROUGH ARGUMENTATION**

by

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A doctoral thesis

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the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis utilises Discourse Analysis to explore argumentation as a discursive tool in the construction of social life. Focusing upon family argumentation, an in-depth empirical analysis is performed upon the single case study of the researcher's own family.

Discourse Analysis has traditionally assumed that argumentation is generally avoided by speakers. In this thesis, the enthusiastic, creative, and sociable pursuit of argument is highlighted. Disagreement and argument are seen to initiate topics and topic change and to impassion interaction. Furthermore, sociable argument is celebrated for its conflict-handling abilities.

In Chapter 3 the academic debate over the role of the researcher is treated as a rhetorical arena in which that role is managed. After a reflexive treatment of methodological concerns in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 turns to the researcher's role in the research encounter itself. Detailed analysis highlights the ongoing and negotiated construction of roles in the research relationship. Chapter 6 focuses on preference structure as an organisational mechanism in conversation. It is traditionally understood that actors are constrained to accomplish sociability through a preference for agreement. However, this chapter uses examples to demonstrate that preference organisation is a resource equally deployable for the accomplishment of sociability through argumentation. Chapter 7 then explores the construction of family in the rhetorical arena of disagreement. The institution of the family is seen to be ongoingly "talked into being" in interaction (cf. Heritage, 1984).

Over the course of this thesis, the importance of argumentation in shaping the social world is emphasised and celebrated.

KEYWORDS: Argumentation, family, the research relationship, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, discursive construction, reflexivity.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

A “A GOOD OLD ARGUMENT”

In common parlance, it is generally assumed that arguing is an activity to be avoided. The general common-sense understanding is, that people are polite to others to avoid antagonising one another into overt conflict. Popular belief is suffused with notions that human civilisation functions purely because polite behaviour controls “natural” aggressive drives, thereby softening and containing competition and conflict. Much is made of the so-called “genetic imperative”, which puts every individual into potential competition with every other of the same sex. In this picture, arguments are seen as flaws in a social veneer which smooths over the rough contours of self-preservatory compulsions. At best, arguments are seen as valves, whose presence is all that allows natural pressures towards conflict to be contained under a lid of civilised conduct. Therefore, agreement with others is understood to be a pursued objective, while disagreement is believed to be minimised, masked and evaded.

As this thesis will show, these notions are, in the main, shared by social scientists. However, an alternative conception of argumentation will be presented here. A challenge will be made to the idea that agreement and sociability are mutually exclusive, and to the conceptual confinement of argumentation to a flaw or valve in the smooth running of the harmonious social machine. Instead, social life will be presented as rife with operative

disagreement. The spirit of contention will be shown to be fundamental to the very constitutive process by which social institutions and social objects are brought into existence.

The title of this thesis begins with the phrase "A Good Old Argument", a phrase which occurs within one of the data extracts which comes under analysis (See Chapter 7). I believe that this description provides an excellent representation of the approach to argumentation adopted throughout this work. The central elements that represent this thesis are: the pleasure that arguing can afford, as expressed by the term "good"; the familiarity and traditionality of the behaviour, as expressed by the term "old"; and the image, produced by the combination of both words, that a potentially wild and dangerous thing is routinely tamed. In all, the picture presented is an unthreatening one. Argument is presented as an activity engaged in for the sake of enjoyment, and although meaty and committed, is treated as a constructive, rather than disruptive influence on the social relationships within which it takes place.

In this description, and in the approach of the thesis that it represents, argument is treated as an activity to be celebrated. However, this assertion is not merely thrust upon the reader as a matter to be taken in faith. Instead, a detailed empirical analysis is undertaken to demonstrate, in concrete terms, the power and passion which argumentation contributes to social life. In the current work, the argumentation that occurs within the family is focused upon, using a single case study. In the light of methodological questions raised by feminism and critical psychology, the researcher's own family is used as the data source. Over the course of the individual analyses which make up the various chapters, the environment of argumentation is emphasised as a pivotal constructive force in the formation of the social.

B OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 provides a literature review which brings together a number of disparate areas of inquiry to form a picture from which the reader can understand the perspective adopted in this thesis.

To begin with, the current text is situated within the paradigm of Social Constructionism, which treats reality as a product of our attempts to understand it. What comes to count as reality is seen to be constructed out of social and cultural forces. In Ethnomethodology, which is discussed next, this process of construction is understood to arise out of the operationalisation by social actors, of culturally shared understandings of the world. In a two-way process, individual occurrences are treated as instantiations of such shared understandings, while these generalised understandings are used to make sense of the individual occurrences.

Arising out of Ethnomethodology, Conversation Analysis (CA) makes a systematic and empirical examination of the organisation of everyday conversation. In this arena of social action, the shared understandings that individuals bring to interaction are seen to organise talk for mutual intelligibility. Like CA, Discourse Analysis (DA), discussed next, studies speakers' deployment of discursive organisational features for the accomplishment of social business. However, in DA, the emphasis is particularly keyed towards the sorts of question traditionally addressed by cognitive psychology. Unlike cognitive psychology, which treats language as a window into the minds of participants, DA sees language use as the moulding and creative force of the social world, and therefore, as a topic in its own right (cf. Potter, 1996).

The discourse analytic treatment of the rhetorical nature of language use is then discussed. Advocates of argumentation as a key mode of

discourse stress the enthusiastic, creative, and sociable pursuit of argument and celebrate argumentation for its ability to handle conflict through humour and play. Disagreement and argument are seen to initiate topics and topic change, and to impassion interaction.

At this point, the discussion returns to Conversation Analysis, this time, to monitor its examination of social institutions. After assuming the primacy of mundane conversation, CA seeks to discover how particular institutions are engendered out of its locally produced specialisations and transformations. The particular institution of Science is then focused upon, and the work of sociologists of science is introduced. The progressive drive of these authors towards a symmetrical approach to scientific endeavour, regardless of whether any particular example comes to be accepted as “true” or rejected, is outlined. This then leads to a discussion of the final area, reflexivity, which involves the extension of this symmetrical treatment to the author’s own text.

Chapter 3 discusses how preoccupations with reflexivity and democratic egalitarianism have led many social scientists to examine the power dynamics of the research relationship. Attention is mainly orientated towards feminist writings, but some insights from critical ethnography and critical psychology are also examined.

The chapter adopts the reflexive perspective of seeing the academic debate as a rhetorical environment. To this end, the discussion centres around Merton’s (1976) concept of “Sociological Ambivalence”. This concept involves viewing paradoxes in social roles as precisely the sort of indispensable vehicle that allows for the ongoing interactional flexibility to manage such roles. Thus the academic debate over authoritarian versus egalitarian styles of research relationship is transformed from the search for a solution, into the solution itself. This chapter therefore includes a re-

examination of some of the criticisms of feminist and ethnographic claims to empowerment, with the aid of Merton's sociological ambivalence.

The conclusion reached by this chapter is: only through an examination of the ongoing construction of the research relationship, via the interactions that take place within it, can the paradox of power it involves effectively be accessed. The stage is thereby set for the empirical inquiry of Chapter 5.

Before this, however, **Chapter 4** reflexively addresses some of the key methodological concerns raised by Chapter 3, and the perspective adopted in the later chapters. Accounts about the method are discussed in terms of the interpretative repertoires of science formulated by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984). Some of the factors traditionally confined to the contingent repertoire are discussed, such as my own personal attributes and commitments, and my socialisation within the scientific community. The protocol of boundary demarcation is also addressed, and the thesis is positioned firmly within the borderlands between the traditional disciplines where social constructionist thought flourishes.

Chapter 5 addresses the roles of researcher and researched as an issue debated in the research encounter itself. To this purpose, an extended extract of data receives an in-depth sequential examination. Over the course of the excerpt, the speakers are observed to establish the statuses of researcher and researched in comparison and contrast to that of family member. The analysis alerts the reader to the negotiated and ongoing process by which these roles are constructed.

The demonstration of this process as ongoing and negotiated contrasts with the presumption, addressed in Chapter 3, that the roles of the research encounter can be (pre)constituted by the researcher. In this analysis, attention is drawn to the cultural assumptions that each

participant brings to the interaction. As a result of the irreconcilability of various of these assumptions, no single cohesive answer emerges. Instead the understanding of these roles changes dynamically as new ingredients are added and new actions are performed. This means that irreconcilable conclusions are expressed and ratified at different points without apparent problem. What counts as the role of the researcher or the researched therefore changes moment by moment according to the rhetorical dictates of the interaction. What is more, the analysis attends to the way content and form continually interact with one another in this process, so that a behaviour warranted in one utterance might be displayed in another.

One example of the dynamic alteration of conclusions over the course of the interaction, is the treatment of how much control the researcher has over the encounter. In the first part of the extract, Ava's expertise is jointly worked up, while later, her amateur ineptitude is similarly co-constructed. Another example, is the manner in which the autonomy of the researched is presented. This is observed to be a concern carefully attended to by the participants, and managed by a continuous oscillation between presentations of guidance by, and independence from, the researcher.

In addition to this demonstration of the dynamic and negotiated process by which social roles are constructed, one particular image of the role of the researched is explicated in detail. Towards the end of the extract, Mum presents the researched as givers of the gift of their co-operation to the researcher. This construction is discussed in relation to the work of classical anthropology on gift giving behaviour, and the work by Mulkay (1988) and others on the ability of humour to exploit ambiguities. The analysis is then related back to the questions addressed in Chapter 3, and it is noted that the picture of the researched as gift-giver is one significantly absent in the work of alternative methodologists.

Although agreement figures strongly in the extract analysed in this chapter, the speakers' attention to the need to argue for a version of events against competing versions, is nonetheless fundamental. In addition, the use of humour to manage contention and conflict is addressed. What is more, the chapter represents an argument in itself, by presenting an example of the sort of solution to the competing roles of the research relationship advocated in Chapter 3. In this sense, Chapter 5 introduces the family's interaction as a rhetorical environment, while later chapters will examine its more explicitly argumentative dimensions.

Chapter 6 takes the discussion onto a more overtly argumentative track by focusing upon preference structure as a key organisational mechanism of conversation. Amongst Discourse and Conversation Analysis, preference organisation has traditionally been understood to constrain actors to accomplish sociability through a preference for agreement. Where a preference for disagreement has been noted, as in the self-deprecations of Pomerantz (1984), the pursuit of harmony and overall conciliation remain as the assumed driving motivation of speakers.

However, in this chapter concrete empirical analysis is used to demonstrate that speakers can also use preference organisation as a resource with which to accomplish their interactional business through sociable argument. In such a pursuit, disagreement is actively courted, and conciliation is strenuously avoided. Nonetheless, the end product of sociability remains the same - only the route is different. Within this chapter, an example of the adoption of that alternative route is examined.

The analysis centres around the identification of a phenomenon I have called the "Check formulation" which, like the "check" manoeuvre of chess, places another on the defensive. The check formulation is characterised by the use of "so", which warrants a conclusion on the

basis of another's argument, and contrastive stress upon an item taken from that other, which is thereby highlighted as problematic. The responses to three check formulations are examined for their deployment of elements of the repertoire of dispreferred seconds. Through close analysis, the differential status of "reluctance markers" (Bilmes, 1988) and accounts is demonstrated. Speakers are observed to actively avoid displays of a reluctance to disagree, especially delay, while simultaneously displaying an orientation to accountability. Following this, a counter-example is presented, whereby, after a change of state marker, a "so" inference is used to accomplish a "confirmation request" (Schiffrin, 1987). Such inferences differ from check formulations in the absence of contrastive stress on a problematic item. The responses to this alternative use of "so" are compared to those following a check formulation, and a very different orientation to accountability is noted.

The in-depth examination of these four examples, which follow each other sequentially in the extract of data under analysis, provides evidence of a preference for disagreement in at least some forms of conversation. More than this, however, it demonstrates that preference organisation operates as a resource of considerable flexibility, which is available for speakers to accomplish almost any social action they might choose. This conclusion stands in direct contradiction to the assumption of (and in some cases assertion by) many discourse and conversation analysts, that preference operates as a normative constraint on interactants, requiring them to behave in a manner incompatible with their personal desires.

Chapter 7 then explores the construction of family and its roles, identities and relationships in the rhetorical arena of disagreement. The institution of the family is seen to be "talked into being", ongoingly, in interaction (cf. Heritage, 1984). Once more, the claims being made in this chapter are explicated through a close analysis of an extended extract of data.

In this chapter, more concretely than those that have gone before, the environment of contention and dispute is identified as a key factor in the construction of the social. The discussion under examination is seen to move from an appraisal of the argumentative behaviour of the family, to the roles and statuses of various family members. Such matters come to be made concrete through the requirement for warrant and justification indispensable to the atmosphere of contention. Furthermore, one matter which is never made concrete, that of “the family” itself, is observed to operate in an abstract and undefined manner, precisely because it never comes into dispute. Within this extract, it is the construction and responses to challenges that lead to the negotiation of social roles and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, while the absence of challenge permits an underlying assumption to operate as a universal.

This thesis comes to the **conclusion** that argumentation is a regrettably underestimated force in the shaping of the social world. Over the course of the empirical examination contained within this thesis, the successful accomplishment of social identities, roles and interrelationships is seen to arise out of an atmosphere of non-threatening disagreement, disalignment, and dispute. The space for social actors to move according to their own desires, is seen to open up between the irreconcilable contradictions that characterise social objects (such as roles, behaviours, and institutions). From this perspective, the reconciliation of these oppositions and contradictions ceases to be a desirable goal, in that it threatens the death of social entities through asphyxiation. However, the search for such a reconciliation is acknowledged to be indispensable. This argumentative perspective therefore renounces the final answer, and instead celebrates the messy and contentious process by which the search for definitive answers provides the momentum for social life.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social constructionism is founded upon the belief that "reality", rather than being something "out there" to which human kind must simply respond, is constituted by our very actions of comprehension. Furthermore, it is not the imagination of the isolated individual that is looked to for this mechanism of construction. Instead, construction is believed to arise out of social, cultural and historical interaction between people (cf. Gergen, 1985; Shweder and Miller, 1985). Thus, the idea that there is, indeed, any distinction between things that are "real" and "out there in the world", and things that are the product of cultures and societies, is itself reduced to the level of a social artefact. That is, from this perspective, our only access to the world in which we live and breathe occurs via the medium of culture, and, as a result, anything we might take to be "real" and "out there" has already been shaped, or "constructed" by social forces.

The epistemological foundation of social constructionism contrasts markedly with that of traditional social science. Traditionally, social scientists have treated "reality" as something accessible to which the "social" can be compared and thereby judged for its accuracy. However, the traditional research questions that follow from such a premise become redundant when the class of things called "real" is seen as no more than a constructed and ascribed category. Basing their work on

this alternative conception of reality, social constructionists have instead engaged in the examination of "the social processes through which 'factuality' is established" (Gergen and Davis, 1985 p v), and the social consequences that such reification engenders. Examples of the sorts of "objects" that social constructionists have examined include: gender (Kessler and McKenna, 1978; Gergen, 1994; Radke and Stam, 1994); the mind (Coulter, 1979, 1989); the emotions (Averill, 1982, 1985; Harré, 1986) science (Latour and Woolgar, 1979; Collins and Pinch, 1982); the family (Gubrium and Holstein, 1990; Holstein and Gubrium, 1994); and lesbianism (Kitzinger, 1987).

This epistemological foundation makes Social Constructionism applicable to a whole range of social scientific and social analytic disciplines, where, as an alternative "paradigm" (Kuhn, 1962. See Section G below), it prompts its advocates to ask novel questions about the phenomena traditionally studied by those disciplines.

Social constructionism embraces fields as diverse as psychology, sociology, rhetoric, philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory, to name but a few. As Shotter (1992) put it, the social constructionist movement

operates in those uncertain, interdisciplinary zones between the mainstream disciplines ... on the boundaries of all the separate spheres of social and behavioural inquiry (p 9).

However, as Shotter conceives it, the Social Constructionist challenge is not an attempt to supplant traditional approaches and set up a fresh hegemony of perspective, but to open up a dialogue with alternative views. In this way, without the need to privilege itself over competing perspectives, it can function as

a new analytic device to reveal aspects of human conduct "obscured" by other forms of talk (p 9).

Equally, social constructionism embraces a wide range of methods in its search to "demystify ... existing forms of understanding" (Gergen, 1985 p 14). Indeed, the perspective is particularly amenable to methodological diversity. One reason for this is that, having abandoned the limitations of a search for "objective truth", the fine-honed analyses of qualitative methods become as acceptable as the vast sweeps of quantitative research.

A second reason is rather reflexive in nature (See Section H), and follows from the observation by Gergen (1985) of the social constructionist belief in

the inherent dependency of knowledge systems on communities of shared intelligibility (p 14).

This insight emphasises the historical and cultural contingency of normative rules. If methodological dictates are seen as an example of such knowledge systems, it would be a contradiction for social constructionism to limit its methodology as if following some realist search for truth. Instead, a highly flexible treatment of methodological rules, which leaves them open to negotiation within the scientific community, is not only warranted, but recommended.

One interesting distinction between the social constructionist work of sociologists and psychologists, proposed by Sarbin and Kitsuse (1994) is that

The constructionist literature in psychology reflects a commitment to the rhetoric of criticism in which constructionists have deconstructed the dominant positivist epistemological assumptions and methodologies (Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994 p 6).

Sarbin and Kitsuse attribute these positivist assumptions to traditional psychology's continual attempts to emulate the positivism of the natural

sciences. In contrast, they note the more accepting attitude of sociology to the constructionist frame, resulting, they believe, out of the way paved by Symbolic Interactionism within the history of the discipline. It is to this, that they attributed the relative absence of a constituent emphasis on challenge and deconstruction in the social constructionist work within sociology. In other words, these writers are pointing to the rhetorical structure of the explorations into constructionism of the two disciplines - with sociology able to present its insights as mere description, while psychology is required to present its analyses in opposition to the foil of traditional understandings.

When realism is rejected and the correspondence of theoretical and analytic conclusions to an "out there" reality becomes irrelevant, something else seems to be required from which to judge the validity of such conclusions. In social constructionism the alternative is often formulated as the question of morals. It is observed that the question of morals has had variable force within realist claims. While radical movements often justify themselves on the basis of their moral and ethical consequences when interfaced with "out there reality", the more conservative realist claims have tended to discount their moral consequences as unfortunate but unavoidable because "that's just the way it is". When realism is abandoned, however, social analysts are required to attend to the moral consequences of their constructions, particularly because they are not merely external commentaries on social life, but are part of the very mechanism by which that social life is constructed. As a result, social constructionist work often, but not invariably, contains a moral commitment to ameliorating social injustices towards groups which have been casualties to realist pronouncements about the world (cf. Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994).

B ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

While social constructionism examines the artefacts that social forces create and then treat as reality, another group of social analysts concern themselves with how such artefacts are brought into social interaction. Ethnomethodology holds that people bring along to social intercourse culturally shared understandings of the world and use these to act within, and react to, the ever-novel environment that they are faced with, thereby constructing that environment. Ethnomethodology can be seen as social constructionist in epistemology, for it focuses its attention on the assumptions about the world that social actors require in order to function within that world¹. It is fundamental to this enterprise that "the world" is created out of actions which treat certain culturally shared notions as assumed.

It is impossible to talk about ethnomethodology without reference to its most central figure, Harold Garfinkel, the originator of the name "ethnomethodology" itself. According to Heritage (1984), Garfinkel was searching for the answer to a "single question":

how do actors come to know, and know in common, what they are doing and the circumstances in which they are doing it? (Heritage, 1984 p 76).

With reference to this question, Garfinkel (1967) formulated what he called the "documentary method of interpretation". This was seen to be the method used by social actors - whom Garfinkel referred to as

¹There is, however, some controversy over the parity of ethnomethodology and social constructionism. The primary point of contention appears to be that social constructionism provides a competing version of reality to that of the 'members' it examines. Ethnomethodologists, meanwhile, find such a denial of "the actor's point of view" unacceptable (Button and Sharrock, 1992 p 20). Instead, they posit that highly illuminating insights into members' activities can be generated without the requirement that their version of reality need be contradicted (See also Watson, 1994).

"members" - to make sense of and live in the world. The documentary method has two parallel aspects. On the one hand, it

consists of treating an actual appearance as 'the document of', as 'pointing to', and as 'standing on behalf of' a presupposed underlying pattern (Garfinkel, 1967 p 78).

On the other hand, it involves any individual appearance being, in its turn,

interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other (Garfinkel, 1967 p 78).

The upshot of this method is that the underlying pattern in question is brought into being in an ongoing manner through the accumulation of concrete instantiations - accumulated as like instances by the very actors themselves. Here then, we see the process by which the world of members is socially constructed.

Two of the most central notions of ethnomethodology are those of "indexicality" and "reflexivity". With regards to indexicality, while linguists identify a specific set of "indexical expressions", such as personal pronouns (e.g. we, you), location terms (e.g. there, here), temporal terms (e.g. now, then), as dependent upon context in order for their referent to be determined, ethnomethodology expands this set to include any expression that takes on a concrete meaning only in its context of use. This, of course, renders it increasingly difficult to discover any term that falls outside such a definition. However, this merely underlines the ethnomethodological belief that members must carry out interpretative work in order to accomplish the meaning of a given term. In other words, entities that come to be described by members are not seen as simply "out there" in a fixed and immutable way. Instead it is believed that

description and concept application are contingent, negotiable and revisable. Past usage does not necessarily determine future usage. The meaning of a concept or descriptor is the range of states of affairs to which it is applied, and the boundaries of that range are continuously reaffirmed or revised in new acts of speaking (Heritage, 1984 p 147).

The ethnomethodological insight of reflexivity, meanwhile, observes that talk is context sensitive and context reproducing. This notion will be discussed in more detail in the sections below regarding conversation analysis (Section C) and reflexivity as an area of enquiry in its own right (Section H).

In setting out to examine the presuppositions that “members” bring to their interactions, ethnomethodology comes across the problem of how to identify a phenomenon that is by definition implicit and unarticulated. The answer adopted by Garfinkel (1963) was to

start with a system with stable features and ask what can be done to make trouble (Garfinkel, 1963 p 187).

In what became known as the “breaching experiments”, Garfinkel (1952, 1963, 1967) instructed confederates to act as if one or other of the presuppositions, or rules, of behaviour was not operational. The reactions of other “members”, not party to the experimental enterprise, was discovered to be extraordinarily vivid - attesting to the efficacy of the assumption/rule in question. Where social actors failed to follow the rules required by the mobilisation of a shared background of knowledge, communication was seen to break down dramatically. Garfinkel was able to conclude from these investigations, not only that speakers attribute the actions of others to the operation of background knowledge, but that this attribution is essential to communication. Garfinkel observed that the communication breakdowns he documented did not entail a complete rejection of the premise that the Other shares the relevant background assumptions. Instead, members tended to stick steadfastly to this attribution, and treat the Other’s behaviour as amenable to sense-making in line with these assumptions, as if such a

sense has yet to be found and when it is it won’t be pleasant (Heritage, 1984 p 100).

C CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Conversation analysis (CA) has adopted a highly empirical approach to the insights of ethnomethodology, concentrating upon the single, delimited arena of verbal interaction. Founded on the work of Harvey Sacks and his colleagues Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, CA examines the deployment by speakers of the shared understandings identified by ethnomethodology. According to CA, social actions are accomplished via the structuring of verbal interaction around these shared understandings. Central to the methodology is its belief in the primacy of natural conversation as a social medium. In line with this, the core pursuit of conversation analysts has been to look for the regularities and irregularities of ordinary conversation. In this endeavour, they have amassed data taken from natural conversation into a single corpus, within which, cross-reference can be freely made. As Heritage (1988) observes, CA is not about

the application of a fixed set of methodological canons, but rather ... [the] resourceful use of the corpus of current knowledge (Heritage, 1988 p 144).

Meanwhile, alternative modes of discourse, such as institutional interactions, are viewed as subordinate phenomena and are compared to conversational benchmarks in order that their institutionality might be understood. (This second project I shall discuss below in Section F, on Institutions and CA). Fundamental to this notion that the data of CA is open to cross-reference and comparison, is the way in which the work carried out by its disparate members is interconnected and complementary. This leads Sharrock and Anderson (1986) to declare that CA is "a genuinely cumulative sociology" (p 81).

This "resourceful use of the corpus" begins with the employment of the "utterance" as the unit of analysis. In other perspectives, such as linguistics or philosophy, categories such as the phrase or the sentence

have been used, which depend upon *analytic* judgements of *content* for their identification. According to CA, analysts thereby impose an unnecessary level of reality construction upon their data. In contrast, CA's "utterance" signifies a single speaker's turn at talk, and thus takes its form from judgements determined by *members'* turn-taking *procedures* (see below, this Section). This choice of analytical unit also reflects one of the most fundamental insights of CA: however effortless it appears, **the mutual intelligibility and orderliness of conversation is something that participants continually work at** (cf. Nofsinger, 1991). This means that CA is primarily engaged in examining

the interactional and inferential consequences of the choice between alternative utterances. (Levinson, 1983 p 287).

Before we move on to look at this insight we need to acknowledge how the analytic unit of the utterance is treated in CA. Utterances are analysed in terms of their sequential placement in ongoing interaction. This emphasis on sequentiality, is paramount within CA. Drawing from ethnomethodology's understanding of reflexivity, CA is grounded in the belief that

the significance of any speaker's communicative action is doubly contextual in being both *context-shaped* and *context-renewing* ... *context-shaped* in that its contribution to an on-going sequence of actions cannot adequately be understood except by reference to the context ... especially the immediately preceding ... in which it participates (Heritage, 1984 p 242).

It is context-renewing, meanwhile, because

every 'current' action will itself form the immediate context for some 'next action' (Heritage, 1984 p 242).

The second "context-renewing" manifestation of contextuality is referred to by Schegloff and Sacks (1973 p 296) as the 'sequential implicativeness' of an utterance.

Returning to the participant-accomplished orderliness of conversation, central to this insight is the CA notion of "alignment" (Stokes and Hewitt, 1976). As discussed by Nofsinger (1991), alignment refers to the activities of conversationalists to bring their contributions into sufficient synchronisation with those of the other participants. It is through attention to the procedures for alignment that participants achieve intersubjective *interaction*, rather than merely idiosyncratic action.

Both alignment and sequential implicativeness are combined in the CA notion of the adjacency pair. In this structure, a first pair part interactionally occasions the production of one out of a selection of possible seconds. Examples of adjacency pairs are questions and answers, invitations and acceptances, offers and rejections etc. Given a first pair part, a second pair part becomes what Schegloff (1972) calls "conditionally relevant". That is, a second pair part is heard as "'responsive to' ... i.e. in a serial or sequenced relation to" that first pair part (Schegloff, 1972 p 307). Furthermore, its absence becomes a "notable" event, serving

as legitimate and recognizable grounds for a set of inferences (e.g. about the participant who failed to produce it) (Schegloff, 1972 p 307).

An important point to note about adjacency pairs, is that the meaning of the first pair part is not irrevocably set by the speaker, it is merely implicative. Indeed, the second speaker's choice of a second pair part acts so as to retrospectively establish the meaning of the first pair part (cf. Leudar and Antaki, 1988). It is therefore in the action of the second pair part that alignment procedures are displayed. For, while the first pair part sets up a sequential implicativeness that is to be satisfied by the second, the second part reveals how the second speaker has interpreted the first. In a successful question-answer sequence, for example, the question may require an answer, but the adjacency pair is only

accomplished by the second speaker's complicity in supplying an utterance which can be taken as an answer. It is the answer which establishes the first contribution as a question, as much as the question which establishes the next contribution as an answer. It is this interplay that is therefore responsible for creating an intersubjective reality between the two speakers, thereby rendering it "*interaction*".

Another key understanding of CA, is that which Sacks (1992) calls "subversion". Subversion refers to the ability of speakers to exploit what they know about how their social actions will be interpreted (their "visibility" (Edwards, 1991)) in order to carry out those actions. As with alignment, subversion utilises shared expectancies, such as sequential implicativeness, to accomplish social business. Thus, adjacency pairs and the specific example of the question-answer sequence can again provide a demonstration of how these concepts combine. For, second speakers can choose to fill the sequential slot after a question with items that, out of context, might not be taken for answers. By doing so they effect a conversion of those items into answers, which often carry a very heavy interpretational load as a result. In this way, counter-questionings, topic changes etc. placed in the answer slot, not only become answers in their own right, but operate on various other levels of meaning and interpretation because of their visibility as "events" in a similar way to the "notable absences" referred to above. This is therefore an additional way in which participants create conversational orderliness in a mutually intelligible fashion.

Another very important aspect of creating conversational orderliness that conversation analysts have explored, is that of turn taking. Sacks et al. (1978) propose that turn-taking proceeds through turn-by-turn discriminations from amongst a normatively ordered set of options. Turn-taking thereby represents what Levinson (1983) calls a "local management system". The system appears to rest upon what Sacks et

al. (1978) call "Transition Relevant Places" or TRPs. These are places within an utterance that other speakers are expected to hear as opportunities for them to start speaking. Sacks et al. (1978) documented three alternative manners in which conversation can proceed following a TRP: current speaker selects next; current speaker makes no selection; and current speaker continues. In the case of current speaker selects next, a second speaker is directly addressed, rendering them accountable to respond. This means that both a responding utterance and the absence of a response, are interpretable as social actions by members. Equally, via subversion (Sacks, 1992; see above) they can be designed as such. When a first speaker does not address any one individual, speakers can self-select and choose to respond to what has gone before (This includes responses where the content of the first speaker's utterance is not directly addressed, for this still counts as a form of response). Finally, speakers can, for various reasons, choose to carry on speaking themselves after a TRP.

This documentation of the three types of TRP allow Sacks et al. (1978) to go on to make key insights into the phenomena of silence and overlap. From the perspective of most alternative methods of analysis, such matters may seem too minute for worthwhile examination. However, in emphasising talk as action, rather than communication (Edwards, 1991), CA rejects no detail of talk as irrelevant or unimportant (cf. Heritage, 1984). Sacks et al. (1978) point out that, in view of the various manifestations of TRPs, there is an array of different meanings attached to silences and to overlapping talk.

With reference to the former of these phenomena, Sacks et al. formulate the following typology of silences. When a first speaker selects the next speaker, any delay can be treated as belonging to that next speaker, thus serving as a form of social action by that individual - for example, acting as a display of hesitation, contemplation, politeness, doubt , etc..

Sacks et al. therefore refer to this type of delay as an "attributable silence". Alternatively, a delay at a TRP, where the first speaker makes no selection of the next speaker, is not attributable to any one speaker. This the writers call a "gap". A further type of silence differentiated by Sacks et al. is understood as an extended delay which marks some form of breakdown in normal communication. These tend to be followed by an articulation of discomfort and, often, an abrupt change of subject. This type of delay, called a "lapse", is seen to be rather rare in conversation, which more usually proceeds without observable breakdown. In all of these cases, the delay occurs at a TRP. However, delay can also occur when a TRP is not marked, so that the current speaker retains possession of the floor. This, very different type of silence, is known as a "pause".

In contrast to the phenomenon of silence, speakers can find themselves engaged in overlapping speech. According to the turn taking rules outlined by Sacks et al. (1978), speakers will take steps to minimise the time during which interactants talk simultaneously, so that it is very unusual for extended simultaneous utterances to occur. Despite this, there are frequent occasions, in which a short sequence of a few words is overlapped by other speakers. Again, Sacks et al. (1978) look to distinguish different meanings in such occurrences. One of these occurs when the current speaker makes no selection of next, following which more than one speaker self-selects. As a result, two or more speakers begin to speak simultaneously (one of these speakers may or may not be the current speaker themselves electing to continue after a TRP). This is known as a "competing first start". Another occurrence is that of "misprojection" whereby a next speaker erroneously projects the end of a current speaker's turn so as to overlap with that speaker. Speakers can also display either antagonism or second assessment enthusiasm (Pomerantz, 1984) by overlapping with another speaker. What might be

called interruption proper, remains a further option, usually entailing a change of topic or a request for clarification.

In the above explanation of overlap, it should be apparent that disruptions of the general orderliness of conversation are not irrevocable, so that competing first starts, misprojections or overlapping requests for clarification, etc., represent merely transitional states of disorderliness, due to the actions of participants to restore order. This option for the restoration of order is far more widely available to speakers than in cases of overlap alone, and is known in CA as repair.

Repair refers to the rectification and revision of utterances or parts of utterances, which thereby signals that something was problematic about such "repairables". Schegloff et al. (1977) distinguish between the marking of an item as problematic - the initiation - and the changes that are subsequently made - the repair. These writers also note that either repair or its initiation can be carried out by either the speaker, who themselves made the repairable utterance, or by another speaker. Thus, there are cases of self-initiated self-repair, other-initiation of self-repair and other-initiated other-repair. The self-initiation of self-repair can be accomplished both at the point that the repairable is uttered, before a TRP, or afterward, in the "transition space" (Schegloff et al., 1977) before another speaker makes a contribution. When another initiates a repair, this is often accomplished by expressions of mishearing, such as "What?" or "Sorry?", or by

echo-questions, or repetitions of problematic items with stress on problem syllables (Levinson, 1983 p 341).

Meanwhile, where other-repair occurs, dispreference markers (see the following paragraph), such as delay and mitigation, can often be included, displaying an orientation to other-repair as a dispreferred option compared to self-repair (cf. Levinson, 1983).

A presentation of CA as an area of enquiry would not be complete without mention of its concept of preference organisation. This topic will be the subject of extensive discussion in Chapter 6, however, a basic outline of the issues involved would seem appropriate here. The idea of preference again involves the adjacency pair, (or, equally, the less tightly paired turns that Pomerantz (1978) referred to as "action chains") and the observation that choices amongst second pair parts following a first pair part are not of equal status. Instead, a normative apparatus exists within a culture, which places oppositional dyads of second pair parts in a hierarchical relationship to one another. Examples include: accepting versus declining an invitation or offer; complying with or refusing to comply with a request; admitting versus denying an accusation, etc.. Thus, for example, after an offer, acceptances tend to be produced in differing turn shapes to declinations. The conversation analytic contention is that, normatively speaking, the turn shape of the former tends to display an unproblematic status, while, the turn shape of the latter marks itself as problematic with options from a group of items such as hesitations, delaying components and accounts. The former is referred to as the "preferred turn shape", while the latter is known as the "dispreferred turn shape". This distinction between preferred and dispreferred turn shapes is held to apply for a whole range of second pair part dyads, including those in the list above. As a result, although preferred turn shapes are response-specific, the markers of dispreference are believed to be more or less common across the range of second pair parts.

Within CA, the work on preference structure has generated a certain amount of disagreement amongst analysts, whose incompatible approaches have lead to competing conclusions. (See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the controversy). However, common to most theories is the observation that preference organisation relies upon culturally shared

expectations. It is also agreed that speakers accomplish mutually intelligible social actions by orientating to such expectations. In this way, preference organisation is understood to represent a strong mechanism through which social communication can be managed.

What can be seen from the above discussion, is that CA is primarily concerned with how conversational organisation is accomplished via the shape of speaker turns, as in silence and overlap, preference organisation etc. However, the issue of how an intersubjective world is maintained has also lead conversation analysts into the study of more content-orientated issues. An example of this is the interest in formulations. The work on formulations arises from the observation that, when speakers use a description of an object, that specific choice of term from amongst a group of alternatives, displays (to both members and analysts) their orientation to the social object in question.

Particularly interesting are those formulations that refer to the preceding talk itself as an object to be represented. Such formulations involve summarisations of the gist of what has been said at some earlier point in the interaction, and as such, display the speaker's understanding of what is summarised. From a CA perspective, these utterances are not merely a neutral retelling, but a "re-presentation" of the talk in question, which focuses upon some aspects and upshots, not others. Those speakers whose contributions have been thereby formulated, can then confirm, amend or reject the formulation, thus displaying and creating the mutual alignment of the discourse.

A rather different approach to the subject of formulations was taken by Pomerantz (1986), who identified a common rhetorical device utilised by speakers in the form of the "Extreme Case Formulation". This entails the characterisation of relevant objects in a highly exaggerated manner, so as to enhance emphasis. This type of formulation is not only relevant to

summarisations of the preceding talk, but also to any formulaic descriptions of social objects made by speakers.

An even broader interpretation of formulations was adopted by Schegloff (1972), who used the term to express any choice of vocabulary by speakers. Schegloff proposed that the word-content of any given utterance represents a discrimination from amongst various competing options. In order to explicate this rhetorical perspective, Schegloff (1972) focused upon the example of formulations of place. Schegloff argued that choices of place terms involve displays by speakers of their orientation to a number of other matters, such as: where they themselves, their hearers and/or their referents are located; what membership categories they, their hearers and/or their referents belong to; what their relationship is to the topic in question; and what activity they are carrying out with their utterance. Meanwhile, a second speaker's response equally entails a reciprocal display of orientation to these matters. Here again, therefore, despite the focus upon the content rather than the form of utterances, the conversation analytic enterprise can be seen to involve the exploration of the mechanisms by which talk is ordered, jointly-constructed and rendered mutually intelligible by the activities of its participants.

D DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse Analysis is a name that has been taken up by a number of very different areas of inquiry. As Potter and Wetherell (1987) observed, it is possible to pick up two books on the subject of discourse analysis and find absolutely no overlap in their content. Therefore it is important to differentiate early on the particular perspective to be taken under the name of discourse analysis in this thesis.

The discourse analysis that will be presented here (henceforth DA) is that adopted by such writers as Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edwards and Potter (1992). This is a perspective which draws mainly upon the sociological enterprises of CA (see Section C), ethnomethodology (see Section B) and the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) (see Section G), but adopts instead an orientation to social psychological topics. Thus, the discourse analysis which derives from the post-structuralist and postmodernist traditions (e.g. Foucault, 1972, 1976, 1980; Derrida, 1973, 1976, 1978) will not be addressed here. Similarly, the pages to follow will rarely touch upon the work within linguistics under that name, which expands upon the Speech Act theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1975, 1976), where idealised sentences and exchanges are used to exemplify its analyses (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Labov and Franshel, 1977). However, as some of this work has been adopted into the discourse analytic perspective with which this thesis claims allegiance, it will at times be featured.

DA can be distinguished from CA, to which, as mentioned above, it is closely aligned, in that it does not concur with CA's belief in the primacy of natural conversation. This means that, although the CA enterprise of searching a random corpus for recurrent patterns remains open (e.g. Edwards and Potter, 1992), many Discourse Analysts choose to engage in interviewing interactants in an unstructured way to get directly at areas of analytic interest (e.g. Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Discourse analysts also extend their study to the analysis of printed texts. Another distinction from CA is that DA combines CA's insights and those of linguistic discourse analyses with an emphasis on the "interpretative repertoires" (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984) of SSK. These are held to be selections from amongst the immense array of culturally available explanations of the world, or as Potter and Wetherell (1988) put it,

relatively internally consistent, bounded language units (Potter and Wetherell, 1988 p 172).

The Discourse Analytic project is to examine how social actors systematically deploy discursive organisational features and repertoires in order to accomplish their rhetorical business. In many cases the analysis then goes on to explicate the way in which this process brings about, sustains and legitimates social practices. Like CA, this project is a cumulative enterprise in which the writings of other authors are compared and contrasted as part of the analytic process (cf. Sharrock and Anderson, 1986).

As mentioned above, DA is a constructionist enterprise that has arisen out of a social psychological orientation. Thus, despite the eclectic approach which links it to CA, linguistics, SSK, etc., discourse analytic work has tended to centre around the questions addressed by "traditional" psychology, that is, the cognitive social psychology that currently represents the mainstream paradigm of the discipline.

DA's broadest attack on traditional psychology is upon the principles of cognitivism itself. The cognitive perspective envisages internal mental entities as the causal determinants of social action. It works with such terms as attitudes, thoughts, emotions, attributions, stereotypes etc., and conceives of each as carried around by social actors and put to use in appropriate social situations. The project of such psychologists is therefore to identify these entities and the methods in which they are used. The practical tools that the analysts utilise are the questionnaire, the survey and the experiment, whereby the parameters are set by the social scientist so as to display the entities in question for overt perusal. Language and other forms of social action are seen as merely the transparent media through which outward display of these inner entities occurs.

DA takes a very different view of language and social action. Rather than trying to look through the window of language into the minds of participants, DA sees language use as the moulding and creative force of the social world. It therefore puts aside any questions about internal states, regarding them as relevant only when they are made so by the actions of participants. Thus, it is observed that people rather regularly utilise the concepts of inner states to explain, justify and describe, their and others' behaviour and to generally make sense of the world. In this guise, inner states do become interesting to the discourse analyst, not as neutral descriptions of some "reality", however, but as interested and rhetorically effective mobilisations of an available cultural repertoire. It could indeed be said that the cognitive psychologists are buying into the cultural repertoire of the inner state, or equally, that their representations of these entities can be seen to be part of the machinery by which the repertoires in question are generated for the wider society. This is much the argument that Moscovici (1976) proposed, perceiving the two-way flow of lay and scientific explanations of the world.

In looking for enduring internal states through the media of experiment and questionnaire responses, one of the fundamental features of the cognitivist search, was for consistency from one occasion of use to another. Consistency was seen to demonstrate the irrelevance of the particular language and context, which could then be written off, so that the nature of the underlying structure could be examined. Thus, consistent responses and accounts were taken as accurate representations of the internal realities under scrutiny.

For DA however, it is variation rather than consistency that is the telling force. DA draws upon the CA insights of Schegloff (1972), regarding formulations as consequential vocabulary choices (see Section C above), in order to conclude that social actors construct versions of the world via their talk and text. Discourse analysts observe: that versions are built out

of available cultural resources in the form of repertoires; that they are actively, though not necessarily consciously, selected; and that these selections are consequential. One way in which discourse analysts then demonstrate this process, is by attending to the language variation employed by the individual interlocutor. DA therefore insists that

Descriptions ... are inevitably 'distorted', not simply occasionally, but perennially, in the sense that they are always constructions for some purpose (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 p 36).

An example of the cognitive preoccupation with consistency is Festinger's (1957) notion of cognitive dissonance. This focused upon what he saw as an uncomfortable psychological state, produced when people recognised inconsistencies in their beliefs or between their beliefs and their actions - leading them to take steps to bring the two into line. For DA, meanwhile,

variability is an expected usual feature of conversation and social texts, despite the fact that people often try to reduce it when it is pointed out to them or when it becomes salient for some other reason (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 p 38).

From this perspective, "consistency" and "inconsistency" can be seen as category terms that are themselves rhetorically deployable for the purposes of interactional business. On this theme, another element of cognitive psychology that DA highlights is that the very methods used by the traditional psychologists tend to suppress variability and promote consistency. This is not only apparent when one looks at the analytic pre-coding of responses for the creation of closed questions, but can also be seen in the post-response codings by practitioners of participants' disparate responses to open-ended questions.

In sum therefore, rather than seeing descriptive variation as evidence of inconsistency, quirkiness and error, as does cognitive psychology, DA points to the exigency of alternative terms and descriptions in the

accomplishment of discursive business. In this way, the primary focus within DA is upon the constructive and flexible deployment of language, which thus becomes a topic in its own right, rather than, as in cognitive psychology, a medium through which other, more intangible phenomena, such as attitudes, thoughts, memory etc., may be accessed (cf. Potter, 1996).

DA's attention to the rhetorical deployment of language, reaches much further than a purely analytical interest. Discourse analysts observe that members are also aware of this availability, which then becomes a central concern in what Edwards and Potter (1992) call "fact construction". If the rhetorical interests of social actors can be served by their choice of language in describing the world, the status of such descriptions as "facts" is liable to be undermined. Edwards and Potter (1992) formulate this problem as the "dilemma of stake", in which members are faced with the conundrum of

how to produce accounts which attend to interests without being undermined as interested (p 158).

Edwards and Potter then bring together a number of techniques within the accounts and descriptions of social actors that attend to this dilemma, which have been identified by themselves and other discourse analysts. Some of the most central of these are the following.

An actor's membership of a particular category can be invoked in order to raise expectations and acceptances of their access to specialised knowledge, skills and interests (cf. Sacks, 1972; Schegloff, 1972). These are referred to by Edwards and Potter as "Category entitlements". Examples of such categories are those of professional expert, neutral counsellor, judge, etc. A speaker's attention to minute descriptive details can create an impression that they are re-experiencing the phenomena in question. Coining the term "Vivid Description" for this device, the authors

contrast it with the opposite resource of "Systematic Vagueness" which leaves out the sorts of detail that can be undermined by hostile interlocutors. Another resource documented by Edwards and Potter is the way actors draw upon the vicarious testimony of independent others to project a feeling of consensus about their accounts or assessments and a sense that their story is corroborated. Both contrasting pairs and lists of items are also identified as rhetorically effective devices for displaying factuality and are presented as particularly identifiable in the discourse of politicians (Atkinson, 1984; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). The authors make special note of the operativeness of three-part lists in displaying a sense of completeness and representativeness (Jefferson, 1990).

E ARGUMENTATION AND RHETORIC

As hinted at above, an interest in the rhetorical organisation of discourse is fundamental to DA. This is because, following the Conversation analytic insight of Schegloff (1972), DA argues that all choices of vocabulary involve discrimination between competing alternatives, thus bringing to life some versions of the world and not others. In other words, discourse unfolds in a rhetorical arena. This, however, is not the only manner in which discourse can be seen as rhetorical. Speakers will often be involved in such social actions as exoneration, justification, and other undertakings in the discursive construction of a moral order. Within such social actions, speakers will be arguing for some version of the world and against others, whether implicitly or explicitly, and in this sense they will be involved in what is clearly a rhetorical enterprise.

This rhetorical emphasis within DA should not be confused with what has been termed "The New Rhetoric" - an area of enquiry which is currently seeking to revive the ancient Greek engagement with the persuasive power of discourse. "The New Rhetoric" generally involves the detailed

cataloguing of various devices and tropes available for deployment, with some interest in their objective effectiveness. Central figures in this enterprise have been Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971). In view of its commitment to the local management of discourse, such generalised cataloguing tends not to be the business of DA. However, this does not preclude the potential of the new rhetoric as a useful resource for examining concrete instantiations of rhetorical devices in a discourse analyst's data.

The discourse analytic interest in argumentation has been primarily championed by Billig (1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993). Billig advocates the "celebration of dialogue, argumentation and negativity" within psychology (Billig, 1993 p 2). In particular, Billig is critical of the conversation and discourse analytic assumption that argumentation is merely a "marginal form of discourse" (Billig, 1989 p 211). Billig takes issue with the conceptualisation of argumentation, by various writers, as specific to certain sub-cultures (Schiffrin, 1984), settings (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Molotch and Boden, 1985), or age groups (Goodwin, 1983; Maynard, 1985). Ironically, his own work is similarly marginalised by Antaki (1994), who suggests that

The conversational convention of agreement ... may be ... tacitly put to one side for certain speech events (like his respondents' family quarrels ...), but that does not affect the general background expectation that they are - normally - in operation (Antaki, 1994 p 161)

Billig attributes the marginalisation of argument to the nature of the corpus so far amassed by CA and DA, agreeing with Goodwin's (1983) conclusion that, on the whole, these practitioners have regarded disagreement as something that speakers tend to avoid. In contrast, Billig takes the view that disagreement and argumentation are often engaged in enthusiastically by conversationalists in a creative and sociable manner. He is, however, eager to point out that

to celebrate argumentation is not to celebrate quarrelling. Ong (1989) and Billig (1987 and 1991), who both praise the argumentative spirit, claim that being quarrelsome disrupts thoughtful argumentation: sulks, slammed doors, ill-tempered bullying etc. threaten the dialogic give and take of ideas. (Billig, 1993 p 9)

As Billig (1989) mentions, Schiffrin (1984, 1985) is another advocate of argumentation as a sociable activity. However, like Tannen (1984) Schiffrin limits the scope of her gaze to a single cultural group within Western society, namely the Jewish community (see Chapter 4 Section B3a). In observing interaction amongst her participants Schiffrin concludes that

In sociable argument, speakers repeatedly disagree, remain non-aligned with each other, and compete for interactional goods. Yet they do so in a nonserious way, and in ways which actually display their solidarity and protect their intimacy (p 311).

A further advocate of argumentation (or as he terms it, "informal discussion") and its centrality and sociability, is Knoblauch (1991). According to Knoblauch, speakers actively engage in the collaborative production of disagreement. Moreover, it is this activity of disagreement that accounts for the supply of topics, the mechanism for topic change and "the tension and the thrill of pursuing these topics" typical of informal discussions (Knoblauch, 1991 p 167). Also, like Billig (1993), he contrasts this with the alternative of conflict talk, including "shouting, crying and quarrelling" (Knoblauch, 1991 p 187), which he proposes as the very opposite of sociability. On this point Schiffrin (1984) takes a slightly different perspective, seeing sociable argument as the "playful enactment of ... conflict" which displays the "high tolerance of conflict in intimate relationships" (Schiffrin, 1984 p 331) precisely by its successful handling of that conflict.

Holstein and Gubrium (1994) make yet stronger claims as to the importance of argumentation. For these writers, disagreement is not merely a form of sociability or a mechanism for the avoidance of

dangerous conflict. They assert that social objects (e.g. social institutions) gain their very substance from the accounts and definitions that an atmosphere of challenge and disagreement engenders. These writers insist that abstract social entities take concrete form directly out of the necessity to justify and warrant claims or to counter those of others. Such an approach takes the discourse analytic insight, that descriptions are neither neutral nor disembodied, one step further. This results in the conclusion that, if descriptions of the world come to be made as a result of the rhetorical business that interlocutors are engaged in, then the mechanism of contention and disagreement is central to the discursive construction of reality. This conclusion is the most important message that the current thesis has to communicate. The work of Holstein and Gubrium (1994) will receive a more detailed treatment in Chapter 7.

F INSTITUTIONS AND CA

As mentioned, in Section C above, CA considers mundane conversation to be the primary interactional medium of the social world. This does not, however, mean that other discursive forms have been ignored by conversation analysts. On the contrary, CA has utilised its insights into ordinary conversation in order to identify, by contrast, the unique qualities of institutional talk. In this way CA aims to reveal how institutions and institutionalised forms are constructed within their discourses, rather than elsewhere. In this way, despite its name, conversation analysis has repeatedly been applied as a methodology to forms of discourse other than that of ordinary conversation.

Introducing a core volume in this topic area, the editors, Drew and Heritage (1992), explain that the undertaking of their volume is to

describe how particular institutions are enacted and lived through as accountable patterns of meaning, inference, and action (Drew and Heritage. 1992 p 5).

This enterprise derives from the CA perspective towards institutions, which, rather than seeing them as pre-existing structures or settings that pre-determine the behaviour of interactants, treats institutions and institutional identities as

locally produced, incrementally developed and, by extension, as transformable at any moment (Drew and Heritage, 1992 p 21).

Central to this understanding of institutions are the related “problems” of “relevance” and “context” outlined by Schegloff (1991). Schegloff pointed out that, during a given interaction, any speaker, and any context, is simultaneously describable in terms of a long list of identities or attributes. However, simply because a speaker or context *can* be categorised in a particular way, does not make that categorisation relevant. Instead, Schegloff insists that both members and analysts must be concerned to determine which of the many possible categorisations are actually *consequential* for the interaction. According to Schegloff, the consequentiality of member identities and contextual features can only be determined by what the participants themselves can be seen to orient towards, during the process of the interaction under analysis.

When applying these problems of relevance and context to the realm of the institution, Heritage (1984) concludes that

in maintaining, elaborating, or transforming their circumstances by their actions, the actors are also simultaneously reproducing, developing or modifying the institutional realities which envelop those actions (p 180).

This shift in focus towards the engendering of institutionality has lead to a number of empirical investigations into concrete examples of this process. One of the more general conclusions of this work has been that “institutionality” often takes the form of

specific *reductions* of the range of options and opportunities for action ... and often involve *specializations* and *respecifications* of the interactional functions of the activities that remain (Drew and Heritage, 1992 p 26).

Many of these have centred upon deviations from the turn-taking procedures of ordinary conversation outlined by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978). Examples include the work of Atkinson and Drew (1979) on courtroom discourse, McHoul (1978) on classroom discourse and that of Greatbatch (1988, 1992) on news interviews. In each case, the respective authors reveal the

systematically distinctive forms of turn taking which powerfully structure many aspects of conduct in these settings (Drew and Heritage, 1992 p 25).

Another aspect of the organisation of institutional talk is the instantiation of asymmetric tasks, roles and category entitlements by its various members. One example of this is the work on the doing of "neutrality" by news interviewers (Clayman, 1988, 1992) and court officials (Atkinson, 1992). A similar focus for exploration has been the differential access actors have to the "tacit procedures and architecture of talk" (Molotch and Boden, 1985). This body of work includes such topics of study as: asymmetries in the ascription of participant status in paediatric consultations (Aronsson, 1991); asymmetries in the opportunities for perspective-setting in police interrogations (Linell and Jönsson, 1991); and asymmetries in the provision and receipt of information during doctor-patient encounters (ten Have, 1991).

Examinations such as the above have led conversation analysts to the conclusion that

conversational mechanisms ... act to "enable" the local achievement and reproduction of institutional and organizational patterns in society (Zimmerman and Boden, 1991 p 9).

It is in this sense that institutions are seen to be "talked into being" (Heritage, 1984 p 290).

G THE INSTITUTION OF SCIENCE

The study of institutions is not unique to ethnomethodology and CA. The study of science as a major and powerful institution in modern society (Woolgar, 1988 p 11) has been underway for decades. Growing out of the philosophy, history and sociology of science, the detailed examination of this particular institution has more recently embraced a constructionist epistemology. Under the title of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK), and later the Social Studies of Science (SSS), the increasing directedness towards constructionism and relativism in the study of science has created a certain amount of convergence with the ethnomethodological, conversation analytic and discourse analytic projects discussed above.

The first move in this convergence is usually attributed to Kuhn (1962). Drawing on the structural-functionalist work of Merton (1949) and Mannheim (1936; 1952), Kuhn proposed that science is a historical enterprise firmly embedded in the culture and society within which it takes place. He identified "paradigms" of scientific enterprise which premise certain beliefs and postulates, but not others. These unexplicated premises then determine which questions are asked and which hypotheses are erected for verification or refutation. Kuhn proposed that science most often proceeds by practitioners working from within a single accepted paradigm - "normal science". While, at certain temporal nodes, the underlying beliefs and postulates themselves come to be questioned, resulting in the supplanting of an "old" paradigm with a "new" one, which Kuhn called "extraordinary science".

Following Kuhn (1962), authors such as Barnes (1974) and Bloor (1976) embarked upon the "strong programme" in SSK. Fundamental to the strong programme is the injunction of Mannheim (1936) that the categorisations and hypotheses of, or questions about, phenomena are not merely a product of the phenomena themselves, but arise out of social interests which determine what is looked at, what is asked and what is seen. These social interests are perceived as both "extrascientific", including financial, political and other inducements and connections, and "intrascientific", pertaining to membership of bodies of like-minded colleagues (cf. Lynch, 1993). What is more, the very distinction between what is "extra-" and what is "intra-" scientific is identified by the strong programme as part of the business of scientific practice itself, and thus becomes a topic of study. As Lynch (1993) characterises it,

the differentiation and stability of a boundary between science and nonscience is itself a continual social construction that can be explained by such factors as social consensus, the distinctive socialization of scientists, and scientists' ability to persuade key elites and members of the public to accept the authority of science as a basis for unquestioned belief (Lynch, 1993 p 59).

Bloor (1976) characterises the "principles" of the strong programme in terms of an undertaking to produce a causal, impartial, symmetrical and reflexive examination of natural science. The enterprise is: causal, in that what is examined is the process by which knowledge and belief come about; impartial, because the objects under study should not be chosen on the basis of whether they later came to be accepted or rejected as science; symmetrical, in that the sociologists undertake to remain uninfluenced by the status of the object of study as true or false, and thus to carry out the same sorts of examination and to look for the same causes of belief regardless of such status; and reflexive, because the sociologists' conclusions about the generation of natural science should be equally applicable to sociology itself as a scientific enterprise.

The strong programme has by no means been the only school of thought that has arisen within SSK. On the contrary, a number of different pursuits have grown out of criticisms of and expansions on their "programme". One of these is what has been called the "empirical programme of relativism", most notably advocated by H M Collins and his Bath school (Collins, 1983, 1985; Pinch 1986). This programme consists of taking the publications and accounts involved in scientific controversies as data for empirical case studies. The programme then utilises the impartial and symmetrical principles of the strong programme as central features in examining these two-sided, or multidimensional debates. The aim is to reveal how the irreconcilability of the competing stories is manifest. Moreover, keen interest is taken in the process by which closure of the dispute is achieved. The results of this enterprise have been to highlight that closure does not arise out of clear-cut and incontrovertible replication and replication failure, as claimed by its members, but through theory-driven and negotiated determinations by a "core set" of members involved in the controversy.

Also centred around the strong programme's principles of impartiality and symmetry is the Discourse Analytic perspective on scientific discourse adopted by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984). In this enterprise, the published texts and interview discourse of scientists are compared to reveal two distinct "interpretative repertoires" (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), which Gilbert and Mulkay name the "Empiricist" and "Contingent" repertoires. Gilbert and Mulkay examine the highly incompatible versions of phenomena that these two repertoires represent, noting how the former is characteristic of published material, while the latter was more usually encountered in interview situations and other less formal interaction. The authors also note that the incompatibility of the repertoires has brought about its own handling system, as well as a variant of humour among scientists which exploits that very incompatibility. As has already been

discussed in Section D above, this work by Gilbert and Mulkay has been one of the most crucial influences responsible for the shaping of that variant of Discourse Analysis adopted in this thesis (see Section D).

Another branch of SSK that has grown out of the strong programme has been the work known as Laboratory Studies. This programme has focused upon the incarnate, everyday practices of scientists within the laboratory, in order to inform an ethnographic approach to the social study of science (cf. Latour and Woolgar, 1979; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Lynch, 1985). The claim is, that the social construction of science can be most concretely captured by observing the routine, daily unfolding of scientific practice. One of the major areas of interest in this programme has been the process by which facticity is established. This involves a predominantly discursive approach to scientific practice, again developing out of the work of Gilbert and Mulkay (1984). For example, it is observed that the process by which "facts" are established as scientific objects involves the discursive abandonment of qualifiers and references to authorship.

The claim of Laboratory Studies to represent an observer's view of scientific practice has been criticised by Lynch (1993), who finds problematic the assertion that Laboratory Studies

describe scientists' activities without buying into the scientists' preconceptions about the relevant objects of study (Lynch, 1993 p 96).

Lynch points out that the wider culture and society, to which the "observers" belong, will share many of those preconceptions held by "the tribe" of natural scientists (Latour and Woolgar, 1979). Moreover, the so-called "observers" are also co-members, along with the "observed", of the intermediate category of "scientists" and will thus share yet more of the preconceptions of their "subjects". In this way, the reformulations of the sociologists cannot help but include many of the scientists' referents

without redescription, thereby very much "buying into the scientists' preconceptions".

This criticism of Laboratory Studies is fundamentally about its failure to see its own activity as an example of that which it attempts to study. Ironically, eleven years earlier, Lynch (1982) objected to the work of Latour and Woolgar (1979) on the basis that they warranted their analysis precisely by highlighting the similarity of their own activities and those of the scientists they studied. The programme of Laboratory Studies is, however, not alone in raising this question of "reflexivity" (Bloor, 1976). Indeed, so strong is the accusation that SSK does not adequately embody the principle of reflexivity, that a whole area of enquiry has arisen which takes this principle as its primary focus and title. It is towards this area of enquiry that I will now turn.

H REFLEXIVITY

As explained above, reflexivity is a topic for SSK and the Social Studies of Science which some authors have taken up as their central focus. The principle of reflexivity is an extension of another of Bloor's (1976) principles, that of symmetry, to include the social scientist's own activities. Thus, not only is the symmetrical examination of "true" and "false" scientific objects required, but this symmetry is extended towards the relationship between how the natural sciences are to be treated and how that treatment is itself to be treated. Thus, reflexivity focuses upon the sociologist's own practices as examples of the doing of science. In this way, the constructed nature of the social scientist's own gloss of participants' accounts is acknowledged and its own rhetorical organisation is highlighted. According to Bloor (1976) reflexivity is

an obvious requirement of principle because otherwise sociology would be a standing refutation of its own theories (Bloor, 1976 p 5).

One manifestation of this reflexive interest is known as "New Literary Forms". This reflexive approach acknowledges that the textual form of a discursive practice promotes a certain representation of reality. In this case, the scientific write-up is viewed in terms of a textual form, whose rhetorical structure privileges only one construction of reality above all others. The explorations of New Literary Forms are an attempt to adopt alternative textual devices and organisations and thus promote alternative realities. In doing so, they shed a contrastive light on the consequences of the predominant literary form in which science is presented. Writers such as Mulkay (1985), Woolgar and Ashmore (1988), Pinch and Pinch (1988) and Ashmore (1989), employ such novel textual forms as: dialogue with alternative voices, play scripts, encyclopaedic formats and parody, in order to accomplish their social scientific contributions in a manner that exemplifies their arguments (which, it should be noted, are not uniformly in favour of the commitment to reflexivity - see Pinch and Pinch, 1988).

Two observations on this enterprise are particularly notable with reference to the current text. Firstly, Mulkay (1985) observes that it is not only the discourse of scientists and politicians that exhibits "textual asymmetry" (Mulkay, 1985 p 101). A similar asymmetry is equally evident in sociological texts. In this way,

whereas members' accounts are treated as defective 'folk theories',
analysts' accounts are treated as accurate 'scientific theories' (Mulkay,
1985 p 6).

Secondly, Potter (1988) asserts that Discourse Analysis is itself a New Literary Form. His rationale for this claim is that the discourse analytic write-up includes within itself passages of the discourse under analysis. As a result, unlike in traditional forms of social scientific text, discourse analysts document their "entire reasoning process from discursive

materials to conclusions" (Potter, 1988 p 49). Potter concludes that this textual organisation makes the analyst's readings explicitly visible as constructs. Meanwhile,

the reader is given the opportunity, indeed challenged, to offer alternative readings or better constructions (Potter, 1988 p 49).

Moving on to the broader reflexive enterprise, Woolgar (1988) makes a distinction between two types of reflexivity. The first of these, which he calls "constitutive reflexivity", he attributes to Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodological understanding of the documentary method (see Section B above), which he interprets as suggesting that all acts of representation involve

an intimate interdependence between the surface appearance (document) and the associated underlying reality (object). The sense of the former is elaborated by drawing on 'knowledge of the latter; at the same time, the sense of the latter is elaborated by what is known about the former (Woolgar, 1988 p 21).

In this way, the accounts of the world that members make, actually participate in constituting that world (cf. Garfinkel, 1967 p 8). Woolgar explains that Garfinkel's insistence on the interdependence between representations of the world and the world 'out there', runs counter to the traditional beliefs which underlie the natural sciences, whereby representation and 'reality' are seen as entirely independent, particularly in the sense of the latter's immutability in relation to the former.

Although such an incompatibility of approaches renders the issue of reflexivity problematic for the natural sciences, Woolgar suggests that a second form of reflexivity is compatible with scientific pursuits and is embraced by them. This form of reflexivity he calls "benign introspection" which, he explains, "entails loose injunctions to 'think about what we are doing'" and tend to take the form of "fieldwork confessions" that are merely appended to the end of entirely unreflexive texts in order to

"provide the 'inside story' on how the research was done" (Woolgar, 1988 p 22).

Woolgar concludes that the social sciences find themselves in a position between these two enterprises, having trouble with constitutive reflexivity in particular, because

social science is attracted by the constructivist undertones of constitutive reflexivity in its literary mood, but repelled by the implications for its own pretensions to produce a 'scientific' social study (Woolgar, 1988 p 22).

Lynch (1993) proposes a similar distinction between two types of reflexivity. In this case, Garfinkel's ethnomethodological reflexivity is again identified as the first distinct type. He terms this "incarnate" reflexivity and characterises it as: "unavoidable"; having "no antonym"; and as having "to do with contextual placement and background understandings" (Lynch, 1993 p 36). This is then contrasted with a second type, which he calls "referential reflexivity", naming Pollner (1991) as an advocate. According to Lynch, referential reflexivity is

a matter of explicitly interpreting, reflecting on, and saying out loud (Lynch, 1993 p 37).

It is therefore "avoidable" and can be considered in terms of degrees - one can be more or less reflexive, depending upon the amount of attention paid to one's own activities as a focus for analytical examination.

However, Lynch contrasts greatly with Woolgar on where this distinction leads him. For, while Woolgar focuses on and attempts to explore the paradox that the two forms of reflexivity present for the social scientist, Lynch embraces the former as a fundamental, while largely dismissing the latter. Lynch does not reject "referential reflexivity" out of hand,

however. Instead, he merely relegates it to a topic of "occasional appropriateness" and interest, summing it up as

pausing to consider what one has just said, thinking out loud, admitting self-doubt, wondering whether others see things in the same way that you do, confessing bias, and so on (Lynch, 1993 p 37).

He then accuses Pollner and other followers of this path, of replacing the foundationalism of scientific tendencies with an equally foundationalist treatment of the activities that members employ to construct the world. Drawing on the critique by Button and Sharrock (1993) he concludes that

In place of thoughts or ideas in older antiobjectivist traditions, these studies install social, textual, interactional, and rhetorical practices and devices (Lynch, 1993 p 38).

This is by no means the only critical reaction to reflexivity from within SSK, nor have New Literary Forms escaped criticism. Indeed, other authors are far more vehement in their rejection. Collins and Yearley (1992), for example, are extremely critical of any claim that reflexivity might represent progress within SSK. The extent of their acceptance of reflexivity amounts only to the conclusion that "there is a living and some joy in" it (Collins and Yearley, 1992 p 309. See also Collins, 1989)

Meanwhile, they characterise the "escalation of scepticism" in SSK, of which reflexivity is a part, as a game of chicken, in this case "epistemological chicken", and conclude that the "relativist regress" of the

escalation from relativism through discourse analysis and "new literary forms" to reflexivity ... leads us to have nothing to say (Collins and Yearley, 1992 p 302).

These authors take issue with the satirical statement by Woolgar and Ashmore (1988) that

The exploration of reflexivity is the next natural development of the relativist-constructivist perspective in the social study of science (Woolgar and Ashmore, 1988 p 7).

They claim that simply packaging this statement in a tongue-in-cheek style does not mean that its message is thereby entirely undermined. Ironically, according to Latour (1988), such an accomplishment is the very defining feature of the reflexive enterprise itself, for he regards reflexivity as

any text that takes into account its own production and which, by doing so, claims to undo the deleterious effects upon its readers of being believed too little or too much (Latour, 1988 p 166).

However, Latour also has reservations about the usefulness of reflexivity as an analytic focus. In Latour's case, this is because he believes that the risk of being believed too much is not as great as that of being believed too little (Latour, 1988 p 170; see also Chapter 4 Section B4).

I A SPACE BETWEEN THE DISCIPLINES

Within this chapter, an attempt has been made to identify, relate and contrast a number of disciplines and approaches as significant in the fashioning of this current work. In addition, not by mere coincidence, this representation of the literature has, it is hoped, created a space within which my own work can be positioned. It is intended that this space and my own occupation of it will be made clear in Chapter 4, in which methodological considerations are discussed. Before such a task is undertaken, however, a more detailed inspection of some pertinent literature will be made in Chapter 3. Unlike the simple presentation of relevant research and theory adopted in this chapter, Chapter 3 will adopt a critical approach to its subject matter. In this way some of the literature concerning power in the research relationship will be examined, attending to its rhetorical organisation and the mechanisms by which it

accomplishes the social business of determining what the research relationship comes to be.

CHAPTER 3 POWER AND THE RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP: A REFLEXIVE LOOK AT THE ACADEMIC DEBATE

A INTRODUCTION

1 *REFLEXIVITY*

In Chapter 2 Section H, Reflexivity was discussed as an enterprise within SSK and the Social Studies of Science, whereby the practices of the social scientists themselves are acknowledged to be as rhetorical as those of the natural scientists they study. However, reflexivity is not exclusive to studies of science. Instead, reflexivity can be understood more broadly as the process of stepping back from participation in a social activity to look at that activity itself as a subject of study. In this chapter, I would like to enter into an ongoing reflexive debate within a rather different type of social science. Within this debate we find social scientists asking reflexive questions about the internal power dynamics of social scientific research, with a view to democratising and equalising the social relationships within it.

Some of the most notable contributors to this enterprise have been feminist writers. On the one hand, this may have resulted from their primary commitment to gender equality, which has provided theoretical and empirical resources that are easily adapted to more generalised issues of power and equality. While on the other, their philosophy of

experiential and subjective knowledge makes self-analysis singularly appropriate. As a result, I shall be placing the emphasis of my discussion on the feminist writings in this area, although the work in critical ethnography and psychology, which has addressed these feminist writings, will also be included.

The aim of this chapter is to deconstruct the debate about power in the research relationship, using the perspectives of discourse analysis and social studies of science. Presenting the debate itself as a rhetorical and discursive interaction, I will show how the dilemmas it attempts to resolve are central to the accomplishment of research as an enterprise - both in the field during data collection and in the academic arena of justification and criticism. In this way, the question of power in the research relationship will be dealt with in a way that highlights the manner in which power is built through the practice of academia itself. It is hoped that my own subversion and partial reversal of some of the tropes through which that power is manifest, will help to expose their operation. Under particular scrutiny will be the asymmetrical treatment of data and previous academic research in warranting a current argument. The difference would appear to rest on fundamental assumptions about ability. Academics are implicitly assumed to be in a position to judge the actions of those they study. Once this assumption is in place, the academic pursuit involves merely the question of whether or not those judgements are deemed correct by fellow academics. Participants, meanwhile,

are not treated seriously as being able to speak the truth about their own lives (Shotter, 1990 p 168).

Put another way, while previous research is normally drawn upon as supportive "fact" or refutable error, the discourse of participants is treated as social action. In this Chapter, an attempt has been made to redress some of this asymmetry. By highlighting its accomplishment of social action, rather than debating its veracity, some of the relevant literature is

treated in a manner more usually reserved for the handling of data. In this way, the relevant theories are neither rejected nor endorsed, but are examined for their rhetorical deployment within the academic debate. It should be noted, however, that the academic literature that appears in this chapter is not universally treated in this symmetrical manner. As academia remains the arena in which the current text makes its contribution, some of the relevant literature will continue to be marshalled for "expert" support and other writings will be reworked so as to ratify my argument (see also Chapter 4 Section D 2). I make no apology for this form of asymmetry, and take as endorsement for this the words of Condor (Unpublished) who, with reference to "enlisting" the voices of participants, insists that social scientists

are, in fact, highly selective in which voices we allow to 'speak for themselves' (Condor, Unpublished p 13).

The argument in question is set out in the following sub-section.

2 THE DYNAMIC AND NEGOTIATED PRODUCTION OF RESEARCH

Fundamental to the critical enterprise of this chapter, are two related insights from ethnomethodology and CA, introduced in Chapter 2. The first of these is the "Documentary method of interpretation" of Garfinkel (1967) (see Chapter 2 Section B). According to the "Documentary method", a concrete instance is treated as exemplifying a pre-existing underlying pattern and yet is also understood by reference to that underlying pattern - each informing the other.

The second insight comes from the CA of institutions (See Chapter 2 Section F) and is summed up by Heritage (1984) who states that

it is within ... local sequences of talk, and only there, that ... institutions are ultimately and accountably talked into being (Heritage, 1984 p 290).

If we take these two insights together and apply them to research we may conclude that: **what gets to be counted as the institution of research is the dynamic and negotiated product of the interaction which takes place within it.** It is a dynamic product, in the sense that research is ongoingly brought into being by individual instances of talk and text. Meanwhile, it is a negotiated product, in the sense that any individual instance of such talk or text may be accepted or rejected as an example of that institution on the basis of its relation to the “presupposed underlying pattern” of other members, yet, at the same time, will be produced and interpreted in the light of what each member makes interactionally relevant about “what is known” of that “underlying pattern” (Garfinkel, 1967 p 78). Furthermore, what material gets to be counted as “within” the institution of research and who gets to be counted as a member, will be established in a similarly dynamic and negotiated manner. It should also be noted that this chapter is itself engaged in such a process. I present myself as a member of the institution (See Chapter 4 Section B3a, on the question of “personal attributes”); I enter into the interaction via this particular piece of text; and I contribute to the establishment of research as a discrete institution. For example, I outline two arenas as included “within” the institution - the academic community and the research encounter.

With this perspective in mind, let us examine in more detail how the debate over power has unfolded.

B HIERARCHICAL RESEARCH AND THE EGALITARIAN ALTERNATIVE

1 THE FEMINIST ALTERNATIVE

One of the most influential articles critiquing traditional social science research was Oakley (1981). In this article she highlighted "a contradiction at the heart of the textbook paradigm" for research interviews (Oakley, 1981 p 33). According to Oakley, this contradiction is made up of two competing methodological aims, which are

the warmth required to generate 'rapport' and the detachment necessary to see the interviewee as an object under surveillance (Oakley, 1981 p 33).

The problem for Oakley was that the over-evaluation of the latter aim to the exclusion of the former, in line with "classical ... gender stereotyping" (Oakley, 1981 p 38), was having a detrimental effect on the quality of research. Oakley strongly believed in the necessity for interviewees to receive some personal satisfaction from the interview in order to encourage a willingness to share their lives with the interviewer and, in the case of longitudinal studies, to maintain attendance at subsequent interviews. She therefore rejected the detached and instrumental relationship of the researcher as expert manipulator of data sources - who just so happen to be human beings - and in its place called for researchers to adopt a compassionate and involved relationship with interviewees and their realities.

Perhaps even more influential upon subsequent feminist writings than the contradiction between detachment and involvement, was Oakley's concern with researcher power and the hierarchical nature of "the paradigm of the 'proper' interview" (Oakley, 1981 p 38). Oakley argued that the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee is assumed, without question, to be a hierarchical one, so that the successful

accomplishment of the interview is attributed solely to the interviewer's expertise. Interviewees are treated as subordinates from whom information is to be extracted, while the interviewer offers little information in return. This leads Oakley to conclude that

the convention of interviewer-interviewee hierarchy is a rationalisation of inequality; what is good for interviewers is not necessarily good for interviewees (Oakley, 1981 p 40).

Meanwhile her own recommendation is that the most will be found out from interviewing, where the interview relationship is "non-hierarchical" and where the interviewer invests their "own personal identity" into that relationship (Oakley, 1981 p 41).

As I have stated, although the anti-hierarchical, anti-exploitative agenda was not Oakley's primary concern, it functioned as a catalyst to a school of feminist methodologists, who Stacey (1988) lists as including: Cornwell (1984); Duelli Klein (1983); Du Bois (1983); Mies (1983); Reinhartz (1983); Stanley and Wise (1983a, 1983b), and whose goal Stacey (1988) summarises as being to

assault the hierarchical, exploitative relations of conventional research, urging feminist researchers to seek instead an egalitarian research process characterised by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity between the researcher and her 'subjects' (Stacey, 1988 p 22).

Furthermore, this is not a goal that has been abandoned in the years between Stacey's writing and my own. (See, for example, the writing of Andersen, 1993 and Lather, 1994.)

In order to form an idea of this alternative methodology, let us briefly look at three theorists:

Mies (1983), insists that feminist researchers are placed in a "schizophrenic situation" because of a contradiction in their role: between

the political objectives of the women's movement and the positivist methodology of "an hierarchical, non-reciprocal relationship between research subject and research object" (Mies, 1983 p 120). In this, and her article of 1990, she outlines a list of methodological postulates designed to achieve a theoretical and methodological foundation for a feminist social science that would be true to the commitment to Women's Liberation. Perhaps the most relevant of these, for the present discussion, is that which calls for a reversal in the "vertical relationship between researcher and 'research objects'" in which the "view from above" is replaced by "the view from below" (Mies, 1983). Mies insists that for this to be achieved, research must be transferred from the service of dominant elites and into the service of the exploited and oppressed, women in particular (Mies, 1983 p 123). To this moral objection, Mies adds a methodological objection, explaining that the hierarchical nature of the research relationship engenders a distrust and a feeling of interrogation in the participants which will have a detrimental affect upon their responses.

Meanwhile, Stanley and Wise (1983b) advocate a strategy of intentionally increasing the vulnerability of the researcher by removing her detached and unexplicated status and instead locating her as central to the research process. This recommendation is made on the basis that

placing 'us' in the research as well as 'them' does something to even up the imbalance of power between researchers and researched, though it obviously can't remove it (Stanley and Wise, 1983b p 181).

A further example is Cornwell (1984), who sums up traditional methods as "manipulating people and calculatedly treating them as objects in order to get what one wants out of them" (Cornwell, 1984 p 12). She states that her alternative to this was to follow the interest of her interviewees, allowing them to dictate the flow of topics in the interview.

2 *THE DIALOGIC ALTERNATIVE*

Much more recently, Sampson (1991, 1993) has advocated a similar drive for a more egalitarian research process, this time within Psychology. Sampson (1993) proposes that current psychology is founded upon a monologic or self-celebratory perspective in which, as a dominant group, psychologists construct "serviceable Others" designed to meet their own needs and desires. As a result, the interaction between them occurs only from a single standpoint, with the Other, in this case the participant, merely reflecting back what the Self elects to be. As an alternative, Sampson presents Dialogic Psychology as a perspective which focuses, not on the isolated individual, but on the dialogue that takes place between social actors. A methodology based upon this perspective would treat both researcher and researched as equally independent entities, each bringing their own distinct position to the interaction. Drawing on Feminist and Ethnographic writings (of which the above are examples), Sampson (1991, 1993) proposes that such a methodology would acknowledge the mutual construction of self and other in the research process. In this way, neither the knowledge of the expert nor of the cultural performer would be privileged above the other. Central to this perspective, according to Sampson, will be the co-authorship of academic texts and a concern with the mechanisms by which indigenous constructions of self render social life meaningful for members.

3 *PROBLEMS WITH THE ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES*

Within the work of the feminist writers discussed in Section 1 above, it seems that the solution to the contradiction between the hierarchical nature of the research relationship and the egalitarianism of feminist philosophy, is to thoroughly alter the research encounter itself and to run it along the lines of an involved, unexploitative and reciprocal relationship. However, the work that has attempted to carry out this

objective, has since been criticised and accused of being merely an alternative, more disguised, manifestation of inequality and exploitation. Central in this arena have been Ribbens (1989), and Stacey (1988) both of whom could be said to argue that the "egalitarian researcher" is a contradiction in terms.

Ribbens (1989) explores the power dilemmas of the feminist researcher, asking

how do we ... acknowledge our power and yet deal with feminist concerns with intimacy, reciprocity, and collaboration? (Ribbens, 1989 p 580).

Meanwhile, Stacey (1988) titles her article "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" and examines the compatibilities and contradictions between ethnographic methodology and the feminist principles of subjectivity, reciprocity and anti-exploitation. For both these writers, it appears that the alternative methodologists' attempts to adhere to egalitarianism prove to be as exploitative as the authoritarianism that their approach was developed to criticise (an observation that will be examined in more detail in Section D).

Similarly, the dialogic alternative of Sampson (1991, 1993) has been criticised for its practical realisability. Condor (Unpublished) has highlighted parallel pragmatic limitations to the achievement of Sampson's goal to those directed at the feminist methodologists. In addition, Condor makes the rather more damning accusation that some of the commitments expounded by Sampson are barely evident in the writings he cites as examples of his dialogic approach.

What we are thereby left with is an apparently irresolvable dilemma for the institution of research. Neither the traditional hierarchical relationship, nor the alternative egalitarian relationship, seems to produce an acceptably democratic social encounter. Within the mainstream of social

scientific thought, this situation represents a major sticking point, a paradox that must be resolved before further development can take place. However, from the perspective of discursive and rhetorical analysis, it is this very dilemma which allows for the institution of research to function.

C "SOCIOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCE": WORKING WITH THE CONTRADICTION

1 NORMS AND COUNTER-NORMS

Billig et al (1988) argue that it is the dilemmas of social life that provide the opportunity for members to interactively accomplish their social business. Much of this perspective is founded upon the insights of Merton (1976). Merton examined a phenomenon which he called "sociological ambivalence", explaining that

in its most restricted sense, sociological ambivalence refers to incompatible normative expectations incorporated in a single role of a single social status (Merton, 1976 p 6. Emphasis in original.).

It is Merton's belief that the very incompatibility of a social role's dominant norms and subsidiary counter-norms is essential to its successful accomplishment. This is because, according to Merton, striving to attain merely the dominant norms would result in a dysfunctional inflexibility in the face of the infinite variability of social interaction. Instead,

a dynamic alternation of norms and counter-norms ... evolves as a social device for helping people in designated statuses to cope with the contingencies they face in trying to fulfil their functions (Merton, 1976 p 18).

One of Merton's clearest examples of this phenomenon is the conflicting requirements of the physician to be at one and the same time detached/neutral and friendly/concerned. He suggests that the detached

neutrality of the physician as scientific expert conflicts with the compassionate concern necessary in the physician as health carer. Attending to only one of these norms is not sufficient for achieving recognition as a "good" practitioner. Instead, the "good" physician is required to oscillate between the two norms in a context-dependant, interactional manner.

It appears to me, that Merton's notion of sociological ambivalence, especially as regards the contradiction in the physician's role, maps perfectly onto the contradiction in the researcher's role identified by Oakley (1981). Thus, the excessive concern with only the dominant norm of detached neutrality within the guide-lines for "good" research, could be seen to result in a similar failure on the part of the researcher to that of the physician. Meanwhile, the "dynamic alternation" between detachment and "rapport"-building concern, according to the contingencies of the ever-changing context, may be presented as affording the flexibility necessary for the successful management of this complex social encounter.

2 *AUTHORITARIANISM VERSUS EGALITARIANISM*

Merton's concept of sociological ambivalence has, however, yet more to offer this debate, for, as I have discussed above, the feminist (and other) writings on alternative methodology have highlighted the hierarchical nature of the research process, and set up egalitarianism as their alternative goal. In doing this, these writers could be said to have instituted yet another set of incompatible norms in the researcher's role - between authoritarianism and egalitarianism. It is here that the work of Billig et al (1988) comes into its own. For, while Merton (1976) focused upon the detachment/involvement contradiction, in a chapter entitled "Expertise and Equality", these later writers utilise Merton's concept of

sociological ambivalence to examine what they identify as the dilemma of the modern expert.

According to Billig et al (1988), the modern expert is presented with the following dilemma. On the one hand, expertise in a given area grants the expert an authoritative position compared to non-experts. Indeed, some idea of the form that this authority can take is presented by Addleson (1983), who suggests that scientific specialists do not possess the authority to command obedience or make either public or private financial decisions. Instead, specialists are accorded "epistemological or cognitive authority", so that

we take their understandings of factual matters and the nature of the world within their sphere of expertise as knowledge, or as the definitive understanding (Addleson, 1983 p 165).

On the other hand, however, Billig et al argue that in contemporary society, the desirability of being democratic is "taken for granted" (p 77). This cultural assumption renders authoritarianism unacceptable and requires that the expert instead acts in a democratically egalitarian manner. Thus, the expert must, in effect,

balance the competing aims of equality and authority (Billig et al, 1988 p 77).

These writers then go on to examine how the dilemmatically opposed norms of authoritarianism and egalitarianism will form a situation of sociological ambivalence that actually provides the expert with the flexibility that the fluid and variable interactive context requires.

3 *"DOING EGALITARIANISM": AN EXPERT SKILL*

One additional insight of Billig et al should also be noted here. For, these writers also identified an ironic state of affairs in which the dilemmatic

aspect of the expert's situation can actually be circumvented. According to these authors there is expertise involved in the "doing" of egalitarianism. In order to illustrate this idea they use the example of a child development centre and its relationship with the families in therapy, suggesting that

expertise, which must use kindness and sensitivity in 'winning over' the 'mums', emphasizes the gap between the experts and the non-experts. And the more sensitivity which is shown, the more the inequality is emphasized, because the sensitivity itself is part of the expertise which separates the expert from the recipient of expertise (Billig et al, 1988 p 82).

In this way behaviour directed at the goal of egalitarianism can simultaneously enhance authority, if not authoritarianism, for the skills required in making the social relationship an equitable one are themselves evidence of both power and expertise.

Billig et al (1988) do not directly apply their discussion to the dilemma of the researcher as expert. Yet it seems to me that the debate under examination in this chapter recommends this particular expert role as a paradigm example.

In this debate we see that a reflexive look at the research relationship "discovered" the norm of authoritarianism in traditional methodology. The reaction against this "discovery" appears as a clear example of the unexplicated Western assumption that undemocratic social relations are undesirable. For, the alternative methodologists not only take great pains to "uncover" the various dimensions of inequality in the research encounter - establishing in this way that there are inequalities in need of disclosure and taking command of that task - but more fundamentally, they are very much in the business of rectifying these inequalities and instituting a counter-norm of democracy in their place.

The next step in the development of the debate then emerges, in which critics such as Ribbens (1989) and Stacey (1988) demonstrate that, even in the alternative methodologists' ostensible pursuit of democracy as a replacement, the norm of authority endures. This leads such critics to ask whether authority can be entirely abandoned when carrying out "research" and instead to talk of balancing the two competing aims.

When the debate over power in the research relationship is presented as an example of sociological ambivalence, we find ourselves stepping outside the epistemological search to find a theoretical solution to the authoritarian/egalitarian contradiction in the researcher's role. Instead, our attention is drawn to the rhetorical contexts of the two arenas in which research takes place: the academic circles in which researchers and critics interact; and the research encounter in which the researcher and the researched interact. In both cases our focus shifts towards the situated work that manages the contradiction in response to the dynamic and negotiated context. The remainder of this chapter will therefore attend to the former of these cases, while Chapter 5 will tackle the second rhetorical context, of the research encounter.

The application of Merton's (1976) Sociological Ambivalence to the research relationship which follows, centres around one important additional consideration - that of rhetoric and argumentation. Merton himself talks of the necessity for flexibility in handling social interaction and the operativeness of oscillating between competing norms. However, he never explicitly accounts for what renders this flexibility and oscillation necessary. As discussed in Chapter 2 Section D, discourse analysis is highly sensitive to the rhetorical nature of discursive interaction. Social actors are understood to be ongoingly engaged in the construction of a moral order, in which competing versions of the world are worked up by interactants over the course of their blamings, warrants, justifications, self-presentations and other similar actions. I would argue that it is this

atmosphere of contention that makes flexibility and oscillation indispensable. I would also like to stress that, in the accomplishment of the role of the researcher, this is a particularly rhetorical matter.

In studies of the rhetoric of science it is understood that science is intimately bound up with the process of persuasion. The many and various authors engaged in the "literary turn" in the social studies of science document the persuasive organisation of scientific discourse (e.g. Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay, 1983). The nature of this persuasive environment is explicated by Danziger (1990). Danziger emphasises that science is primarily about making "knowledge claims", which are only converted into "knowledge" by way of a process of acceptance - by other scientists, those in control of the resources for research, and the general public (p 180). Danziger therefore insists that the production of knowledge is shaped from the outset by the anticipation of this acceptance. In other words, the public arena of science is a highly rhetorical one, in which positions are attacked and defended (Danziger, 1990 p 12).

D PROBLEMS WITH EGALITARIAN RESEARCH ADDRESSED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCE

Within this final section I will examine the criticisms of alternative methodology by Ribbens (1989) and to a lesser extent by Stacey (1988) and Condor (Unpublished), from the perspective of sociological ambivalence. The aim will be to recast these critical insights, from irresolvable problems, into welcome rhetorical leeways which allow for the ongoing constitution of research as an institution.

1 ON DOING BEING EGALITARIAN

I would like to begin by looking at the rhetorical accomplishment of acceptable research in the academic arena that is achieved by "doing being egalitarian" (cf. Sacks, 1984), as accessed by the criticisms of Ribbens (1989) Stacey (1988) and Condor (Unpublished)

a) Collaboration

One of the major concerns of "egalitarian" researchers, that all three of the above authors attend to, (each addressing themselves to their appropriate field) is that of collaboration. Ribbens sums up the inequality under scrutiny, saying that "the greatest power sociologists may have [is] to define other people's realities for them and for others." (Ribbens, 1989 p 589). Stacey (1988) echoes this sentiment as follows:

In the last instance an ethnography is a written document structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered in a researcher's voice (Stacey, 1988 p 23).

Meanwhile Condor (Unpublished) accounts for this disparity in the "purposes", "interpretations" and "voice" of the researcher and the researched. The key, according to Condor, lies in the dissimilarity between the rhetorical circumstances of the original elicitation and those in which the research write-up is presented. Given the entirely alien environment in which the participant's narrative is marshalled as a contribution to academic work, it is unsurprising that the participant's story should be repackaged so as to accomplish discursive business for the researcher. It is this process of transformation that Condor points to as responsible for the redefinition of participant realities.

Each of these writers then observes that egalitarian researchers have presented collaboration as a method for mediating this power to (re)define the realities of participants. Within this collaborative solution,

interviewees are invited to take part in authorial and editorial decisions and are thus given the opportunity to present their own realities to their audience. In this way, it is argued that reciprocity is achieved and an egalitarian/dialogic relationship is established between researcher and researched.

However, Ribbens identifies a paradox in this proposal, for, she asks,

what do I do if my interviewees disagree with what I write? (Ribbens, 1989 p 589).

Similarly, she asks, what happens if the researcher disagrees with her participants' representation of reality? For example, if a feminist seeks to research non- or even anti-feminist women. Interestingly, there is an underlying assumption of greater researcher power within both of these concerns. Ribbens does not ask what to do if the researcher disagrees with what the interviewees write. Instead, it is taken for granted that the researcher will do the writing, even in a relationship of "collaboration". Neither does Ribbens ask what to do if the participants disagree with the researcher's representation of reality. Again it is the latter that is taken for granted. Participants' perspectives may "deviate" from the researcher's, but the whole research project will not be expected to change in theoretical orientation in line with such deviations.

Stacey (1988), meanwhile, focuses on a slightly different dimension of the paradox, asking who should have the power to include or exclude data in the write-up. Stacey talks of instances when her participants have used their status as authorial collaborators to veto the inclusion of sections of the data. Again, it is interesting to note that the participants are only offered the power of veto and no more.

Although Condor (Unpublished) acknowledges that collaboration is a "practical impossibility" (p 9), she does not elaborate on this observation.

This is because, despite Sampson's (1991, 1993) major emphasis on co-authorship within dialogic psychology, Condor can find little or no commitment to collaboration by the authors he cites as examples of this approach. In the light of such a criticism, a discussion of the paradoxes of co-authorship become redundant to her argument.

Let us now apply the notion of sociological ambivalence to the paradoxes of collaboration highlighted by Ribbens (1989) and Stacey (1988). From this perspective, it appears that adhering solely to the counter-norm of egalitarianism undermines the "cognitive authority" (Addleson, 1983) of the researcher, which, as discussed above, is an intrinsic and constitutive dimension of research as a social institution. The point here, is that the warrant for the researcher expending valuable resources is founded on a belief in her specialised knowledge and competence. Thus, if participants are considered to be equally knowledgeable and competent to define and represent their own realities, questions begin to emerge as to what contribution researchers can possibly offer to society.

For Ribbens and Stacey, such paradoxes create an impasse in the execution of acceptable research. This is because, claiming a unique right to represent others' realities and abandoning all claim to such a unique right, both emerge as illegitimate enterprises for researchers. However, from the rhetorical perspective of sociological ambivalence, these same paradoxes are precisely the resources necessary for establishing the legitimacy of research. For, it is because of the very illegitimacy of the two extremes that a space is opened up in which research can operate. Here we see the single-minded pursuit of the norm of the researcher as expert authority and sole author undermined. We then find that the alternative counter-norm - of complete interchangeability in the contributions of researcher and researched - turns out to be equally unviable, in that it divests academic work of anything extra or unique to say. For Merton (1976) this in itself is the

answer, with the “dynamic alternation of norms and counter-norms” (p 18) serving as the mechanism by which the research enterprise obtains the flexibility to function in the face of the contingencies of interaction.

In the argumentative arena in which academic work must be justified, by including collaboration in their research design, scholars can argue both for an egalitarian morality and for the status of researcher, depending on which of these is being called into question. Pointing to the co-authorship of their texts can be used to counter criticisms from influential sources outside the academic community, such as politicians or activists, that academic work is undemocratic and emanates from the unrealistic isolation of the ivory tower. Meanwhile, where a respondent's perspective is in danger of undermining the rhetorical work that the researcher sets out to accomplish, the superordinate expertise and objectivity of the researcher as scientist and observer can be called upon to legitimate their claims above those of the researched. These same accusations and defences are similarly available within the scientific community for attacking and defending relevant perspectives. This is the means by which authors can establish their own theories in the rhetorical and argumentative arena of the academic world itself. Thus, however authoritarian or egalitarian one is accused of being, the rhetorical equipment exists for defending oneself and for attacking rival positions.

At the same time, it is the rhetorical opposition of these two contradictory alternatives that provides the flexibility necessary to carry out the complex social role of researcher during the research encounter. In this arena too, it is only by oscillating between the counter-aims of authority and egalitarianism that researchers can meet the ongoing interactive requirements of the local context - more of this in Chapter 5.

b) Topic selection

Ribbens (1989) gives only a cursory mention of the issue of topic selection and who should have the power to decide. Ironically enough, she accuses other writers of seeming to "evade the issue" and then manages to evade it herself by moving on to a related concern. What she does say of this, however, is to quote Cannell and Kahn (1968) and draw attention to their "tacit suggestion" that topic saliency, respondent motivation and the "accuracy" of data will be closely related (Ribbens, 1989 p 582). She then notes that these writers give no explicit attention to whether, in the light of this interrelation, participants should control the agenda - and then herself fails explicitly to deal with this issue.

This dilemma over topic selection, although side-stepped by Ribbens, provides yet another example of how sociological ambivalence is managed by the "doing" of egalitarianism. The following quotations can be taken as examples of its presentation in egalitarian research:

my priority in composing the schedules for the interviews and interviewing people was, as much as possible, to take my cue from them, to let them direct the course of the interview and to follow their interest in the topics I proposed to them (Cornwell, 1984 p 12: emphasis added).

By speaking in ways that open the boundaries of standard topics, we can create space for respondents to provide accounts rooted in the realities of their lives (Devault, 1990 p 99: emphasis added).

How artfully these discourses display both equity and authority simultaneously. Informants are treated as active, cue-giving parties, possessed of an "interest in topics" and living "realities" to "account" in their own ways. However, at the same time, it is the expert researcher who "composes", "proposes" and "creates" opportunities for these to be expressed. As in collaboration above, in such rhetorical packages egalitarian researchers can attend to both norms and present themselves as both egalitarian and expert simultaneously.

c) *Friendships as reciprocity*

One of Ribbens's (1989) most central questions is

how far are interviews different from other sorts of social encounters?
(Ribbens, 1989 p 579).

Ribbens is particularly concerned with how far interviews differ from friendships. This is because one of Oakley's central claims was that one index of the reciprocity of her relationship with her interviewees was the close friendships that had developed between them over the years following the research. To begin with, Ribbens points out that "the nature of friendship is not unidimensional" (Ribbens, 1989 p 585) and this leads her to question what, in fact, it means to declare that one is friends with ones interviewees. Furthermore, she argues that the emergence of friendships subsequent to a research relationship is not the best measure of reciprocal methodology. Instead, she is interested in

how far it could work the other way around, so that a friendship could subsequently form the basis for collaborative research (Ribbens, 1989 p 586).

She notes the absence of such research within sociology, but that a psychological study by Orbach and Eichenbaum (1987) explored the topic of women's friendships using their own relationship.

Ribbens's first question presented here, regarding the difference between interviews and other examples of social interaction, can be answered from the ethnomethodological perspective discussed in the introduction to this chapter. From such a viewpoint, interviews are "different from other sorts of social encounters" precisely to the extent to which they are jointly and dynamically constituted as such by members. Thus, it is Oakley's very inclusion of friendship as pertinent to the research relationship, that introduces friendship as an issue in that relationship.

The relevancy of the issue is then subject to interactive negotiation between other members of the academic community. In this way, when Ribbens calls Oakley's friendship index into question, she is demonstrating that the relevancy of such claims is a product which is ongoingly negotiated amongst members. In terms of sociological ambivalence, therefore, claims to an ability to make or to remain friends with one's participants, represent an account rhetorically designed to argue that egalitarianism has taken place. Whether or not such an account is then accepted, is for members to negotiate¹.

d) *Information as reciprocity*

Another of Oakley's claims to reciprocity is that she answered her interviewees' questions, rather than evading them in traditional style. However, this claim also promotes criticism from Ribbens (1989). Ribbens highlights Oakley's report that 76% of the questions put to her during the research interviews were requests for general information, rather than questions of a personal or sensitive nature, and concludes that

This can hardly count as reciprocity in the mutual exchange of personal information (Ribbens, 1989 p 584).

Ribbens suggests that researchers could go even further than merely answering candidly any personal questions by the participants, they could volunteer such information without being asked, thus equalising at least some of the vulnerability. Considered in terms of the goal of egalitarianism, such behaviour appears highly commendable.

¹ The status of friendship in relation to the interaction which takes place in the separate arena of the research encounter will also be a product of the negotiation that takes place within it. In Chapter 5 the issue of filial and sibling behaviour will be addressed as just such a negotiated and mutable product.

Again, however, Ribbens identifies an important paradox created by such behaviour. The problem is that the voluntary offering of unsought personal information by the researcher may be seen in rather negative terms, for example, as a mere nuisance and interruption. However, more significantly, Ribbens warns that such behaviour represents a breach of what she considers to be a special research contract - one that gives participants "permission to do what is normally seen as an indulgence and socially reprehensible: to talk about oneself at length." (Ribbens, 1989 p 584).

An important feature of the above is that it highlights an imbalance that favours the researched. In this case, therefore, any move to treat researcher and researched equally, instead of benefiting participants, would actually deny them a privilege that more traditional research styles afforded them. This issue calls into question the implicit assumption amongst alternative methodologists, that all role differences between the researcher and the researched inherently favour the researcher, and that homogenising the power of the two will inherently benefit the researched. Instead, the possibility is raised, that in some respects the researched traditionally have greater power than the researcher, so that in such cases, developments along egalitarian lines will actually serve to disempower participants.

Viewing decisions over the volunteering of information in terms of a paradox, once more recommends the perspective of sociological ambivalence. Here, we see that introducing a reciprocal focus on personal information about the researcher can be represented either in terms of: a) substituting the detached invulnerability of the authoritarian with the egalitarian reciprocity of the democrat, or conversely, b) reneging on the empowering social contract that offers participants the special privilege of a unique spotlight for their concerns. Such a dilemmatic tension seems to me to offer yet another example of the potential for the

flexible management of research as a social, and argumentative, enterprise.

In this way, researchers are able to argue either that making oneself vulnerable by offering personal information promotes egalitarianism, or, that withholding such information empowers one's interviewees to speak at length about themselves. Either way the ideal of democracy can be displayed. Equally, critics of a piece of work can always draw upon what is not done - on the one hand, the absence of reciprocal vulnerability, and on the other, the absence of the researched's privileged right to hold forth.

One additional point of note about information as reciprocity, is that participants in traditional research possessed another privilege regarding information. This was the power to lie to researchers. In the detached and brief relationship that characterised most positivistic studies, the way lay open for participants to choose exactly what level of accuracy to concede to researchers. In the involved, intimate and often lengthy relationships that characterise the alternative research methodology, such a freedom may be greatly reduced, for reasons laid out more fully below (See Section e). If this is the case, then again some of the changes that the alternative methodologists champion may, paradoxically, lead to a disempowerment of participants. If this is so, then such research will be less "valuable" according to the criteria of egalitarian researchers. This may appear rather ironic, as such a reduction in "lying" will increase the "validity" of the research according to the criteria of the traditional methodology that it seeks to criticise.

e) *Intimacy and betrayal*

Ribbens observes that a commitment to non-hierarchical research may give a false semblance of intimacy and caring because,

the subtle distinctions between listening with empathy and actually responding with care and concern, may be hard for the interviewee to appreciate (Ribbens, 1989 p 587).

She warns that this may create interviewee expectations incompatible with the aims and skills of the interviewer - who is carrying out research rather than therapy. Condor (Unpublished) makes the more sinister observation that, if respondents believe researchers to be genuinely interested in their life stories, it is because researchers lead them to believe this, precisely so as to secure their full co-operation. Whether by accident or design, Ribbens (1989) warns us that such expectations can lead to participants exposing themselves to an extent normally exclusive to long-term caring relationships, thus leaving themselves wide open to potential researcher abuse.

Stacey (1988) gives us some insight into the form that such abuse might take. In her own experience, when groups of participants are recruited out of the same network of relationships, this can cause problems, if participants volunteer material of an illicit or secretive nature. The researcher is thereby placed in an inauthentic position of "potential, perhaps inevitable betrayal" (Stacey, 1988 p 23). Indeed, Stacey is led to conclude that such potentially harmful situations are inherent to the fieldwork method.

Stacey also discusses another power dilemma generated by intimacy with one's participants. Using the extreme example of a death amongst her participants and her quandary about using this event as yet more data, she concludes that

the conflicts of interest and emotion between the ethnographer as authentic, related person (i.e. participant), and as exploiting researcher (i.e. observer) are also an inescapable feature of ethnographic method (Stacey, 1988 p 23).

Here we find that accusations of exploitation could be attached to both intimate and detached behaviour on the part of the researcher. Indeed, Stacey (1988) to some extent echoes the reservations of Condor (Unpublished) above, when she questions the ostensible advocacy of respect and equality for the researched in alternative methodology and asks whether this might not actually obscure a more dangerous and fundamental order of exploitation (cf. Stacey, 1988 p 22).

This again appears to be just the sort of dialectical opposition explained by sociological ambivalence. Whatever level of intimacy a researcher is seen to have established, accusations and denials of exploitation can both be accomplished in accordance with the rhetorical demands of the situation. Thus we again find that the problematic and contradictory nature of the researcher's two options is far from disruptive, rather, it functions to engender the flexibility vital to the successful management of the critical scientific forum within which research is carried out.

Moreover, there are also aspects of this dilemma that seem to allow for the simultaneous display of egalitarianism and expertise that Billig et al (1988) identify. The key observation in this case, is that representing participants as deeply in danger of exploitation by their researcher, represents the researcher as being in an extremely powerful position, while simultaneously displaying a commendable commitment to egalitarianism. Such a construction is ideal for reinforcing the researcher's high and powerful social status, while at the same time presenting her as democratically principled.

2 *LIMITATIONS TO RESEARCHER POWER*

Within the debate over egalitarianism in the research process presented above, there lies a fundamental and unexplicated assumption. This assumption involves taking as read that researchers possess the

capacity to influence the power relationship within the encounter. As in the paradox outlined by Billig et al (1988), "doing" egalitarianism accomplishes not only the egalitarianism it claims to promote, but at the same time, the authoritarian expertise of dictating what the power relationship will look like. In other words, in a truly egalitarian relationship there would be no question of one actor making or enforcing a decision over what the research relationship would look like. It is only from a position of power that one can choose (whether or) not to exert power.

Therefore, I would now like to turn to aspects of the research encounter that limit the researcher's power to dictate the shape that the research relationship should take. The first of these is identified by Ribbens (1989), while the second has, as far as I'm aware, remained unexplored to date.

a) *Making other social attributes relevant*

Ribbens (1989) makes the observation that the social attributes of the researcher and the researched will affect the balance of power between them. To exemplify this, Ribbens uses the example of McKee and O'Brian (1983), who report feeling powerless as female interviewers to challenge the sexism of their male participants. She also uses the example of Smart (1984) who, in interviewing powerful men, found herself in a passive role, unable to interrupt and expected to agree with material to which she was entirely opposed. Ribbens then contrasts these two situations with Oakley's (1981) powerful social position as a middle class, educated mother in relation to the uneducated, working class mothers-to-be that she interviewed.

Ribbens treats these power differentials as entirely outside a researcher's sphere of influence, so that, irrespective of any egalitarian behaviours that researchers perform, differences in social status that are external to those of researcher and researched will have inegalitarian effects. In

terms of sociological ambivalence, this perspective provides an interesting counter to the view of the researcher as possessed of the authority to dictate that the relationship will be egalitarian. In this way, it undermines that convenient, dilemma-managing move and presents a contrasting picture: of the researcher as both without authority and unable to achieve the goal of egalitarianism.

Following Schegloff (1972), DA is not in the business of endorsing such a perspective. This is because it considers that social attributes, such as gender and economic power, will only have an influence on interaction as far as they are made relevant by those who participate in the interaction in question. This is very different to the picture given by Ribbens, of the researcher as entirely at the mercy of external social statuses. Instead, within the research encounter, the researcher is seen as a co-negotiator of the relevance of social statuses to the local context. The discourse analytic perspective on external social statuses therefore runs (at least partially) counter to the image of the skilled expert "doing egalitarianism".

The above attack on the researcher's privileged authority is, however, somewhat undermined when one leaves the context of the research encounter and turns to that of the academic community. Indeed, Ribbens (1989) places the reports of McKee and O'Brian (1983) and Smart (1984) within this arena. These researchers are said to complain about the social statuses of maleness and economic power within their write-ups, rather than during their interviews. In these reports, the researchers thus utilise their unique power in order to present their case in a forum from which the researched are invariably excluded. From this, we are again left with the impression that the researcher is a powerful member of the research institution as long as entrance into the arena of the academic community remains limited for the researched.

In view of the above, the relevance of external social statuses remains a product of negotiation. However, it is one that occurs between academics rather than between researcher and researched. For example, it is Ribbens who makes relevant Oakley's (1981) status as middle class, educated mother and the statuses of her participants as uneducated, working class mothers-to-be. Oakley herself does not make such statuses relevant. Therefore, one should see that it is in the academic literature that these sorts of contributions become contested and notions of relevance within the academic community become negotiated products.

b) Voluntary participation - an overlooked element of power

While the above section may seem to have converted a dimension in which the researcher has limited power, into one where again the researcher celebrates a privileged position, in this section I would like to propose a replacement dimension of researcher powerlessness.

Ribbens (1989) subtitles one of the sections of her article "subtle sabotages". Although she does not go into detail, one might assume that these sabotages would include classic problems such as non-response, changing the subject, lying, resisting the interviewer's directing hand, etc. Ribbens then goes on to highlight an interesting paradox: while the quantitative researcher must be concerned to minimise non-response amongst a random sample, qualitative research typically relies on voluntary recruitment. Ribbens suggests that, in volunteering, the motivation of participants to co-operate might, in some ways, be assured. "Rather ironically", this might allow the researcher more room to exert power than in quantitative studies (Ribbens, 1989 p 582). Furthermore, in the concluding section of her article, Ribbens states that

groups without power more generally in society are not in a position to assert power over the research process either, which is the essence of vulnerability (Ribbens, 1989 p 590).

I believe that there is a missing element in the story told by the alternative methodologists, as well as by Ribbens herself. What goes unnoticed is the power of the participant as co-negotiator of what goes on in the research encounter. While I agree that participants will generally have little power over what happens to their interview responses once they are given, I believe that the power of interviewees to offer their own accounts in the first place has been greatly underestimated in the literature.

Despite noting the power of sabotage that participants possess, few (if any) have acknowledged that all participants have **the power to choose whether or not to engage in sabotage**. Furthermore, the characterisation of participants' displays of autonomy as "sabotage" is extremely telling. The acknowledgement that participants always have a choice in how they behave, presents a very different picture of their role in the research encounter. Unlike the inanimate phenomena studied by natural scientists, interviewees have their own definition of how research should be carried out and unlike these inanimate objects, they actively engage in participatory behaviour: answering questions (or not); explaining their lives (or clamming up); permitting the researcher a directive role for the current purposes (or refusing this permission) etc.. Indeed, Ribbens asks of researchers:

Are interviews a sort of neutered social encounter, divorced from issues relevant to other social situations, so that you accept behaviour in interviews that you might expect to challenge elsewhere? (Ribbens, 1989 p 581).

However, she does not apply this question to the researched or see that they too may *voluntarily* accept behaviour in interviews that they might challenge elsewhere. Thus, from the perspective of DA, accepting certain behaviour that is challenged in other contexts, may be what constitutes

research as an identifiably independent institution. Furthermore, this constitutive behaviour will be carried out ongoingly by all interlocutors within that institution.

This focus on the participant's role as an active one, has an additional and extremely important dimension. As noted above, Ribbens (1989) concludes that the participant in egalitarian research will have an assured motivation to cooperate with the researcher. If such co-operation is indeed a product of alternative research methods, then the sociological ambivalence of the researcher's dilemma between authority and egalitarianism will create a similar dilemma for participants in achieving the goal of co-operation. In this case, the participant will be presented with two simultaneous requirements: co-operating with the authoritative guidance of the interviewer; and co-operating with the researcher's attempts to "do" egalitarianism - by affirming, through displays of autonomy, that the relationship is an egalitarian one.

From this perspective, therefore, instead of participants being seen as potential saboteurs, they are seen as "participating" in the research encounter and carrying out a key role in the joint-construction of what is research. Thus, informants are actively engaged in the "empowerment" of the researcher as much as *vice versa*, an observation which rather undermines the convenient management of the dilemma represented by claims to "doing egalitarianism". Viewing the researched as the magnanimous purveyors of the gift of their co-operation (cf. Mum, Chapter 5 Section 10 of the data), robs researchers of the power to "do" anything so authoritarian as to enforce egalitarianism. Instead, we are left with the conclusion that only through ongoing negotiation between all the members is the tone of the relationship established.

E CONCLUSION

What I hope to have achieved within this chapter is to have deconstructed the academic debate on power in the research process as a debate - with all the occasioned usage and rhetorical construction that are intrinsic to argument and debate as social actions. In doing so, I have also presented that debate as an introduction to some of my concerns in the chapters which follow and introduced my own discourse analytic perspective, which, here, draws heavily upon Merton's (1976) notion of sociological ambivalence. This concept of sociological ambivalence was identified as an explanatory concept that seems to convert an apparently disruptive paradox in the researcher's professional role, into an indispensable vehicle for the rhetorical management of that role. The main emphasis here has been upon the felicitous flexibility generated by having the two counter-norms to draw on when acting as part of the scientific community. In Chapter 5 the emphasis will be upon this same salutary flexibility as an essential device in the management of the research encounter itself.

As was noted in the introduction to this Chapter, a reflexive reversal of the usual treatment of the academic debate has been undertaken here. Instead of using the academic arguments of the alternative methodologists simply to situate, justify and validate a position on power in the research relationship, those arguments have been examined as a text for their discursive construction. Chapter 5 will include some elements of a similar reversal. This will entail treating the discourse of my family not simply as a rhetorically constructed text, but also, in line with the observation by Shotter (1990) quoted in the introduction to this Chapter, as containing serious analytical proposals pertinent to the deconstruction of the research encounter as a social institution.

Before this is undertaken, however, some important methodological issues of using my own family as research participants will be addressed in Chapter 4. Even more overtly than in the current Chapter, these issues will be discussed using a reflexive approach, which highlights that the more traditional questions and explanations, as regards methodology, are inadequate to handle the issues raised by the current project.

CHAPTER 4 A QUESTION OF METHOD

A INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 a straightforward literature review was presented in order to introduce areas of general interest around the topic of this thesis. In contrast, Chapter 3 contained a reflexive treatment of some of the literature concerning the research process. This treatment raises various methodological questions. Such questions, along with numerous others which arise from the later chapters, will be addressed in the current chapter.

Within this thesis the question of method is not a simple one. In texts such as this, it is usual for the reader to be informed about participants, procedural decisions and the approach adopted. However, in this project, it is very difficult to separate such matters from more epistemological and rhetorical business. In the light of this, many of the most central methodological elements will be addressed in a traditional, "realist" manner, in the "Non-Reflexive Box" below. Following this, some of the more constructionist and reflexive issues will be discussed at greater length.

A NON-REFLEXIVE BOX: METHODOLOGY

1 THE DATA

There are two types of data analysed within this thesis, one from the social institution of the "family" and the other from that of "academia".

a) The "Family" Data

The participants concerned in the "family" data are the five members of my own family: Mum, Dad, Sue (aged 28), Ava (the author of this thesis, aged 26) and Mish (aged 22). At the time of the recordings, all three siblings were single and studying at University. Sue was living in the family home with Mum and Dad, while Ava and Mish were living and studying away from home. The family members are Jewish and either second or third generation English.

b) The "Academic" Data

The data analysed in Chapter 3 is not conversational in nature. Instead it consists of various pieces of academic writing on the subject of alternative methodology. This material is treated not only as literature for review, but also as "data" - as a variety of discourse to be unpacked for its rhetorical organisation. (See Section D2 below.)

2 DATA COLLECTION

a) The "Family" Data Recordings

There are three tape-recorded sessions which make up the "family" data.

For the first research encounter, four family members, including Ava, but excluding Mish, were asked to take part in Ava's doctoral research project. They were organised around a standard audio tape-recorder with

multi-directional microphone, in the family home. The verbal interaction to be recorded was then initiated by the researcher with the prompt "I want us to argue about what we argue about".

The second session included all five family members as participants. Again the subjects were arranged around a tape-recorder in the family home. Each was given a typed transcript of the first 15 minutes of Session 1. Immediately following the receipt of this material, the tape recorder was switched on. The transcript was thereby established as a focus and prompt for discussion.

Excerpts of transcripts from Sessions 1 and 2 were subsequently used as the basis for a meeting of the Discourse and Rhetoric Group at Loughborough University. This meeting was also recorded, in order to create a reflexive loop which would allow the family to make an analysis of the analysts analysing them.

In Session 3 the family members were once again organised around a tape-recorder in the family home. The first 30 minutes of the DARG tape-recording was then utilised in order to prompt a third discussion amongst the subjects. The procedure followed was for the family members to listen to a segment of the tape until an agreed juncture. The DARG tape was then paused so that discussion could commence among the family members. This discussion was itself recorded.

b) *The "Academic" Data Sources*

The Academic data set is recruited via the usual means of compiling a literature review, featuring a selection of empirical and theoretical writing on the area in question.

B A REFLEXIVE ISSUE: MIXING CONTINGENT AND EMPIRICIST REPERTOIRES

1 TELLING A STORY ABOUT THE METHOD

Billig (1988) discusses the nature of "methodology" in contrast to an opposing category of "scholarship". According to Billig, methodology involves the prescription of a set of procedures, so as to homogenise social scientific practice. This standardisation of conduct thereby ensures that a given problem will produce identical results regardless of the individual characteristics of the researcher. The converse case of scholarship, Billig presents as concerned with following hunches which lead the scholar along unique pathways of intellectual experience. In scholarship, novel perspectives and original conclusions reflect the utilisation of widely diverse readings. Furthermore, there is no edict to catalogue this diversity, as such an enterprise is deemed by scholars as at best unnecessary and at worst impossible.

Schiffrin (1987) offers a very different perspective on the way that methodology is presented in social scientific reports. Recycling the philosophical work of Kaplan (1964), Schiffrin presents his suggestion that

'science as process' is guided by a **logic in use**, and 'science as product' is guided by a **reconstructed logic** (Schiffrin, 1987 p 312).

She then goes on to explain that her text has so far been written according to "reconstructed logic", as are the majority of academic reports. However, Schiffrin then proposes that some consideration of her "logic in use" would be helpful. This leads her to discuss how she was led in the direction her analysis took her and to disclose that her "discourse model" was "largely an **outcome**" of her analysis rather than the reverse (p 313).

I would like to suggest that these stories about methodology, told by Billig (1988) and Schiffrin (1987), are rather reminiscent of the interpretative repertoires identified by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984: see Chapter 2 Section G).

2 *INTERPRETATIVE REPERTOIRES REVISITED*

One of the most central observations of Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) was that the official research reports of the natural scientists they studied almost exclusively utilised what they called an “empiricist repertoire”. In the more informal context of semi-structured interviews, however, the natural scientists utilised an additional interpretative resource which Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) called the “contingent repertoire”.

According to Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), the empiricist repertoire consists of the following features. Firstly, experimental findings are presented as both logically and chronologically prior to theoretical concerns. Secondly, the theoretical commitments of authors are elided, along with any mention of social connections. At the same time, methodological procedure is presented as a product of routine, universally applicable rules. Furthermore, such features are to be found within an impersonal literary style which proffers agency to the phenomena under study and the physical world, rather than the authors themselves. In this way the empiricist repertoire represents science as merely a neutral and inexorable mechanism through which the natural world makes itself intelligible.

In contrast to this, the “contingent repertoire” characterises science as primarily a product of the personal attributes and social practices of members of the scientific community. This repertoire stresses the importance of scientific groups, within which unique interactions occur

between particular personalities, thereby creating an exclusive environment that alone enables essential skills to be socialised. These scientists are also presented as negotiating the path of scientific progress, not by heeding the insistent pull of nature straining to make herself known, but by the pre-mapped road of prior commitment, coupled with the random and unpredictable proddings of speculative insight.

3 *A DOSE OF THE CONTINGENT REPERTOIRE*

When the contrasting features of the empiricist and contingent repertoires are examined in detail, the stories told by Billig (1988) and Schiffrin (1987) in Section 1 above take on a rather different cast. Billig's (1988) presentation of "scholarship" as an enterprise led by quirky individuality, rather than universal methodic procedure, and Schiffrin's (1987) adaptation of Kaplan's "logic in use", then appear to represent examples of the contingent story about science. Yet, in both cases they appear in a scientific write-up, which, according to Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), is most usually characterised almost exclusively by the empiricist repertoire. Neither are Billig and Schiffrin the only writers to imbue their accounts with such doses of the contingent repertoire. Quite the contrary, such a form of explanation is very much part of the post-modernist discourse which is in vogue at the moment, in particular that of Social Constructionism (See Chapter 2 Section A). So, it would seem that, as a result of the post-modernist revolution, the contingent repertoire has entered the scientific write-up. What is more, I would suggest that it is this movement of the contingent repertoire into the formal scientific text that has opened up the space for reflexivity in current social science. The contingent account of science is one of motivated, personal and rhetorical factors so that, when these enter the formal empiricist domain of the scientific write-up, the similarities between that domain and the material that it seeks to examine, become a pressing concern. However, it should also be heeded that this same space has simultaneously

brought with it a double danger. Firstly, the exposure of crevices in the soil being sown for credibility. Secondly, the bottomless pot-holes of the reflexive regress (cf. Collins and Yearley, 1992).

Despite such dangers, let me insert my own dose of the contingent repertoire into this text:

a) *"Personal attributes"*

During the course of this thesis various of my own personal attributes have become pivotal to the argument herein. To begin with, membership of my family has become a central theme in my take on the data. My membership of the category "researcher" is also drawn upon heavily. These two attributes are made particularly relevant in Chapter 5, where the negotiation of my status as family member and researcher is examined. Another personal characteristic that is offered as potentially important, is my cultural heritage. It is mentioned in Chapter 6 that the data under examination comes from a Jewish family and that writers such as Schiffrin (1984) and Tannen (1989) highlight the propensity towards argumentation of this particular culture. Schiffrin (1984), for example observes that

Ethnographies of Jewish life point out the importance - indeed, the positive value - of argument (Schiffrin, 1984. p 332).

In Chapter 6, I consider the possibility that the strong tendency towards "argument as sociability" (Schiffrin, 1984) in my data, characteristic of interaction amongst Jews, is partially responsible for my reservations about the harmonistic assumptions that underpin much of CA. The idea being, that the mismatch between readings of my own data and the CA conclusions about, for example, the preference for agreement, is what inspired me to disagree(!). What is more, one could consider that my personal upbringing in an environment rich with this form of sociability, is

even more fundamentally responsible for the nature of this thesis: not only in alerting me to the aforementioned predilections of much CA, but also in prompting my original choice of topic for this thesis.

b) *Scientific Community*

In Gilbert and Mulkay's (1984) commentary on the contingent repertoire, the unique environment of the group of scientific co-workers is presented as essential to the science that any individual produces. It is likewise the case for myself, whereby it is largely thanks to the particular socialisation that I have undergone within the Discourse and Rhetoric Group (DARG) at Loughborough University, that this thesis takes the form it does. Indeed, one can see some of the dynamic interaction of con- and divergent elements that make up this unique research group, playing themselves out within these pages. Examples include: a predilection for analysing lengthy and continuous extracts of transcript; the fundamental celebration of the argumentative spirit; a strong preoccupation with reflexivity; and the free integration of linguistic, CA, rhetorical and SSK insights into an analysis concerned with contextual embeddedness and social consequentiality.

c) *"Prior Commitments"*

Leading on from the above, the contingent repertoire highlights the influence of prior theoretical commitment over the questions asked in research, the choices made and, as a result, the conclusions reached. This is no less the case with my own research.

Although too various to be discussed here, what might be considered the most important of these has already figured greatly in the above. Reformulated, this refers to a commitment to the celebration of argumentation. Primarily addressed in Chapters 6 and 7, the idea of argumentation adopted throughout this thesis, is that it is a widely

available, often used and common resource in social life. As this thesis will attempt to show, the importance of argumentation has been underestimated by conversation and discourse analysts in a way that various writers have sought to rectify, for example, Billig (1993), Schiffrin (1984) and Edwards and Potter (1992). As a representative of the pro-argumentation approach, Billig has been particularly criticised for being too generalised and theoretical in his championing of argumentation, paying insufficient attention to the complex interaction of features which a close analysis of data extracts would afford (Myers, 1989). I therefore declare here, that part of the project undertaken by this thesis, is to expand and extend the pro-argumentation line. By providing a minute examination of the issue at a conversation analytic level of detail, such criticisms of the approach will be addressed.

d) *"Speculative Insight"*

It is central to the epistemology of Social Constructionism that scientific endeavour is not led merely by truth revealing herself to the diligent observer. As a result, it could be argued that speculative insight is the only commodity that the paradigm tenders. The rigorous discipline of justifying speculation, coupled with the unreplicable currency of unique and erudite insight, is presented as the best any researcher could have to offer. Furthermore, in "owning up" to this, while their more essentialist fellows tell stories about "truth", the integrity of the social constructionist practitioner is proclaimed. Subsequent to such a rosy reformulation of the issue, let me therefore strongly pledge allegiance to this enterprise.

4 AVOIDING AN OVERDOSE

Due to the adoption of myself and my family as participants in this research project, the elements from the contingent repertoire, of personal commitment, social ties and inspiration, become highly evident. It is my

hope that this feature of my work will aid in bringing to light some of the business accomplished by empiricist devices.

This expectation rests upon the idea that common rhetorical devices become more obvious when doubts are raised. Such is the rationale adopted by Wooffitt (1992). In choosing to examine the fact construction of paranormal accounts, Wooffitt selected a phenomenon traditionally treated with circumspection on the issue of facticity. In this way he was able to highlight with greater ease, elements that would be obscured given a less controversial subject.

In my own case, by raising circumspection due to my membership, the question of neutrality should hopefully be rendered more transparent. I expect my analysis and treatment of Ava and her family to be minutely inspectable and accountable. The hope is, that questions and problems will come to light that are obscured when the relationship between the analyst and participants has a taken-for-granted distance. The issues then become reflexive in nature, with my own arguments coming under examination for how far they can be taken as valid scientific practice.

Potter (1988) insists that one of the virtues of discourse analysis as a method, is the way in which it makes public the extracts of transcript under analysis. The reader's access to the data allows the analyst's claims to be judged for themselves, with the reader then able to accept or reject them on an informed basis. This leads Potter to suggest that discourse analysis is in itself a reflexive methodology.

In the current text, as with all its analytical claims, the availability of the data offers the reader an opportunity to question the validity of the analysis on the basis of the author's membership. However, it is hoped that any doubts the reader does have on this matter, should

simultaneously give rise to a questioning of objectivity as a rhetorical device.

The above representation might set up expectations in the reader of a text laced with heavy doses of the contingent repertoire. However, Latour (1988) cautions that being believed too little, presents far more of a problem than being believed too much. In my case, the subversion of accepted protocols involved in analysing Ava and her family, leaves me very much at risk of being believed too little. As I see it, therefore, the challenge will be to utilise all of the empiricist tools available, so as to counteract this danger and gain my legitimate place within the academic community. In deference to the danger of too little credence, therefore, the reflexive issues explained here will be rarely so explicitly expressed in the remainder of the thesis.

At the same time, however, the underlying game that is played with the objectivist rhetoric of validation, will hopefully become all the clearer as a result of its adoption in this thesis. I believe that a symmetrical treatment of the utterances of Ava and those of the other participants, along with the confinement of my justifications to objective rather than subjective warrants, will serve two purposes. Firstly, the power of the rhetoric of objectivity will be rendered all the clearer if it can be deployed effectively in a circumstance that has such a strong subjective cast. Secondly, if such a deployment becomes at any point ineffective, the basis on which a non-participant analyst would be more effective should be called into question. It is hoped that the reader will take these two factors into consideration as they peruse the pages of this text.

C METHODOLOGICAL BORDERS AND NEUTRAL ZONES

In writing a methodological chapter, there appears to be some expectation that one's methodological alignment will be proclaimed. This procedure would appear to involve the delineation of lines and distinctions between various ostensibly similar social scientific enterprises. It is here that similarities and differences are most concretely declared and thus (re)produced and that the business of boundary demarcation is accomplished (see, for example, the corresponding chapter in Wooffitt, 1992).

Let me therefore state that for myself, I am reluctant to draw my boundaries too tightly lest it close down the space between the disciplines which my own analysis seeks to inhabit. Instead, I would like to present a picture of overlapping terrain in this chapter and suggest that a "neutral zone" can be carved out of the territories of established schools and extended into pastures new. However, this is not to say that I am alone in such borderland territory. Rather, this is the picture of "interdisciplinary zones" that Shotter (1992) offers as the home of the social constructionist perspective (see Chapter 2 Section A). I would suggest that it is also within this borderland territory that the Discourse and Rhetoric Group (DARG) at Loughborough has prospered, providing the melting pot out of which this thesis has been forged (see Section B3b above).

D THE “MUNDANE”, THE “INSTITUTIONAL” AND THE “NATURALLY OCCURRING”

1 A VIEW OF THE FAMILY VIA RESEARCH

As has been noted above, the “family” data was collected in an unstructured interview. Such a method might be seen to exclude it from the conversation analytic category of “naturally occurring” data. The grounds for such a judgement would be that, in the absence of the current project, the interactions used as data would not have taken place. Thus far it resembles discourse analytic methodology, so that, as particularly highlighted in Chapter 5, the researcher’s guidance of the topic towards an area of her interest is what enables an analysis of that topic to be made. However, I would argue that the “family” data is, to an equal extent, a “naturally occurring” instance of the institution of “research”. Indeed, the analysis made within Chapter 5, is precisely concerned with the local production of that institution by the participants to the interaction. In this sense then, the methodology can be considered to align itself with the CA of institutions.

Similarly, the approach adopted in Chapter 7 is to examine what precisely is “familial” about this data. In this way, although the topic of talk is set-up in Chapter 7, it is not the topic itself which is at issue, but rather, the rhetorical deployment of categories, devices and other interpretative resources, in order that the institution of the family might be (re)produced. One could argue that there is no reason why the research-generated nature of the talk should invalidate an enquiry of this nature. In the same way that the family’s discourse during interaction with strangers, during a functional task, or over the telephone, would bring in additional issues of context, I would suggest that the particular context of having a conversation recorded for “Ava’s thesis” should not preclude the utilisation of the mechanisms by which “family” is (re)produced (indeed, it

might be said that "Ava's Thesis" has now become very much a part of the family! See Chapter 8 Extract 1). On close inspection, this conclusion is very much in line with much work within CA, in which a specific telephone conversation is used to exemplify "ordinary conversation" or a particular extract of talk in a courtroom is used to access the institutionality of courtroom discourse. From such a representation, therefore, the methodology used regarding the "family" data is both discourse and conversation analytic.

Ironically, this latter point could also be used to treat my methodology as a pointed critique of CA's presentation of "naturally occurring", "mundane conversation" as a valid analytical category. Instead of using "family" talk as an archetypal example of CA's conception of "ordinary conversation", my analysis attempts to highlight its own distinctive institutionality. In this way, my analysis calls into question the homogeneity of the category "mundane conversation". At the same time, the unnatural generation of the "family" data is here treated as, at the least, irrelevant to a CA-friendly analysis and, at the most, indispensable to it.

2 *A VIEW OF RESEARCH VIA RESEARCH*

It should be obvious that the academic data set is not only textual rather than conversational, but is "institutional" in nature, rather than "mundane". In Chapter 3 aspects of this very institutionality are explored. The primary element under examination is the process by which the dilemma of authority versus egalitarianism can be managed in the research write-up.

However, in doing this, another element of the institutionality of the research write-up also comes under the spotlight, that is, the institutional convention of warranting a current argument by aligning or disaligning oneself with the "facts" and opinions of previous literature. In this case, however, the point is not made via an analysis of the phenomenon.

Instead, a reflexive subversion of the process is attempted. This involves examining previous literature as “data” for its rhetorical structure, rather than treating it as material to be engaged with directly in argument.

It should be noted, however, that only some previous research is treated in this manner (i.e. the research on alternative methodology), while other work is utilised in the usual way to warrant my own argument (i.e. the work of my fellow DARG members and any literature that they have used to warrant their own views!). This I hope, will be rhetorically effective, not only in justifying my claims, but in displaying the extent to which such a subversion is workable (see also Chapter 3 Section A1).

3 *A VIEW OF RESEARCH VIA THE FAMILY*

The subversion of the usual means by which claims are made in the research write-up is continued, to an extent, in Chapter 5. While Chapter 3 treats some previous research as “data”, Chapter 5 treats some of the family argument as a perspective with or against which alignment can be made - the treatment more usually reserved, in academic texts, for previous research. In other words, there is a point in Chapter 5 at which the opinions being aired by the family (specifically Mum) are engaged with directly in the write-up, rather than being treated as merely “data”. It will be shown how one of the comments offered by Mum cuts to the very heart of the issue of egalitarianism in research. Here Mum can be seen to turn entirely on its head the means by which researchers proclaim egalitarianism while simultaneously procuring for themselves positions of power.

4 *A VIEW OF THE FAMILY VIA THE FAMILY*

At the very end of the thesis, in Extract 1 of the Conclusion, an attempt is made to allow the family's view of itself to be presented, unanalysed. The

workability of such a ploy is, however, highly questionable, as the extract presented is selected for inclusion by the researcher alone and not the remaining family members. As with all the other extracts of data that are analysed, whether or not they approve of this choice is also not examined. Therefore, although this extract is presented as "the last word", who it belongs to remains a matter of debate!

E REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE STUDY

A final institutional requirement that, I feel, needs to be addressed in this methodology chapter, is that of the representativeness of the sample. Clearly the size and particularity of my data corpus cannot even begin to aspire to representativeness. One counter to possible criticism in this line is that one of the key features of both CA and DA is that disparate studies can be used to support the arguments of one another. The theoretical and empirical insights of other authors are frequently utilised to build up a picture of the phenomena under examination. Practitioners draw upon, expand and generally fill out the picture of social life that their combined efforts produce. As mentioned in Chapter 2 Sections C and D, both CA and DA are understood to be cumulative projects (cf. Sharrock and Anderson, 1986). In this cumulative process, I would suggest that contradiction, dispute and disagreement are equally productive, as alternative stories about the world are freely entertained. In this way, the analytic insights of my text are continually warranted by comparison to the insights of other authors, based on their own particularised data. Furthermore, my own insights are rendered publicly available in this thesis and I hope that they too will undergo a process of comparison which is the means by which they can be tested for their generalisability to other contexts. It is this ongoing and joint process that allows conversation and discourse analyses to transcend the particularities of individual instances and become details on the canvas of a wider picture of social action.

Also acknowledged as a significant requirement, even within discourse and conversation analytic work, is the use of numerous data sources so that comparisons and contrasts can be made within a particularised context. This requirement is also not met in my project. Mine is not, however, the first piece of work that has concentrated upon a case study of only one source of data. Similar analyses of a single example, in great detail and with emphasis on the unfolding local context, have been carried out by Smith (1978), Billig (1989) and Taylor (1995), amongst others.

F CONCLUSION

It should be clear from this chapter that the methodology adopted in this thesis is rather untraditional. The use of my own family as the main data source and the use of academic literature as a second data source, raises numerous reflexive issues. This has prompted me to address such issues in a correspondingly reflexive manner over the course of the chapter. Even the information presented within my "Non-reflexive Box", comes, at later points, to be treated as a reflexive issue. In this way, the "Non-reflexive Box" can be seen as a rhetorical device in itself, designed to do institutional business in as efficient a manner as possible. The use of "reflexive boxes" by Potter and Edwards (1992) to accomplish reflexive business in a similarly minimal way, has been criticised (Gill, 1995). In this chapter, the reverse is not only attempted but celebrated. It should be noted, however, that this chapter can be considered a form of "box" in itself, containing an attention to reflexivity that is not mirrored in the remaining chapters. I hope that such a compartmentalisation has here been justified sufficiently for the business of those remaining chapters to go largely unreflected upon - while still encouraging the reader to keep a reflexive eye on the text.

CHAPTER 5 THE RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP REVISITED: ITS ONGOING AND NEGOTIATED CONSTRUCTION IN THE RESEARCH ENCOUNTER

A INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 Merton's (1976) notion of sociological ambivalence was used in order to present a Discourse Analytic perspective on the academic debate over power in the research relationship. Its conclusion was that it is just such debates within the institution of research which serve to construct this scientific enterprise as an institution. In this chapter, research will again be examined as an institution. Here, however, the emphasis will be upon the research enterprise as constituted by a rather different configuration of interlocutors: those involved in the research encounter itself. The key insight that was used to unpack the academic debate was based upon the ethnomethodological insights of Garfinkel (1967) and Heritage (1984), which taken together and applied to research, suggested that: **what gets to be counted as the institution of research is the dynamic and negotiated product of interactions in which "counting in" is enacted.** These insights will now be applied to the research relationship.

Within this chapter, an extended extract of my data will be examined using Discourse Analysis, in order to access the ongoing and jointly-constructed character of the research relationship. This particular extract has been chosen because it explicitly and reflexively addresses the

matter of the roles of the researcher and the researched in the research encounter. In particular, this extract contrasts Ava's role as interviewer with that of family member, in order to establish a jointly-born understanding of that very distinction. Within the interaction, the central themes that comprise the dilemmas discussed in Chapter 3, of detachment versus involvement and authority versus egalitarianism, are put to the floor and dealt with, so that some of the academic controversies discussed in Chapter 3 can be re-examined from within this alternative arena of research practice.

B THE EXTRACT

1 PRE-EXTRACT CONTEXT

The conversation that precedes this extract involves a discussion of the usual conversational strategies employed by the family members. At this point the conversational styles of Dad, Mum and Sue have already been attended to. Although this topic grew out of an observation of Mum's current style within the research encounter, such specific instances have ceased to be referred to, rather the topic has moved on to the habitual styles of the various family members which transcend specific instances.

2 FULL EXTRACT

(Tape 2 Side A)

- 1 Ava: so what do I do
- 2 Mum: ... (it's just a) role
- 3 Ava: [if there's any particular thing
- 4 Mish: [you you'll
- 5 well for this thing
- 6 you're run you organise [people and
- 7 Ava: [yes ok right
- 8 Mish: make sure they (.)
- 9 sort of put them on the right track [a little bit
- 10 Mum: [you're the
- 11 coordinator
- 12 Sue: yeh
- 13 Ava: do you think I am acting as a family member
- 14 or as an interviewer

15 Sue: [both
 16 Mum: [both yeh both (.) definitely
 17 Dad: both
 18 Mum: both
 19 Sue: you're guiding us (.)
 20 into the way that you want us to go
 21 and w we make we're making our own decisions
 22 about what we talk about
 23 'cause we'll ignore you
 24 and go off at a tangent sometimes
 25 but you're still saying
 26 and what do you think about that
 27 and do you say that
 28 Mum: [yes
 29 Sue: [and you're clarifying
 30 Ava: but have I got (the ()
 31 Mish: [you're driving us
 32 to find out what you want to know
 33 Mum: mm [yes
 34 Mish: [not necessarily that we're
 35 going to give you (the right opinion
 36 Ava: [yes so I've got
 37 have I got undue power
 38 in this particular (.)
 39 Mum: no
 40 Ava: situation
 41 Mum: no
 42 Sue: compared to normal
 43 Mum: no
 44 Ava: compared to
 45 what I should [have for example
 46 Mum: [I THINK YOU'RE NORMALLY like that
 47 Mish: well who says you should
 48 Sue: no she's not [I don't think she is
 49 Mum: [you don't think so
 50 Mish: do you think no [then
 51 Sue: [SHE JUST HAS HER TWOPENNETH
 52 [LIKE WE DO
 53 Ava: [can I just say [no not like a
 54 Sue: [SHE'S IN A DIFFERENT POSITION
 55 she's in a more of a
 56 higher power [position now
 1 Ava: [have I got like
 2 Mum: yeh
 3 Ava: like m
 4 Sue: [I think
 5 Ava: [you know (.)
 6 normally I wouldn't be allowed
 7 this sort of (.) con[trolling
 8 Sue: [directing
 9 Ava: directing
 10 Mish: no you wouldn't 'cause we'd slap (.)
 11 Mum: [no we'd have a go at you
 12 Mish: slap [you down
 13 Sue: [yeh we'd say [shut up
 14 Mum: [shut up Ava
 15 it's my turn ((laughs))

16 Sue: we could argue about what we want [to argue
 17 Dad: [the point is
 18 the point is it comes and goes doesn't it
 19 I mean when you're in full flow
 20 and you're in the sort of general discussion
 21 Sue: yeh in the [midst of it
 22 Dad: [then you're just like er
 23 one of the team that
 24 Sue: yeh [that's right
 25 Dad: [when you think about it
 26 you sort of suddenly remember
 27 what we're doing here and why (.)
 28 Ava: yeh
 29 Dad: and then you're sort of then (.)
 30 having a little push
 31 in one direction or another or (.)
 32 Mish: yeh
 33 Mum: mm
 34 Mish: 'cause otherwise [as we are
 35 Dad: [controlling the situation
 36 Mish: we're likely to go on
 37 to something completely [different
 38 Mum: [I THINK W YES
 39 I THINK [WE
 40 Ava: [does it matter
 41 Mum: I THINK WE'RE TREATING [you
 42 Sue: [good point
 43 Mum: with a little bit more dis[cretion
 44 Mish: [WELL THE ONLY WAY
 45 THAT YOU COULDN'T DO IT
 46 Mum: because of your situation
 47 Ava: which is very [kind of you thanks very much
 48 Mish: [WELL THE ONLY WAY
 49 THAT YOU COULDN'T DO IT
 50 Mum: that's quite alright [(.) don't mention it
 51 Sue: (((laughs))
 52 Dad: (((laughs))
 53 is it what you wanted or not
 54 Mish: THE ONLY WAY YOU [COULD IS TO SIT OUT=
 55 Ava: [yes it's exactly what I wanted
 56 Mish: =AND JUST listen and not say anything
 57 Sue: why is it the [(important) thing
 58 Ava: [no no I don't want to
 1 [this is how I want it to be
 2 Mish: [NO I WAS JUST SAYING that is
 3 the only way that you could not do that
 4 Ava: yeh
 5 Mish: 'cause you have to
 6 Sue: I don't think (.)
 7 she wouldn't be able to
 8 she'd be sitting there going [mmm mmm mmm
 9 Ava: (((laughs))
 10 Sue: [trying to say something
 11 Ava: [can you imagine then
 12 [you'd say something that (())
 13 Sue: [you'd never (())

C ON THE SUBJECT OF ROLES

SECTION 1

(1:1-12)

- 1 Ava: so what do I do
2 Mum: (it's just a) role
3 Ava: [if there's any particular thing
4 Mish: [you you'll
5 well for this thing
6 you're run you organise [people and
7 Ava: [yes ok right
8 Mish: make sure they (.)
9 sort of put them on the right track [a little bit
10 Mum: [you're the
11 coordinator
12 Sue: yeh

The extract begins when Ava asks:

- 1 Ava: so what do I do
- 3 Ava: [if there's any particular thing

This utterance fits into the current topic in which the habitual conversational styles of the family members are discussed. However, Mish responds with:

- 5 well for this thing
6 you're run you organise [people and
7 Ava:]yes ok r*i*ght
8 Mish: make sure they (.)
9 sort of put them on the right track [a little bit]

In this way, she chooses to address Ava's specific behaviour in the research situation, rather than any generalised style characteristics. By emphasising "this thing" in line 5, Mish is able to side-step, yet simultaneously leave open, the possibility that Ava's current behaviour differs from her general behaviour. Ava's triple acknowledgement in line 7 is initiated at a non-transition relevant place (Sacks et al, 1978) and appears to display enthusiastic support of Mish's mode of answering her question. Indeed, Mish goes on to finish her utterance overlapping with

this affirmation. Mish interrupts herself repeatedly in this utterance and, I would suggest, each alternative wording mitigates the extent of Ava's acceded power - "run" is changed to "organise", while "make sure they" is abandoned in favour of "put them on the right track" which has already been mitigated by "sort of" and is further mitigated by "a little bit". Mum then overlaps Mish's final mitigation with an alternative contribution of her own:

10 Mum: [you're the
11 coordinator

Sue, meanwhile, offers a simple agreement. In this way a display of consensus is produced between these three family members, proposing that Ava is performing some sort of special role within the interaction. However, at the same time, some delicacy is displayed as to the exact status of this special role, through the increasing mitigation from running, to organising, to putting onto track and finally, to co-ordinating the other family members (who therefore do not have such powers).

SECTION 2

(1:13-18)

13 Ava: do you think I am acting as a family member
14 or as an interviewer
15 Sue: [both
16 Mum: [both yeh both (.) definitely
17 Dad: both
18 Mum: both

This section of the extract and the talk which surrounds it, provides an excellent demonstration of the ongoing and negotiated nature of the research relationship. For, I would argue that it is precisely the consensual affirmation of her special directive role in the previous section that makes such a role available to Ava in the current section. It is this

newly agreed status that then encourages Ava to change her "footing" (Goffman, 1981) and ask the probing question of lines 13-14:

13 Ava: do you think I am acting as a family member
14 or as an interviewer

Despite its organisation as a question, Ava's utterance of lines 13-14 seems to introduce a novel pair of terms for the family to contrast with one another. Here, Ava has reformulated the prior talk into a role dilemma between that of "family member" and "interviewer". What Mish may have meant with her particularisation of "this thing" (rather than any other) is thus framed by Ava. In this way, Ava's utterance could be said to both enact the special role affirmed for her by the utterances that precede it and to recharacterise that role as that of an interviewer.

The family's response of "both" then carries out two actions of negotiation. On the most simple level, this agreement on "both" and the absence of moves to hold Ava accountable for this particular reformulation of the talk, affirms that Ava is legitimate in introducing the two roles of "family member" and "interviewer". Meanwhile, on a more complex level, Ava's utterance becomes an *instance* of the family being "put" "onto the right track" - in this case the "right track" consists of having their prior talk organised into this duality. Thus, it is only through the family's legitimisation of both of these roles that they become relevant to the research process: before line 13 they were not consequential for the talk, while in lines 13-14 - before they were affirmed by the group - they were only candidates for relevancy. Ava's dual role as family member and interviewer is therefore a dynamic and negotiated product.

This issue of Ava's dual role is then put aside until later in the interaction. Meanwhile, the nature and extent of Ava's "co-ordinating" behaviour is further addressed by Sue, as we shall see in the next section.

SECTION 3

(1:19-27)

- 19 Sue: you're guiding us (.)
20 into the way that you want us to go
21 and w we make we're making our own decisions
22 about what we talk about
23 'cause we'll ignore you
24 and go off at a tangent sometimes
25 but you're still saying
26 and what do you think about that
27 and do you say that
28 Mum: [yes
29 Sue: [and you're clarifying

Within this extract, Sue displays what could be seen as a very delicate management of the dilemma between authority and equality. As discussed in Chapter 3 Section D2b, participants are faced with sociological ambivalence in carrying out the role of co-operative informant. As explained, their dilemma lies between affirming the interviewer's authoritative guidance and affirming an environment of egalitarianism through displays of autonomy. Sue can be seen to manage this dilemma in just the sort of functional oscillation between the two aims that Merton (1976) envisaged.

Firstly, in lines 19-20, Sue reiterates the family's earlier organising and co-ordinating conclusions:

- 19 Sue: you're guiding us (.)
20 into the way that you want us to go

In this way, she affirms Ava's power to guide the family according to her own agenda. This, however, is directly followed by a statement of the family's autonomy and independence in:

- 21 and w we make we're making our own decisions
22 about what we talk about

In this section of the utterance, the competing requirement of autonomy is addressed. Here, although no-one has actually attacked the construction of Ava as guiding the family, the counter-presentation of family autonomy is presented directly alongside it. In this way, despite the absence of disagreement in response to the former formulation, Sue displays her rhetorical sensitivity in the counter-balancing invocation of a directly opposing version of events.

In lines 23-4 this balance is even more minutely accomplished. Here Sue talks of ignoring Ava's direction and going "off at a tangent". This allows her to both acknowledge Ava's directive role and at the same time, to establish the extent to which this direction is allowed by the family. To speak of tangents is to imply that there is a given path from which to stray - a "right track" - while to ignore Ava's direction would constitute the active withdrawal of participation in their empowerment of her. It should be noted, however, that "sometimes" mediates this behaviour and reduces it from actual to potential power. This is something that the family can do but which they choose to do only sometimes, thus affirming their power to lend Ava the power to organise them!

The concluding section of Sue's utterance and her next utterance constitute a commentary on the form that Ava's guidance takes:

25	but you're <u>still</u> saying
26	and what do you think about <u>that</u>
27	and do <u>you</u> say that
29	Sue: [and you're <u>clarifying</u>

The essence of lines 25-27 seems to conclude that Ava guides through probing questions, while line 29 (after a "yes" from Mum) suggests that Ava also says things to clarify what other members of the family have said. The key point here, I feel, is that in the two examples in lines 26-7

and in the choice of the word "clarifying", Sue demonstrates that although Ava is guiding, it is the family's thoughts and words that are autonomously communicated and it is these raw materials that Ava organises and distils through her probing questions and her clarifications.

If we take this representation of events as an analytical framework, we can use this idea of Ava's "clarifying" the discourse of others with probing questions, to analyse what occurs in lines 13-14. In this way we may conclude that Ava clarifies the family's diverse comments on her organising and co-ordinating behaviours into a question of role behaviour as interviewer versus family member. Used in this reflexive fashion, we find that Sue's analysis retrospectively sheds light on the discursive action carried out by Ava's question. However, Sue's utterance does not actually represent an uptake of the issue in Ava's question, which is about family member versus interviewer. Instead, Sue is returning to the issues of organisation and coordination raised just prior to it. One could see this as an example of the family "making ... [their] ... own decisions about what ... [to] ... talk about" by "ignoring" Ava and "go[ing] off at a tangent"!

SECTION 4

(1:30-40)

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 30 | Ava: | but have I got [the () |
| 31 | Mish: | [you're driving us |
| 32 | | to <u>find out</u> what you want to <u>know</u> |
| 33 | Mum: | mm [yes |
| 34 | Mish: | [not necessarily that we're |
| 35 | | going to give you [the right <u>opinion</u> |

I am going to leave Ava's utterance in line 30 to be discussed subsequently, after I address Mish's comments. Here Mish interrupts Ava's question to formulate her own version of Ava's interactive strategies in the research situation. In a manner almost identical to Sue's,

she oscillates between confirming the power of the researcher and the autonomy of the other participants, balancing the rhetorical consequences of lines 31-2, with the counter-presentation of lines 34-5. In the first part, Mish represents what Sue called "guiding" as "driving":

31 Mish: [you're driving us
32 to find out what you want to know

She continues immediately, however, with a balance of this power that mirrors Sue's in lines 1:21-4:

34 Mish: [not necessarily that we're
35 going to give you [the right opinion

Indeed it is as if the comment of lines 31-2 establishes Ava's power too strongly, thereby putting into question the independence of the family's opinions. Thus, lines 34-5 come as an immediate remedy that re-establishes the family's free thinking. As in Sue's analysis, Mish establishes through her oscillation between the two aims, that Ava's topic guidance does not signify that she is at liberty to generate concordant opinions from the other participants.

From the utterances of both Sue and Mish we can derive a picture of the research process as currently constituted - Ava guides the family to express their opinions on topics that interest her, by clarifications and prompting questions. However, the family is always free to express opinions from their own agenda and in all cases, the opinions expressed by the family will be entirely their own and not Ava's by some form of ventriloquism. In this way the family can be seen to be very much in the business of co-operating in the research - their established freedom signals that it is co-operation and not coercion that produces the unfolding discourse, while the oscillation between guidance and autonomy ensures that both forms of co-operation are displayed.

D A QUESTION OF POWER

SECTION 5

(1:30 and 1:36-46)

- 30 Ava: but have I got [the ()
- 36 Ava: [yes so I've got
- 37 have I got undue power
- 38 in this particular (.)
- 39 Mum: no
- 40 Ava: situation
- 41 Mum: no
- 42 Sue: compared to normal
- 43 Mum: no
- 44 Ava: compared to
- 45 what I should [have for example
- 46 Mum: [I THINK YOU'RE NORMALLY like that
- 47 Mish: well who says you should

In line 30 Ava begins to ask a question but is interrupted by Mish's observation. When she comes to reiterate her utterance in line 36, she does so in the form of a statement rather than a question. However, this is promptly transformed into a question again in lines 37-8 and line 40. The switch from question to statement to question, I would suggest, establishes Mish's observation (discussed above) as a partial answer to Ava's "intended" question. Ava begins by introducing a question but this is interrupted by Mish's utterance. Ava then affirms Mish's observation with "yes" followed by "so" - establishing the utterance which follows as an inference based upon this observation (see Chapter 6). However, by then repairing the statement form and reformulating it as a question, Ava displays that there remains an element of query thus far unaddressed by Mish's outline of Ava's behaviour. This additional element is presented in the following manner:

- 37 have I got undue power
- 38 in this particular (.)

I would like to argue that the family's uptake of this question displays a resistance to the manner in which it formulates the research relationship. If this is the case, then this section of the interaction can give us a key insight into the negotiation that determines what gets to be counted as the research relationship.

I would argue that the family identify and take issue with the negative framing of Ava's question. Ava does not merely raise the question of whether her power is legitimate or not, she uses the term "undue" and thus casts her question in a negative vein. In addition, as discussed above, the repaired false start in the statement format "yes so I've got" (line 36), even more concretely establishes this negative appraisal as the focus rather than any positive alternative, such as legitimacy. I believe that the responses of Mum, Sue and Mish carry out a great deal of work in order to avoid affirming the negative evaluation of Ava's behaviour that is inherent in the question's formulation.

The clearest uptake on this negativity is Mum's. Her response takes the form of an emphatic repetition of "no" three times. The first of these is introduced before Ava has finished, while the other two sandwich the utterance by Sue. Sacks et al (1978) identified one form of overlap between interlocutors as arising in the form of a display of enthusiasm by a second speaker to support the contribution of the first speaker. Meanwhile, Pomerantz (1984) postulated that disagreement with a prior speaker's self-deprecations carry out a social support function (see Chapter 6). I would suggest that Mum's early and reiterated strong disagreement with Ava's formulation is just such a display of social solidarity in response to a self-depreciation. However, it is also more than this, for it actively and retrospectively *constitutes* Ava's formulation as a

self-depreciation precisely in the socially solidary design of its rejection. In this way, Mum frames Ava's question as an appeal for reassurance - that she is not over-reaching the bounds of behaviour deemed acceptable by the family - and responds so as to unequivocally offer that reassurance.¹

Meanwhile, Sue postpones directly responding to the framing of Ava's question, by initiating a classic insertion sequence (Schegloff, 1972) requesting a clarification of the question's parameters and thus some puzzlement with Ava's formulation of the issue. Here, Sue reconstitutes undueness as a comparative term and offers "normal" as the benchmark for comparison:

42 Sue: compared to normal

Ava's answer to this question is as follows:

44 Ava: compared to
45 what I should [have for example

This can be seen as an extremely deft management of the sociological ambivalence associated with the "dilemma of the expert" (Billig et al, 1988). In this response, Ava dismisses the proposed comparison between her current level of power and her normal level. In doing so she deflects the inquiry away from defining whether researchers have greater power than that possessed by actors in "normal" (supposedly egalitarian) situations. Such a comparison requires a head-on confrontation between

¹ Although perhaps, as it were 'over-reaching the bounds of behaviour deemed acceptable' for analysts, one might be tempted to read this as responding to Ava's question as presented by a "family member" rather than an "interviewer" - as a self-depreciation requesting reassurance, rather than a probing question framed in a directly biased manner in order to illicit a negative response!

authority and egalitarianism. Instead, she sets up the comparison as between the power she currently has and that which she currently should have. In this way she establishes as *given* the power differential between the roles of family member and interviewer. This then allows her to set up the comparison to decide between the illegitimate, commandeered power of the authoritarian and the legitimate, negotiated power of the egalitarian expert who is successfully engaged in "doing egalitarianism". The possibility of not having power is thus excluded and an expert status is assured.²

Furthermore, this presents the family with the opportunity to doubly affirm their status as co-operative participants by choosing the latter option. Such a choice both represents co-operation with Ava's direction; and establishes that Ava requires their co-operation in order to have power in the first place!

Interestingly enough, Mum chooses an entirely different option by saying:

46 Mum: [I THINK YOU'RE NORMALLY like that

In this way, she resists Ava's dismissal of the current/normal comparison of her behaviour and presents Ava as powerful (perhaps even overpowering) within the family, regardless of any researcher status. In doing this she undermines any claim to expert privilege and at this point

² This is rather reminiscent of the question by Ribbens (1989) discussed in Chapter 3:

how do we ... acknowledge our power and yet deal with feminist concerns with intimacy, reciprocity and collaboration? (Ribbens, 1989 pp 580)

My suggests that it is precisely through acknowledging power and simultaneously professing feminist egalitarian commitments, that claims to carrying out egalitarian research are accomplished!

answers the question posed by Ribbens (1989) and discussed in Chapter 3:

how far are interviews different from other sorts of social encounters?
(Ribbens, 1989, p 579).

This she does by more or less implying that when the social encounter for comparison is family interaction, there is no difference between that and interviews, if the interviewer is an inordinately bossy family member under "normal" circumstances. In addition, this utterance serves as a substantiation of the previous emphatic reassurances of "no" so as to reiterate that Ava is not commandeering illegitimate power in the current interaction.

Mish's subsequent utterance also avoids the option that Ava has set up for the family. She asks instead:

47 Mish: well who says you should

As with Sue's response in line 42, she avoids directly engaging with Ava's question with an insertion sequence, however, in this case her query is also what Knoblauch (1991) termed a "calling into question". Such questions do not simply require an answer, they also render the preceding utterance accountable (See Chapter 6). In this utterance, rather than confirming Ava's expert egalitarianism and the family's double-edged co-operation, Mish calls into question the assumptions that Ava has been making and thus raises the problematic issue of authority that Ava has been deftly avoiding.

Mish's question is indeed a very fundamental one for the dilemma of the expert, for she is asking "who" authorises an elevated quota of power. If the answer is members of the community of alternative methodologists, then their goal of egalitarianism is undermined by their very authority to

make such an "authorisation". However, if the answer is the family itself, then theirs, as participants, is the ultimate power - this time directly undermining the authority of the community of researchers. Furthermore, to the extent that this utterance calls into question the *right* to elevated power, it also censures the presumption of researchers to set themselves up as authorities! There is no uptake of this extremely thorny question!

SECTION 6

(1:48-56)

48 Sue: no she's not [I don't think she is
 49 Mum: [you don't think so
 50 Mish: do you think no [then
 51 Sue: [SHE JUST HAS HER TWOPENNETH
 52 [LIKE WE DO
 53 Ava: [can I just say [no not like a
 54 Sue: [SHE'S IN A DIFFERENT POSITION
 55 she's in a more of a
 56 higher power [position now

This extract is dominated by an exchange between Sue and Mum that develops out of Mum's statement in line 46:

46 Mum: [I THINK YOU'RE NORMALLY like that

Sue's utterance in line 48 begins with a strong, direct disagreement with this statement:

48 Sue: no she's not

The disagreement is then repeated in the more mitigated form of:

48 Sue: [I don't think she is

Mum's response to this disagreement is:

49 Mum: [you don't think so

In overlapping the latter part of line 48, this utterance displays an element of eagerness - through early initiation based on the prediction of a TRP (Sacks et al, 1978). What Mum is doing with this eagerness becomes clearer if we consider the questioning tone with which this utterance is delivered, despite its format as a statement. I would suggest that the lack of hesitation and the questioning flavour of Mum's contribution, display an absence of commitment to an adopted position, thus signaling an openness to the consideration of opposing positions. This reading of Mum's utterance also underscores the status of Mum's earlier position (of "I think you're normally like that") as one adopted for the purposes of reassurance. This is accomplished through the contrast of the earlier reassuring comment with the current display of serious deliberation over an issue. It is as if Mum's readiness to discard her earlier position itself marks that earlier message as mere reassurance - rather than a committed stance on the issue. In doing this, Mum prioritises supportive behaviour, displaying that, only once such interpersonal concerns are dealt with, can she entertain informational and content oriented considerations. I would suggest that in these utterances, Mum not only skilfully oscillates between the roles of supportive mother and co-operative, independently-minded research participant, she also conveys a moral hierarchy between such roles.

In line 50 Mish asks the question:

50 Mish: do you think no [then

This would appear to inquire whether Sue's disagreement with Mum indicates a negation to Ava's original question about undue power. However, this question, like her previous contribution, is ignored by the others.

Instead, Sue explains the nature of her disagreement with Mum. To begin with, she constructs what Ava's normal behaviour is like:

51 Sue: [SHE JUST HAS HER TWOPENNETH
52 [LIKE WE DO

Following this, she goes on to explain in what way this differs from Ava's current actions:

54 Sue: [SHE'S IN A DIFFERENT POSITION
55 she's in a more of a
56 higher power [position now

In this way, Sue proposes that, in the current context, Ava has greater power than simply the normal "twopenneth" that is her equal right within the family. However, she makes no mention of whether this extra power is "undue" or not. Thus, the issue of power is again pursued amongst the participants in the form of a comparison between "normal" and current behaviour, rather than the comparison between current and due power that Ava has attempted to initiate.

It is interesting to note that in all of this interaction, from line 48 to 56, Ava is not addressed directly - she is talked about (in the third person) but she is not talked to. She does attempt an interruption of the others, with:

53 Ava: [can I just say [no not like a

However, despite the fact that this appears to be another signal that the family are not pursuing the line of inquiry that she favours, this attempt to gain the floor is entirely unsuccessful. There is a particularly humorous irony in this, from an analytical point of view. The disagreement that ensues debates Ava's power position, asking whether she is generally endowed with the heightened powers of "guiding" and "directing" the family, or merely possessed of them in the current interaction. Yet,

throughout this section of the dispute Ava herself is excluded and her attempts at direction go unheeded! What is more, if we return to Sue's description of Section 3 lines 19-24, we find that this situation has actually been described within the discourse. Thus, in the manner outlined by the "Documentary Method" of Garfinkel (1967), Sue's utterance both sets up a pattern for this behaviour to conform to and allows this behaviour to count as an example of that pattern: When addressing Ava and referring to the family, she says:

(Section 3)

19 Sue: you're guiding us (.)
20 into the way that you want us to go

In this case, that guidance is towards a discussion of the legitimacy of her current, taken for granted position of elevated power,

21 and [yet] w we make we're making our own decisions
22 about what we talk about
23 'cause we'll ignore you
24 and go off at a tangent sometimes

In this case, their "own decision" would appear to be, to discuss their concerns about whether or not Ava indeed has any more power in the current context than she possesses "normally"!

SECTION 7

(2:1-16)

1 Ava: [have I got like
2 Mum: yeh
3 Ava: like m
4 Sue: [I think
5 Ava: [you know (.)
6 normally I wouldn't be allowed
7 this sort of (.) controlling
8 Sue: [directing
9 Ava: directing
10 Mish: no you wouldn't ['cause we'd slap (.)

11 Mum: [no we'd have a go at you
 12 Mish: slap [you down
 13 Sue: [yeh we'd say [shut up
 14 Mum: [shut up Ava
 15 it's my turn ((laughs))
 16 Sue: we could argue about what we want [to argue

In line 1, Ava makes another question initiation but then displays hesitation about this form of address in lines 1, 3 and 5. This hesitation is marked by the delay after line 1 (which allows Mum to slip in a "yeh" (line 2)); her repeat of "like" in line 3; and her repair of "m" with "you know". At this point she is acceded the floor when Sue elects not to continue after "I think" in line 4. Her contribution then reverts back to the statement form in the following:

6 normally I wouldn't be allowed
 7 this sort of (.) con[trolling

By beginning with the question "have I got", Ava sets up her current intervention as a reformulation of her earlier question. Her display of hesitation then establishes the statement form of lines 6-7 as a repair. This statement is, I feel, particularly designed not only to foster the agreement that she has failed to illicit thus far, but to display that agreement is being sought. To begin with, lines 6-7 manage to avoid the self-deprecatory characteristics of lines 36-8 of Section 5, which led to disagreeing reassurances. This means that supportive behaviour by the family is in this case managed as involving agreement rather than disagreement. At the same time, in line 6, Ava addresses the family's concern with "normal" behaviour, so as to affirm its relevance, yet manages to subordinate it to her own concern with the legitimacy of her power. Additionally, she firmly establishes that it is the family who "allows" - or deems "undue" - the special "controlling" behaviour of the research encounter, thereby answering Mish's question of line 47.

The sought after agreement is then forthcoming, in the form of a completion by Sue which responds to Ava's hesitation after "sort of" in line 7:

8 Sue: [directing

The status of this completion as an agreement is then ratified when Ava repairs her own almost simultaneous self-completion of "controlling" with a repeat of Sue's chosen verb in line 9:

9 Ava: directing

What then follows is an overlapping, jointly engendered agreement from Mish, Mum and Sue, which sets out the form that this prohibition would take if Ava attempted to take illegitimate power under "normal" circumstances:

10 Mish: no you wouldn't ['cause we'd slap (.)
11 Mum: [no we'd have a go at you
12 Mish: slap [you down
13 Sue: [yeh we'd say [shut up
14 Mum: [shut up Ava
15 it's my turn ((laughs))

Within this interaction each member makes an individual contribution to the picture being established of the family's reaction to "undue" behaviour. Thus the issue of "undueness" is transferred into the arena of "normal" family interaction where it can be addressed without undermining researcher power or participant co-operation and without encountering any need for reassurance.

Let us now compare what Mum says here with what she said earlier. In Section 5 line 46, Mum's comment concerning Ava's current "guiding" behaviour was:

In this section, however, Mum warns that if Ava "normally" exhibited "this sort of controlling ... directing" behaviour, the family would "have a go at" her and say "shut up Ava it's my turn". Such an apparent contradiction underlines the rhetorical nature of the interaction, along with the ongoing and negotiated construction of the social objects under discussion. Mum's responses demonstrate their situated contingency, in that her initial position responds to a call for reassurance, while the subsequent position responds to a call for support. Furthermore, the negotiated status of the interaction is displayed in that the earlier position is modified through interaction with other interlocutors, while the later position makes up part of a jointly established scenario.

In this section of the data, therefore, we find that Ava has converted the problematic issue of "undue power" into the idea that the other family members would not "normally" permit her current "directing" behaviour. In agreeing with her, the family offer some specific behaviours that are at the general disposal of the family for the impediment of such actions. Implicit within this is the warning that in the current encounter the family possess the power to actively prevent Ava from seizing control of the interaction, yet they choose to forego this right and "allow" Ava to direct them. This thus establishes an overt difference between Ava's current and normal behaviour, yet frames it in terms of what the family choose to permit. In so doing, the family can be considered to have answered Ava's question about "undue power". They are indicating that "undue power" need never be an issue - because of the family's inherent ability to disallow any behaviour that they find unacceptable. In this way, the family not only display themselves as "normally" egalitarian, but also as

supportively co-operating with Ava's "doing" of egalitarianism in the research encounter!

The next utterance by Sue is as follows:

16 Sue: we could argue about what we want [to argue

Here, Sue implies that, if Ava were not guiding and directing the discourse, the family would be free to argue about topics of their own choice. Within this utterance two implicit messages can be identified. The first follows on from the above discussion, reminding Ava that the family are voluntarily consenting to argue about the topics of Ava's choosing. Meanwhile, the second suggests that, because of Ava's guidance, the family are not arguing about what they want to argue about.

If this second implication is accepted, Sue's utterance could easily become an excellent example of the sort of dilemma in collaborative research that Ribbens (1989) identifies. As I discussed in Section D1a of Chapter 3, Ribbens talks of the paradox that occurs

where the researcher seeks to treat what is said with respect, but does not like or agree with what is said (Ribbens, 1989 p 590).

When this research programme was designed, it was anticipated that, once each interaction had been initiated via a question or the presentation of material (see Chapter 4), the topics of the conversation would be able to flow without direction from the researcher. This picture of the family's interaction would suggest that the topics that arise over the course of the arguments are initiated, sustained and terminated via negotiation between all the family members. This characterisation would suggest that the family can argue about what they want to argue about. The above utterance by Sue, however, presents a rather different picture. Indeed, this utterance rather exemplifies the case where the family do not

give what, according to Ava, would be the "right" opinion. Again, the issue concerns the dilemma between authority and egalitarianism: The researcher's favoured image would present the data in an egalitarian light, with the family entirely free to determine topics for argument; while in Sue's representation of affairs, Ava's family-legitimated authority to direct influences the family away from topics they may wish to argue about.

This particular embodiment of the expert's dilemma provides an interesting opportunity for a reflexive examination of the dilemma of collaboration discussed in Chapter 3. This is just the sort of discrepancy in the construction of the proceedings between that which the researcher would make and that made by another of the participants, that Ribbens (1989) problematises. What can a researcher do in such a situation?

In Chapter 3 we saw that "egalitarian researchers" are able to justify any position within the collaboration dilemma by drawing upon: either the transcendental position of researchers in determining what is acceptable to the academic audience for whom the write-up is designed; or upon the transcendental goal of egalitarianism which dictates that anti-exploitative, participant-friendliness outweighs the fads and fashions of the academic elite. For the reflexive "meta-" analyst, a different form of management is available for handling the dilemma: and that is the ironic and pithy examination of multiple options. The following are some such rhetorical moves:

Firstly, I could characterise Sue's reading of who guides the topics of the interaction as context-dependent - as occurring within a section of the discourse that particularly recommends her conclusion that Ava generally guides. In this way, I could call to my aid an observation about the irony of the present extract. When compared to the remainder of the data, the question of power in the research encounter would appear to be one of

the most directed topics of the recording - being one of the most clearly identifiable as of particular concern to the researcher. Thus, I would be able to present Sue's suggestion - that the family is not freely choosing its own topics - as a context-contingent observation. Meanwhile, the researcher's contrasting representation could then be proffered as a "truer" observation of the wider picture: imputing that when the research is taken as a whole, the participants are free to choose the topics under discussion!

Secondly, I could treat Sue's implication, of a directed selection of topics, as of equal standing to my own assertion of the family's freedom to negotiate topics. This option would suggest that the discursive work carried out by my own construction of topic selection should become as much a matter for deconstruction as Sue's. In this way, a symmetrical treatment would be recommended. Sue's assertion would be characterised as accomplishing an emphasis on the family's voluntary conferral of power on Ava; while my own representation would be identified for its rhetorical value in playing down the influence of the researcher's objectives on the data.

Using this second strategy, although I would suffer from a loss of authority in terms of supplying a definitive interpretation of the data, I would hope to gain integrity by displaying sincerity, openness to criticism and a commitment to the egalitarian handling of discursive constructs. This equal treatment of the two positions would also allow both Sue's representation of the co-ordinating expert and my own representation of the researcher as just another participant, to stand simultaneously! Furthermore, such a move might also accomplish the presentation of myself as "doing egalitarianism" with expert subtlety (See Chapter 3 Section C3).

Thirdly, I could side-step an interrogation of my own discursive actions by presenting this dilemma as a problem in itself requiring reflexive treatment. I could make a list of various alternative strategies for accounting for this difference of opinion and discuss each in a self-aware, "multisubjective" manner (Billig, 1989). This would act so as to make public my own stake - whereby Sue's comment can be fitted into an explanation that presents my(!) research as both collaboratively egalitarian and expertly co-ordinated. In so doing, I would be able to present the authorship of this chapter as itself egalitarian (though not collaborative), in the sense of avoiding preferential treatment of this discourse above that of the data. A further bonus of this strategy would be that it might either confuse or amuse the reader sufficiently to circumvent the requirement that a single conclusion be reached.

As you see, I have decided against all of the above options on the grounds that whatever I write will be informed by rhetorical concerns and thus open to criticism by you, the reader - a situation that would, of course, highlight the status of this analysis as a discursive construct in itself!

E OSCILLATION

SECTION 8

(2:17-33 and 2:35)

17	Dad:	[the <u>point</u> is
18		the <u>point</u> is it <u>comes</u> and <u>goes</u> doesn't it
19		I mean when you're in full <u>flow</u>
20		and you're in the sort of general <u>discussion</u>
21	Sue:	yeh in the [<u>midst</u> of it
22	Dad:	[then you're just like er
23		one of the <u>team</u> that
24	Sue:	yeh [that's <u>right</u>
25	Dad:	[when you <u>think</u> about it
26		you sort of suddenly remember
27		what we're doing here and <u>why</u> (.)
28	Ava:	yeh
29	Dad:	and then you're sort of then (.)
30		having a little <u>push</u>
31		in one direction or <u>another</u> or (.)

32 Mish: yeh
33 Mum: mm

35 Dad: [controlling the situation]

At this point in the interaction, Dad's contribution resurrects Ava's original question from earlier in the discussion -Section 2 lines13-14:

(Section 2)

13 Ava: do you think I am acting as a family member
14 or as an interviewer

Beginning in line 17, Dad asserts that:

17 Dad: [the point is
18 the point is it comes and goes doesn't it

He then goes on to explain that, whether Ava is acting as a family member in the discussion, or as an interviewer, depends on the flow of the talk. He says that on the one hand:

19 I mean when you're in full flow
20 and you're in the sort of general discussion

22 Dad: [then you're just like er
23 one of the team that

On the other hand, however:

25 Dad: [when you think about it
26 you sort of suddenly remember
27 what we're doing here and why (.)

29 Dad: and then you're sort of then (.)
30 having a little push
31 in one direction or another or (.)

35 Dad: [controlling the situation]

The above description of Ava's behaviour not only represents yet another skilful management of the researcher's dilemma, but can also be seen to accomplish a number of key manoeuvres in the constitution of the roles of those engaged in the current encounter.

Looking firstly from the perspective of the expert's dilemma, it is extremely tempting (particularly for this researcher) to ignore lines 25-7, so that we are left with the following construction of Ava's behaviour. When the conversation is "in full flow" Ava acts "just like ... one of the team". However, at other times she finds herself "having a little push in one direction or another ... [and] ... controlling the situation". Such a description would present the researcher as, at one and the same time: a) an egalitarian member "of the team"; and b) a highly competent researcher whose merest "little push" is all that is necessary for "controlling the situation". This is what Dad almost says, drawing upon the egalitarian and authoritarian themes thus far raised within the discussion. However, Dad's lines 25-7 are fundamental to his description and cast an entirely different view of Ava's behaviour.

In the lines thus far ignored, Dad suggests that Ava's controlling pushes occur when she "suddenly remember[s] what we're all doing here and why". Taking this into account provides a formulation of her behaviour that is not so flattering! Instead of the egalitarian expert, the picture that can be constructed is of a subjective family member and amateur analyst. This is a person who generally gets carried away in the "full flow" of the discussion and as a result, acts "just like er one of the team". However, every now and then, when she has time to "think about it", she "sort of suddenly remember[s] what we're doing here and why". This representation characterises Ava as unprofessional for getting caught up in her own subjectivity and only sporadically reminded of her duty as a "real" researcher. Thus her oscillation between family member and interviewer is presented as indicating a lack of expertise rather than the

reverse! In this alternative formulation of Ava's behaviour, the description of the "controlling" "push" as "little", rather than accrediting fine-tuned expertise, seems to imply that Ava's power of influence is rather limited.

This observation of Dad's appears to be a perfect example of where the family display what Mish warns in line 34 of Section 4:

(Section 4)

34 Mish: [not necessarily that we're
35 going to give you [the right opinion

Instead of presenting Ava as the egalitarian expert and expert egalitarian, Dad portrays her as a barely competent researcher, not only lax in her control but also rather ineffectual when she does get around to doing her job! Such a characterisation of the current research encounter hinges on Dad's implicit suggestion about "what we're doing here and why".

It is in this, rather damning, representation of Ava's behaviour that we most clearly see the power of the participant in the research encounter. The first important point is that it is not only the researcher who brings to the research encounter a view of the research process - the participants too have ideas and expectations about what the research process entails. Thus, it is only where the participants co-operate with the researcher's ideas about how the encounter should be conducted, that the researcher can "do egalitarianism", or "do authoritarianism" for that matter. In other words, these preconceptions on the part of all concerned will have an important part to play in the negotiation of what goes on, acting dynamically and interactively so as to constitute what exactly does go on.

The resulting implication is that, in spite of a researcher's egalitarian principles and intentions of empowerment, if the participants are

possessed of a more traditional understanding of what it means to be involved in research, they will play their part according to their own model. Thus the final interaction will be a negotiated product of the different constructions of the power relationship, bearing in mind that the participants' constructions will not necessarily be homogeneous.

In Dad's observation, what Ava has been constructing (with some co-operation from Sue, Mum and Mish) as an expert handling of her dual role, Dad presents as an inexpert blurring of her two roles - in which she is only an interviewer when she "remembers". This, I would suggest, represents a more traditional perspective of how research should be conducted - with authoritative guiding and co-ordinating as the only valid researcher behaviour, while being "one of the team" is merely an erroneous behaviour born of overfamiliarity. It is also interesting to note that Dad characterises Ava as having a supplementary view of the proceedings to that held by "the family", of which she is also a part. Dad implies that, in her occasional recollections, Ava uses an alternative perspective on the encounter that is particular to herself: it is what "you" remember that "we" should be doing and what "you" do as a result. Presumably, this supplementary perspective is available exclusively to a researcher.

SECTION 9

(2:34; 2:36-40; and 2:42)

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 34 | Mish: | 'cause otherwise [<u>as</u> we are |
| 36 | Mish: | we're likely to go on |
| 37 | | to something completely [<u>different</u> |
| 38 | Mum: | [I THINK W <u>YES</u> |
| 39 | | I THINK [<u>WE</u> |
| 40 | Ava: | [does it <u>matter</u> |
| | | |
| 42 | Sue: | [good point |

In lines 34 and 36-7 Mish says:

34 Mish: 'cause otherwise [as we are

36 Mish: we're likely to go on
37 to something completely [different

This leads on from Dad's observation and supports earlier suggestions that the family "go off at a tangent sometimes" and that Ava's "directing" behaviour prevents the family from "arguing about what we want to argue" about. Ava's response is to ask:

40 Ava: [does it matter

However, despite the question format of this utterance, Sue's subsequent rejoinder, is:

42 Sue: [good point

This orientates to Ava's utterance as a statement, rather than a request for Mish's opinion. In judging Ava's question as a "good point", Sue acknowledges its discursive action in communicating that the topic of the conversation does not matter. In this way, Ava's utterance is treated as an almost classic "rhetorical question".

It is through just such minor exchanges as these that I feel that the power relationship between the researcher and the other participants is negotiated. In content, the exchange signals that the researcher is willing for the participants to take a greater share in directing the topics of the interaction - Ava implies that it would not matter if the family were to "go on to something completely different". In this way she attends to the earlier construction of the effect of her guidance on topic choice and hints that she does not agree with such a level of direction. Meanwhile, in form, the ostensibly democratic strategy of asking an opinion is interpreted as, in fact, the giving of an opinion and thus a form of subtle guidance rather

than autonomy. In this way, despite a democratic front, the business achieved by this utterance is expert skilfulness - in the form of guidance away from a view of her as overly affecting topic choice.

It should, however, be noted that discourse analysis makes no extrapolations about whether or not Ava intended her utterance as a statement of opinion. Similarly, whether or not Ava acts as a skilful expert who subtly guides her participants is not a matter to be concluded from this sort of analysis. Our only concern is with the treatment of Ava's utterance by the other participants. What we can say, however, is that Sue responds to Ava's utterance in a way that constitutes it as guidance - Ava's utterance becomes skilful guidance purely and simply because Sue permits it to be. Thus, the above exchange provides us with a concrete example of the participants' active role in promoting privileged behaviour by the interviewer, discussed in Section D2b of Chapter 3.

Until this point in the data, it has been possible to analyse the proceedings in an almost exclusively sequential manner, with only a few stray utterances being grouped with others that do not immediately precede or follow them. However, at this juncture there occurs a fragmentation of the discourse that merits a slightly different ordering of the analysis.

Therefore I will group the appropriately linked utterances into two sections and analyse them separately. The first of these is the following:

F THE GIFT

SECTION 10

(2:41;;43 46-7; 50-53; and 55)

- 41 Mum: I THINK WE'RE TREATING [you
43 Mum: with a little bit more dis[cretion
46 Mum: because of your situation
47 Ava: which is very [kind of you thanks very much
50 Mum: that's quite alright [(.) don't mention it
51 Sue: (((laughs))
52 Dad: (((laughs))
53 is it what you wanted or not
55 Ava: [yes it's exactly what I wanted

In lines 41, 43 and 45 Mum offers her opinion of Ava's role in the research encounter:

- 41 Mum: I THINK WE'RE TREATING [you
43 Mum: with a little bit more dis[cretion
46 Mum: because of your situation

In this statement Mum concludes that, during the data collection, the family are proffering upon Ava a special dispensation because of her status as researcher.

Ava's uptake on this utterance deserves particular attention because of its significance in the ongoing construction of the research relationship. Ava responds with:

- 47 Ava: which is very [kind of you thanks very much

In order to understand the social actions accomplished by this utterance, we need to turn to the work of Goffman (1971) on discursive phenomena

he called "ritual offerings". Goffman proposed that ritual offerings occur when

one individual provides a sign of involvement in and connectedness to another (Goffman, 1971 p 89).

Furthermore, Goffman suggested that, following such "giving statements", "it behoves the recipient" to make a rather prescribed form of response which he termed a "show of gratitude" (Goffman, 1971 p 89). According to Goffman, this response projects a fourfold message - displaying: an appreciation of the initiator's message; an affirmation that the implied relationship does indeed exist; the worth of the initiator as a person; and the appreciative and grateful nature of the recipient.

As discussed in previous chapters, a central feature of both Conversation and Discourse Analysis, are their emphasis on the pivotal role of the next turn in ongoingly constituting the meaning of the current turn (see Chapter 2 Section C in particular). It is in this sense that Mum's utterance in lines 41, 43 and 46 becomes a "giving statement" as a result of Ava's "show of gratitude" in line 47. This emphasis departs from Goffman's (1971) thesis in the sense that Goffman looks to displays of gratitude as demonstrations

that the affirmed relationship actually exists as the performer implies (Goffman, 1971 p 89).

This therefore assumes that "the performer" (in this case Mum) has in fact implied a particular relationship (in this case, that the family's act of granting discretionary behaviour to Ava should be considered as a gift). Meanwhile, the Discourse Analytic perspective would argue that the implied relationship is precisely what is problematised by Ava's response. In this sense, whether Mum "really" implied that the research relationship involves a gift from researched to researcher, is not at issue. Instead,

what requires attention is how far this implication is established as a "reality" for the participants. Indeed, I shall argue within this discussion that the "reality" of this implication is precisely the problematic issue that is skilfully managed within the extract through the application of humour.

Before we move on to the management of humour in the extract some background to the concept of gift giving, or "prestation" as Mauss (1966) called it, is required. Here we can look to some of the classical sociological and anthropological work on the social convention of gift giving.

In exploring gift-giving behaviour, Malinowski (1932) argued that participating pairs of actors are governed by a notion of reciprocity, in which "equivalent services" are ongoingly exchanged in such a manner that, over time, a balance is maintained in which both parties benefit equally. Gouldner (1960) points out that this reciprocal relationship means that, in benefiting the recipient, the donor creates an obligation (p 174). Ironically, this position - in which obligation is owed to a donor - can be seen as a benefit in itself. This is because, as Mauss (1966) intimated, prestation procures for the most recent donor in the ongoing process, an "authority and power" over the most recent recipient (Mauss, 1966 p 10). A similar observation then leads Gouldner (1960) to anticipate that societies will actually generate

mechanisms which induce people to remain socially indebted to each other and which inhibit their complete repayment (Gouldner, 1960 p 175).

In these cases, therefore, the reciprocation does not occur through counter-prestation but through the benefit to the donor that results from the moral constraint upon the recipient to show their gratitude, "or at least to maintain peace" with them (Gouldner, 1960 p 174). This picture of an exchange of benefits thus far greatly resembles other forms of commodity exchange, such as sale and barter. However, what these

writers argue is unique to prestation, is that it is an action displayed as "voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous" (Mauss, 1966 p 1). This leads Mauss to conclude that although

The form usually taken is that of the gift generously offered ... the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest (Mauss, 1966 p 1).

Thus, gift giving behaviour, as represented by these authors, is founded upon an inherent incongruity. The donor marks their offering as a gift (rather than sale, barter etc.) through a display that reciprocity is unnecessary and that the gesture unilaterally (and thus disinterestedly and generously) benefits the recipient. However, the very mechanism through which the recipient ratifies the offering as a gift is the show of gratitude that actually provides reciprocation. It is because both parties are aware of this paradox that "formal pretence and social deception" are involved.

One of the most notable manifestations of this social deception is the pretence, upheld by both parties, that a show of gratitude is spontaneous rather than obligatory. It is particularly pertinent to the current discussion that this formal pretence is potentially undermined if donors draw explicit attention to their actions as prestation. If the show of gratitude is the required response to prestation, when a donor highlights their act of prestation they would appear to have stolen the initiative from the recipient and belied the spontaneity of the recipient's gratitude. For this reason, I would suggest that explicit reference to their gift giving behaviour becomes a more or less forbidden topic for donors.

Turning now to the use of humour in the extract, Mulkay (1988) identifies two modes of discourse available in Western society - the serious mode and the humorous mode. He argues that

in the serious realm we normally employ a unitary mode of discourse which takes for granted the existence of one real world, and within which ambiguity, inconsistency, contradiction and interpretative diversity are potential problems (Mulkay, 1988 p 4).

Meanwhile,

humour actively creates and fosters ambiguity, and uses it to generate incongruity and interpretative contrast (p 28).

Mulkay's does not, however, assert that these two realms are utterly distinct but rather, that the boundary between them is symbolic and ambiguous. This ambiguity utilises the implicit and allusive nature of humour to render any serious intent ultimately deniable, thereby allowing what might otherwise be problematic interactional business to be accomplished. As a result, Mulkay argues, the humorous mode is not properly understood as a "self-contained alternative to serious discourse" since it is generally utilised as a resource for the accomplishment of serious business (p 217). What is more, the humorous mode does not merely make problematic social actions achievable, it actually feeds upon the paradoxes and incongruities of social life taking them up as "resources to be exploited, added to and enjoyed." (Mulkay, 1988 p 215).

It is in this sense that I believe that humour is being employed within the extract under discussion. I would argue that Ava's utterance in line 47 utilises the humorous mode in just such a manner. Ava responds with:

47 Ava: which is very [kind of you thanks very much

This, I would suggest, is a tease of Mum which is able to exploit the incongruity intrinsic to gift giving, thereby accomplishing a number of strategic actions in a manner impossible through the exclusive use of the serious mode. These actions include: interpretative multiplicity, denial, reproof and the handling of forbidden topics.

Let us begin by setting out some of the multiple interpretations that are simultaneously available for Ava's utterance:

One available perspective is to see Ava's utterance as a sincere expression of gratitude in acknowledgement to a gift received. Such an interpretation explicitly establishes the family's discretion as a case of prestation, while simultaneously accomplishing the required display of gratitude and acceptance of obligation appropriate to the receipt of such a gift.

From another perspective, Ava's utterance can be considered as a tease of Mum. In explicating the work of Drew (1987) on teases as a particular instance of informal humour, Mulkay (1988) summarises Drew's analysis in the following way:

Teases, Drew shows, are characterised by exaggerated or extreme reformulations of something that the recipient has said or done previously. These reformulations contrast with or contradict some statement, assumption, or meaningful action uttered, implied or carried out by the recipient. They also, playfully, question the adequacy, reality or propriety of what the recipient has said or done, whilst simultaneously indicating that their own interpretative challenge is not to be taken seriously (Mulkay, 1988 p 76).

As a tease, Ava's utterance can be seen to carry out a number of actions. Firstly, Mum is established as having intentionally implied a gift-giving relationship. Meanwhile, this behaviour is also constructed as transgressional: as discussed above, intentionally drawing attention to one's gift-giving can constitute a kind of pursuit of gratitude and call for obligation to be acknowledged, thereby contravening the "formal pretence" of gift giving (Mauss, 1966). At the same time, Ava accomplishes a denunciation of the behaviour, drawing attention to the transgression, questioning the "propriety" of such behaviour and responding with irony.

A third available perspective would view Ava's utterance as actually constitutive of the gift-giving implication in Mum's words. In this light, Mum has no connection to the implication - it is not a feature of Mum's delivery, but of Ava's receipt. Thus, Ava's utterance becomes a tongue-in-cheek pretence of hearing an implication that, in reality, it actively creates. From this viewpoint, Mum is involved in no transgressional activity - for she herself has implied nothing and therefore has not contravened any conventions of prestation. On the contrary, it is Ava who may be seen as a transgressor, who highlights her own debt of gratitude, yet displays this gratitude in an ironic manner rather than with the required sincerity. In this way she is belying the acknowledgement of a debt that she herself has established as due.

As Mulkay (1988) has shown us, humour is specifically designed to exploit the sort of interpretative multiplicity demonstrated by these three alternatives. Mulkay explains that the crucial element in exploiting multiple meanings centres around the ability to deny responsibility for any one possible interpretation. Within the extract under discussion I believe that there are two main ways in which the ability to deny intent is put to use.

The first of these is the deployment of deniability for the purposes of reproof. Mulkay suggests that "the allusive, self-denying discourse of the tease" allows a teaser to correct and reprove another "without 'really' doing so" (Mulkay, 1988 p 79). Whereas serious reproof might hazard the danger of a descent into conflict, the deniability of humour "makes such interpretative confrontation less likely" (p 79). Thus, Ava is able to reprove her mother in a manner that is deniable and therefore nonconflictual.

The second of these is the recruitment of denial for the purposes of broaching topics that are generally "forbidden" from open discussion. As discussed above, due to the incongruity of the donor's relationship with reciprocity, donor interest in gaining acknowledgement for their act of prestation becomes a more or less forbidden topic. It is this topic that is raised via the humorous mode in the current extract. Mulkay (1988) discusses the work of Emerson (1973) on the ability of humour to handle the introduction of forbidden topics into conversation. Emerson studied the discourse of patients and nurses, particularly noting the expression of fears about death through the medium of humour. Emerson's conclusion was that the opportunity for denial presented by humour's simultaneous communication of multiple meanings permits speakers to

introduce a forbidden topic into the conversation whilst insisting that it was never 'really' mentioned (Mulkay, 1988 p 81).

In the case of this extract, Ava is able to introduce the topic of Mum's interest in presenting the family's discretion as a gift to Ava.

To summarise the key conclusion, in the cases of both reproof and the introduction of a forbidden topic it is the simultaneous communication of several inconsistent messages that allows these potentially blameable social actions to be accomplished. This is because the denounceable interpretations co-exist alongside a number of other, less blameable, interpretations. As a result, any accusation levelled at such an interpretation can always be countered by invoking one of the other available interpretations. Meanwhile, the existence of ambiguity about the intended seriousness of the censurable message acts as a further safety net from social denunciation.

At this point I would like to move on to Mum's response to Ava's utterance. In his discussion of teases, Drew (1987) argues that there is a mixture of humour and hostility in teasing and that responses to teases

can be oriented to either or both of these messages. To this end he presents a quantity of data in terms of their position along a continuum: at one extreme he places serious responses to the hostility element; at the other he places joking responses to the humorous element; and in the middle ground he positions cases where

recipients simultaneously acknowledge the humour of the tease and treat the tease seriously, by building laughter into the rejection/correction (Drew, 1987 p 222).

As Mulkay (1988) points out, it is the interpretative multiplicity of humour that allows such a duality of social actions - humour and hostility - to be simultaneously accomplished by teases. When evaluating the continuum of responses we see that this multiplicity is what proves problematic for handling the receipt of teases. The serious interpretation and consequences need to be attended to but so too does the non-seriousness of the message. Thus, participants may be forced to make a choice between allowing the reproving message of the tease to stand uncorrected, or, if the humorous message is not responded to, risking accusations of po-facedness and lack of a sense of humour.

Drew (1987) concludes from the analysis of his data that speakers who are teased usually respond to the serious message contained within the tease, despite the equal availability of the humorous message of the tease - in other words, responses tend to populate the serious end of his continuum. Drew postulates that speakers are motivated to return to the serious mode because teases

playfully, question the adequacy, reality or propriety of what the recipient has said or done (Mulkay, 1988 p 76)

Speakers will therefore be interested in re-establishing the reality and propriety of the action under attack.

In the case of this extract, Mum's response accomplishes a particularly skilful management of the competing messages. Here Mum actually makes a reciprocal tease of Ava:

50 Mum: that's quite alright [(.) don't mention it

In throwing the tease back onto Ava, Mum accomplishes much more than simply establishing the propriety of her utterance, or even addressing the ambiguity over her responsibility for the gift giving implication. Instead, she undermines the status of the tease itself. Mum's response in line 50 could be itself examined in terms of a questioning of the adequacy, reality and propriety of Ava's tease - questioning: the "adequacy" of Ava's display of gratitude which, in its irony, undermines its own construction; the "reality" of her (Mum's) intentional authorship of this implication; and indeed, the "propriety" of Ava's treatment of the serious issues of gift giving and obligation with such irreverence.

It seems to me, that the reciprocal tease, as presented by Mum, is particularly well suited to manage teasing utterances. A reciprocal tease attends to both the humour and the hostility of the initial tease. At the same time, it manages the indeterminacy of the boundary between these two messages. This is because it mirrors and matches both of these properties of the initial tease. Thus, whatever message can be read into the initial tease is countered in the reciprocal tease - serious hostility counters serious hostility and light-hearted fun counters light-hearted fun, both in appropriate measure.

In this light, Mum's response to Ava represents an extremely subtle and effective management of the interpretative multiplicity she is presented with. She cannot be accused of po-facedness, but neither does she sacrifice amending Ava's reproving representation of her utterance - indeed she instead accomplishes a transferral of reproof onto Ava.

Following from the above discussion, the laughter that follows this exchange, from Dad and Sue in lines 51 and 52, can likewise be seen to accomplish a multitude of actions. Firstly, it signals their appreciation of the humorous dimension of the exchange. Secondly, it supports and promotes a non-serious reading of the exchange, as opposed to a serious, hostile interpretation. In this sense it subtly diffuses the harmful potential of the latter reading. Thirdly, the laughter may be seen as an appreciation of the skill of the participants in disputing this potentially dangerous topic in a manner that avoids overt conflict. For example, the ability of Ava to raise this topic without causing a breakdown in the interaction and the ability of Mum to turn round the implicit accusation of transgression onto her accuser in a similarly acceptable way.

At this point, flowing freely out of the laughter, comes a more serious orientation to the issues highlighted in the form of Dad's poignant question:

53 Dad: is it what you wanted or not

Ava then replies to this:

55 Ava: [yes it's exactly what I wanted

Despite his immediately preceding laughter, Dad seriously attends to the implication regarding prestaton and the family's discretion. Such an interpretation fits in well with the conclusions of both Drew (1987) and Emerson (1973). Both writers report that speakers tend to respond to the serious message of, respectively, teases and humorous introductions of forbidden topics. One could theorise that the very ambiguity of Mum's retort, regarding the extent to which she is seriously responding to a serious message, fails to exploit the opportunity for open familial discussion of a topic whose problematic status generally prohibits its

introduction. I would suggest that Dad's contribution represents an attempt to exploit the opportunity that Mum has forgone. As discussed above, Mum's retort instead exploits the ability of a humorous response to skilfully manage a humorous quasi-attack. Indeed, Dad's response is far more characteristic than Mum's of those found by Drew (1987). In fact, his response mirrors very closely the response that Drew presents as a key element in his argument - whereby a speaker in one of his extracts responds to a tease in a manner that

displays recognising that the remark was not serious when she laughs ... [However,] that recognition does not prevent her going on to respond seriously to the tease (Drew, 1987 p 222).

In order to unpack the significance of this exchange we again may draw upon some of the research and theory concerning gift giving behaviour. This time we can turn to the work of Caplow (1984). Examining the ritual of Christmas gift giving in the town of Middletown, Caplow puts forward a set of "rules" followed by members of the town's community.³

One of the areas of Christmas gift giving that Caplow comments on, is that of selecting gifts. He lists three "rules" governing this, one of which is particularly pertinent to our discussion here:

A Christmas gift should ... demonstrate the giver's familiarity with the receiver's preferences (Caplow, 1984 p 1313).

In line with this, he observes that the possibility of error in gift selection is built into the culture, in that "the four or five shopping days immediately after Christmas are set aside in Middletown stores for return or exchange of badly selected gifts" (Caplow, 1984 p 1314). He also notes that a

³ Caplow later problematises the appropriateness of the term "rules" for the practices under question, particularly their unarticulated status.

social meaning is attached to selection errors - he particularly identifies misalignment in gifts between spouses or lovers as being taken as a sign of alienation.

These observations of Caplow's can be highly useful to our analysis of Dad's question:

53 Dad: is it what you wanted or not

From this perspective, Dad is concerning himself with the requirement that the family "demonstrate" their "familiarity with the receiver's preferences". Indeed their gift giving generosity would be greatly undermined if their gift turns out to be "badly selected". Like the inhabitants of Middletown, therefore, Dad is orienting to the possibility of error in gift selection. Furthermore, I would suggest that, like Caplow's post-Christmas gift-returning days, the existence of questions such as Dad's in line 53 are evidence that the possibility of selection errors are built into our Western culture. Additional support for this generalisation can be found in other examples of research encounters. Observations such as the following have been made by various researchers:

Respondents constantly asked, 'Is this what you want, stop me talking if not.' (Measor, 1985 pp 66-7)

several stopped in mid sentence to ask, 'Is this really what you want?' 'Are you sure this is helping you?' (Devault, 1990 p 99).

However, they are explained using various rather different perspectives. For example, Measor (1985) attributes such comments to the self-indulgence of talking about oneself at length, while Devault (1990) attributes them to the surprise of respondents when the research encounter turns out to be different from their expectations. Both of these conclusions can be considered valid and, indeed, useful. However, it presents an interesting alternative to view such comments in terms of

egalitarianism" is somewhat undermined. Instead the researched are cast in the role of generous benefactors of the researcher's dispensation to "organise", "direct" and "co-ordinate" the research encounter.

G NON-INTERVENTION

The extract under discussion in this chapter concludes with the following Section of discourse:

SECTION 11

(2:44-5; 48-9; 54; 56-8; and 3:1-13)

- 44 Mish: [WELL THE ONLY WAY
45 THAT YOU COULDN'T DO IT
- 48 Mish: [WELL THE ONLY WAY
49 THAT YOU COULDN'T DO IT
- 54 Mish: THE ONLY WAY YOU [COULD IS TO SIT OUT=
- 56 Mish: =AND JUST listen and not say anything
57 Sue: why is it the [(important) thing
58 Ava: [no no I don't want to
1 [this is how I want it to be
2 Mish [NO I WAS JUST SAYING that is
3 the only way that you could not do that
4 Ava: yeh
5 Mish: 'cause you have to
6 Sue: I don't think (.)
7 she wouldn't be able to
8 she'd be sitting there going [mmm mmm mmm
9 Ava: [((laughs))
10 Sue: [trying to say something
11 Ava: [can you imagine then
12 [you'd say something that [()
13 Sue: [you'd never [()

While the interaction discussed as Section 10 is occurring, Mish tries in vain twice to make a point

44 Mish: [WELL THE ONLY WAY
45 THAT YOU COULDN'T DO IT

48 Mish: [WELL THE ONLY WAY
49 THAT YOU COULDN'T DO IT

However, it is not until the middle of a third attempt, on the termination of Section 10, that any response is made to her, despite the fact that all three attempts are made in a louder than normal voice. Mish begins her third attempt with:

54 Mish: THE ONLY WAY YOU [COULD IS TO SIT OUT=

She then continues with:

56 Mish: =AND JUST listen and not say anything

Ava eventually responds thus:

58 Ava: [no no I don't want to
1 [this is how I want it to be

This, however, is framed by Mish as a merely partial understanding of her intent, for she protests and reiterates the first half of her comment:

2 Mish [NO I WAS JUST SAYING that is
3 the only way that you could not do that

In doing so, Mish displays Ava's response as only orientated to the suggestion of sitting out and simply listening silently. At the same time, Mish emphasises instead, her formulation of this scenario as a rejected extreme option - "the only way that you couldn't do it". Even here, however, when Mish has at last achieved a response - and one which requires correction at that - the floor is almost immediately taken from her. She is in the middle of her utterance of line 5 when she is cut off by Sue:

5 Mish: 'cause you have to

Sue's observation is, that even the possibility of the silent observer would be unavailable to Ava - she says:

6 Sue: I don't think (.)
7 she wouldn't be able to
8 she'd be sitting there going [mmm mmm mmm

10 Sue: [trying to say something

Ava not only laughs at this scenario but adds to it simultaneously with Sue's continuation:

11 Ava: [can you imagine then
12 [you'd say something that (())
13 Sue: [you'd never (())

The latter parts of both of their utterances are then obscured when Dad contributes his next utterance - one that will not be analysed here, as I have chosen this point as the end of the current extract for analysis.

The content of both Mish and Sue's scenarios are extremely telling in terms of what happens to the research situation where the participants are part of the researcher's family. Chapter 3 introduced the question formulated by Ribbens (1989) which asked

how far are interviews different from other sorts of social encounters? In particular, how far and in what ways are they different from friendships of the type advocated by Oakley herself as appropriate for feminist research? (Ribbens, 1989 p 579)

As I noted within that discussion (see footnote to Section D1c), although my own research does not answer precisely this question of friendship, it does provide an *in situ* exploration of a related issue: how the roles of

family member and interviewer differ and in what ways the dual performance of both roles might affect an actor's behaviour.

Mish's conclusion is that in her dual status Ava could only maintain the role of non-directive, neutral observer if she were to "sit out and just listen and not say anything". Thus, Mish is suggesting that Ava would have to resort to the most extreme form of researcher detachment because any interaction with the family could only lead to involvement in the content of the discourse and a complete abandonment of neutrality.

Sue goes even further than this, concluding that even this course of action would not be possible given the situation. She is saying that, even where Ava were to try to be silently non-directive, she would find herself fighting this resolution to silence and would not be able to prevent herself from becoming involved.

Both of these comments from the sisters also attend to Dad's formulation of Ava's behaviour in Section 8, constructing Ava's oscillation - from being in "full flow" (line 19) and "one of the team" (line 23) to "having a little push in one direction or another" (lines 30-1) - as the only available option for someone in her subjective position.

It is extremely interesting to note how the family relationship between the researcher and the researched is presented, at various points in this extract, as affecting both ends of the directive/non-directive continuum of behaviours. Firstly, the family are constructed as responsible for preventing Ava from overly directive powers in their "normal" interactions. The family describe how they would "slap" her "down", "have a go at" her and tell her to "shut up" if she displayed outside the research encounter the sort of directive behaviour that, by implication, is being tolerated within it - a toleration characterised as being treated "with a little bit more discretion". Please note how this supports the observation in Chapter 3,

that the following question by Ribbens (1989) should be applied to the researched as well as the researcher:

Are interviews a sort of neutered social encounter, divorced from issues relevant to other social situations, so that you accept behaviour in interviews that you might expect to challenge elsewhere? (Ribbens, 1989 p 581).

This seems to suggest that the usual family protocol for ensuring that no single member is overly directive is being relaxed in the current interaction.

Meanwhile, a picture is also painted of how Ava's established family relationship would also prevent her from overly non-directive behaviours within the research encounter. Here she is described as, in all probability, unable to sit silently without intervening in the goings on. Instead she is likely to be "sitting there going mmm mmm mmm ... trying to say something" and in this way unsuccessfully fighting any resolution to silence.

Thus what counts as "acting as a family member or as an interviewer" is negotiated in the course of this conversation. For each role there is a construction of what actors are permitted to do and what they are dispositionally capable of: family members are allowed their "twopenneth" - they are slapped down if they step over the line, yet they are also incapable of withholding all contribution to the ongoing talk. Meanwhile, interviewers are given the discretion to direct others and control the situation, yet they are also capable of being silently non-directive if they so desire.

H CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the above detailed analysis of an extended extract from my data has served as the sort of undertaking that Merton (1976)

recommended for understanding the skilful interactive work carried out in the performance of a social role and the indispensable utility of sociological ambivalence in achieving this. As can be seen, the status of various behaviours as egalitarian or authoritarian is not clear-cut. In addition, we see that egalitarianism can profitably become a topic discussed by the participants themselves as part of the research design. In conclusion, the central lesson to learn is that the egalitarianism of the research relationship will always be an ongoing product of negotiation within the research encounter itself, rather than a preordained constituent that is solely the property of the researcher to set according to academic dictates. In line with the general argument of this thesis, the momentum of this product and its foundation in negotiation reflect the rhetorical process of which it is a part. In this way, it is the taking up and defence of positions in relation to counter positions, on the subject of roles, behaviours and relationships which brings these dynamic entities into being.

In the chapter which follows, this defence of positions in the face of challenge from counter-positions will be examined as a more overt phenomenon. Grounded in an empirical investigation, the pursuit of argument for sociable ends will be explored.

CHAPTER 6 "CHECK FORMULATIONS": PREFERENCE ORGANISATION AS RESOURCE - NOT CONSTRAINT

A INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 3 and 5 the discursive construction of the research relationship as a social object was examined. In Chapter 3, the arena under examination was that of the scientific community, while in Chapter 5, the research encounter was focused upon. In both of these arenas we found that what counted as the researcher's role and as egalitarianism, were constructed out of the rhetorical environment in which they are topicalised.

In the academic arena, egalitarianism was seen as a resource to be drawn on in making a case for one's own way of conducting research. The flexibility and malleability of this resource was seen to arise from the irreconcilability of the norms and counter-norms of the social role of researcher. Space was to be found to enact the role in the very contradiction these competing norms produced, a space opened up by the contentiousness of the academic environment where positions have to be justified and warranted.

When the research encounter itself was examined in Chapter 5, the researcher's role was found to resist preconstitution by the researcher alone. Instead, it was found that the role was once again constituted out

of discussion and debate, this time between the participants to this separate interaction. The emphasis in this chapter was upon the negotiation of what counts as the role of researcher amongst the participants to the interaction. In this negotiation, the social role of family member was utilised contrastively in order to map the boundaries of the researcher's role.

In the current chapter, the constructive force of discussion, debate and argument will again be addressed. However, a rather different approach will be adopted. Here, assumptions concerning the pursuit of harmony and agreement by social actors will be contended. Under attack will be the conversation analytic work that champions a preference for agreement among speakers. The argument to be forwarded in its place will demonstrate that the organisation of talk should be treated within discourse and conversation analysis, as a resource for the accomplishment of social life, rather than as a normative matrix of constraint. In this light, the notion of a preference for agreement will be re-evaluated and a case will be made for the pursuit of sociability through the alternative channel of disagreement and argumentation.

B CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AND PREFERENCE ORGANISATION

The Conversation Analytic project is principally concerned with examining the stable patterns of structural organisation within conversation. In Chapter 2 Section C, the nature of this enterprise was outlined and it was observed that the structure known as "preference organisation" had received a great deal of attention. The nature of that attention was then only briefly alluded to. In this chapter, the controversial question of preference organisation will be examined in much greater detail and my own position on the debate will be presented.

Bilmes (1988) describes CA as

a structural and not a statistical undertaking ... The object is not to account for or to model what participants in particular situations normally do but to account for how what they do provides resources and constraints for the other participants. (p 173)

However, this prescription of the Conversation Analytic enterprise is by no means universal. Levinson (1983), for example, orientates his analysis to "preferred actions", which are exactly the sort of correlationally derived behaviour models that Bilmes rejects - described as those actions "normally performed in the preferred format" (Levinson, 1983 p 336). The problem with this focus on characteristic usage, is the way it overemphasises conversational structures as normative constraints. Heritage (1984), for example, concludes that cultural expectancies and patterns of accountability constrain us

to adopt the institutionalized form regardless of our private desires and personal inclinations. (Heritage, 1984 p 268)

This picture of institutionalised constraints completely ignores the other element of Bilmes's (1988) vision - the acknowledgement that expectancies are cultural resources. This contrary perspective highlights the difference between an expectancy and a prescription for behaviour. Prescriptive behaviours limit speakers to only one course of action. Expectancies, meanwhile, merely dictate that all behaviours, bar one, involve accountability. In this way, alternative behaviours are not only available, they gain the vital force of action precisely by their contravention or parody of the said expectancies. Therefore, not only is it erroneous to derogate cultural expectancies for curtailing individual freedom, they should be championed as the source from which interpersonal interaction becomes intelligible and thus possible.

The following chapter attempts to redress this imbalance and champion preference organisation as a resource rather than a constraint.

1 ARGUMENT AS SOCIABILITY: AN ALTERNATIVE TO POLITENESS

In Chapter 2 Section E, the importance of argument as a form of sociability was emphasised. It was found that the pursuit of harmony and avoidance of argument has acquired an unexplicated and taken-for-granted status in conversation and discourse analysis. Such writers as Levinson (1983) and Heritage (1984), assume that the only way to accomplish sociability is through the harmonising force of politeness. However, writers such as Billig (1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993), Knoblauch (1991) and Schiffrin (1984) present "argument as sociability" as an alternative route to sociable interaction. For example, Schiffrin (1984) suggested that social solidarity can be produced out of the nonserious and playful handling of conflict, whereby the ability of social ties to endure the potential threat of disintegration, attests to their strength and resilience. This emphasis on nonseriousness as the mechanism by which conflict can be successfully managed, also highlights the importance of the "humorous mode" of Mulkay (1988) (discussed in Chapter 5) to the accomplishment of this alternative route to sociability. The significant feature of the humorous mode for the current discussion, is the way that it utilises the ambiguous contravention of expected behaviours to promote laughter. Here again then, expectancies can be seen to open doors to alternative realms of meaning, rather than to constrain speakers into a single course of action.

The alternative route to sociability offered by argumentation, underscores the status of organisational structures, such as preference, as resources rather than constraints. This is because, not only can speakers choose to adopt or accountably contravene shared expectancies, but alternative modes, such as argument as sociability, exist as arenas in which their

contraventions can be legitimately staged. Moreover, as ethnomethodology stresses with its notion of reflexivity (Garfinkel, 1967), it is these very contraventions that ongoingly produce, reproduce and ratify the alternative modes themselves, as well as the acceptability of movement between modes.

In the current analysis, preference structure will be examined within the discursive mode of argument as sociability. In studying an alternative to the "normative" mode of interaction which dominates the CA literature, it is hoped that this analysis will allow the more universal features of preference organisation to be distilled from its merely "normative" manifestations. In this way, the properties that render this structural phenomenon a valuable resource for accomplishing social business will be highlighted and its image as a constraining form of normative dictates will be undermined.

Before I begin this, however, I would like to briefly summarise the original "error" of mistaking the "normative" usage of preference organisation for part of the structure itself. I believe that much can be learnt both from the nature of the error itself, and from the manner in which it was identified/constructed.

2 *PREFERENCE FOR AGREEMENT: A GENERAL PRINCIPLE?*

The assumption that speakers pursue harmony and avoid argument underscored the very first examination of preference organisation as a subject of study. When Sacks (1987) initiated this topic of inquiry, he did so by suggesting that conversation includes a "preference for agreement" as a "general principle", which he took to be a "formal and anonymous" apparatus independent of personal desire or local context (p 54). In an attempt to identify this apparatus, Sacks highlighted the importance of delay as a mechanism for displaying disagreement with a prior speaker as a "dispreferred" option when compared to agreement. He argued that

agreements occur “contiguously” (early in the turn) while disagreements are typically “pushed rather deep into the turn” (Sacks, 1987 p 58). Writers as recent as Buttny (1993) have supported this belief in a preference for agreement.

This notion of a “preference for agreement” was later rejected when it was noted that

Agreement is not *invariably* ... a preferred next action (Pomerantz, 1984 p 64).

Pomerantz (1984) was one of the first to establish that disagreement and dispreference are not inherently linked. Pomerantz identified a concrete empirical example whereby agreement is actually dispreferred, in responses to self-deprecations. She then compared disagreements under conditions of agreement preferred with agreements under conditions of disagreement preferred (such as after self-deprecations). She found that these utterances exhibited very similar features, which she termed a “dispreferred turn shape”. In this way, the common element was identified as dispreference and not disagreement.

Following this, CA shifted its attention away from merely dispreferred disagreement, to an examination of the nature of turn shapes. In doing so, they added additional components to Sacks’s “delay”, thereby establishing a set of features typical of dispreferred seconds. In contrast, preferred seconds were presented as identifiable through the absence of such components (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Levinson, 1983; Pomerantz, 1984). In this way, a new relationship between preference and agreement was established. For these analysts, it became clear that, however “normative” a preference for agreement might be, given the correct context, as in the case of self-deprecations, the apparatus is equally available for displaying disagreement as preferred.

3 *DIVORCING PREFERENCE ORGANISATION FROM THE PURSUIT OF SOCIABILITY*

As I have stated, one of the central aims of this chapter is to carry out a similar process of separating the “normative” usage of preference organisation from the universal resource. In this case, as I have noted, the problematic assumption concerns the role of politeness-as-sociability in conversation. Ironically, the same article by Pomerantz (1984), which sparked the rejection of agreement as inherently preferred, also participated in the adoption of sociability, in the form of politeness, as an intrinsic feature of preference organisation.

Pomerantz argued that preference organisation represents the functioning of a sociability norm in conversation. It was via this argument that she accounted for instances of a preference for disagreement. She concluded, for example, that it is more sociable for a second speaker to deny the validity of a first speaker's self-deprecations by disagreeing with them, than to attest to the acuity of their judgement by agreeing. However, the key figure in proposing sociability as constitutive of preference organisation was Heritage (1984).

Heritage (1984) is a major figure in promoting the unexplicated assumption that sociability and solidarity are necessarily achieved through agreement and affiliation. This assumption is apparent in his treatment of delay. Heritage contends that affiliative actions are produced early in a turn, while disaffiliative actions are delayed. This leads him to conclude that

the institutionalized timing features of preference design maximize the tendency for socially solidary actions to take place. In short, the preference system itself is intrinsically 'biased' towards solidary actions (Heritage, 1984 p 276).

However, he assumes without explication that agreements and acceptances are affiliative actions, while disagreements and rejections are disaffiliative. Heritage also makes the assumption that sociability is intrinsically tied up with the pursuit of agreement and harmony, in his comments on the nature of accounts. In discussing the "no fault" character of typical accountability practices in dispreferred responses, Heritage concludes that accounts universally and

inherently serve to diminish the opportunities for proliferating disagreement or contest (Heritage, 1984 p 272).

As discussed in Section 1 above, and in Chapter 2 Section E, other analysts do not agree either that agreement is necessarily affiliative, while disagreement is disaffiliative, or that accounts are invariably used to avoid disagreement and contention. The most notable authors identified as advocating argument as a sociable pursuit were Billig (1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993), Schiffrin (1984) and Knoblauch (1991).

For Knoblauch (1991), disagreement affords "a high degree of sociability" (p 187). According to Knoblauch, this is produced by the long-term affiliative action that disagreement provides for the playful circumvention of power asymmetries. Meanwhile, Schiffrin (1984) observes that argumentation actively employs competitive discursive structures, yet relies upon underlying cooperative and other-protective assumptions. In this way, Schiffrin contradicts the conclusion of Heritage (1984) that accounting practices maintain social solidarity by serving as "threat- and conflict-avoidance procedures" (Heritage, 1984 pp 272-3). Instead, Schiffrin asserts that argument promotes sociability by displaying a

tolerance of conflict through the playful enactment of such conflict - tolerance made possible by the taken-for-granted level of intimacy of the relationship (Schiffrin, 1984 p 331).

This contrary assertion draws our attention to the essential availability of threat- and conflict-handling procedures in maintaining the social solidarity of particularly intimate relationships.

It should be clear that this challenge to authors such as Pomerantz (1984) and Heritage (1984) does not attempt to deny the operation of sociability in the apparatus of preference organisation. Instead, it merely asserts that sociability can be performed by social actors in very different ways. As a result, explaining the design of a turn shape in terms of sociability tells us little or nothing, when both extreme politeness and out and out adversarial verbal combat can be attributed to motivations towards sociability. We see that although social solidarity can be maintained via conflict-avoidance (cf. Heritage, 1984) sociability can also be accomplished through courting the potential disaster of conflict-threatening behaviour and surviving as a solidary social unit (cf. Schifffrin, 1984). The lesson, then, is that whatever may "generally" be the case, actors are free to recruit preference organisation to perform any appropriate action, often precisely by accountably contravening the more "normative" usage.

4 *DISPREFERENCE: DIVORCING "RELUCTANCE MARKERS" FROM ACCOUNTS*

Viewing preference organisation as a deployable structure, malleable in the hands of conversationalists, also occasions a rather different treatment of the components that make up that structure. In his attempt to "model what participants in particular situations normally do" (Bilmes, 1988 p 173), Levinson (1983) divided the features of dispreferred seconds into four categories: *delays*, including pauses, insertion sequences, and the second category of *prefaces* - which in turn included discourse markers, token agreements, qualifiers and hesitations; *accounts*; and a "*declination component*" in which the action itself is performed, typically in an indirect or mitigated manner. Equipped with this

list of features for ticking off appropriate utterances, Levinson was then in a position to draw conclusions about the existence of preference structure as an institutionalised form.

Bilmes (1988) also differentiated component features of dispreferred seconds. For example, in discussing the “dispreference markers” of Pomerantz (1984), Bilmes grouped the first two categories - delays and prefaces - under his own heading of “reluctance markers”. However, for Bilmes this distinction was instituted in order to determine how this particular group of “competencies” (Heritage, 1984) functioned. Indeed, he directed his discussion only to these features, on the basis that

accounts. ... may be yet another partially independent phenomenon
(Bilmes, 1988 p 173).

I would suggest that this acknowledgement of the partial independence of accounts from reluctance markers results from Bilmes’s “structural” rather than “statistical” approach to CA. Rather than seeing preference organisation as some apparatus of constraint, which can be definitively captured once mapped out concretely, Bilmes is interested in how each individual feature of the structure operates as a resource.

It is this latter approach that I shall adopt in the current discussion. Such a perspective frees us from assuming that the various features of dispreference will necessarily co-occur and, moreover, allows us to differentiate between them in terms of what they accomplish in a given empirical instantiation. What I hope to demonstrate, is that the very institutionalisation of the pattern acts as part of the resource itself and that the various component parts of this pattern are not interchangeable. In particular, accounts are, unsurprisingly enough, orientated to accountability in a much more overt manner than “reluctance markers”. With this more detailed and differentiated approach to the phenomenon, we can examine the operation of preference organisation in

accomplishing the relatively little-documented discursive mode of argument as sociability.

5 "CHECK FORMULATIONS": A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

It has been through the study of my own argumentative data that the overgeneralisations spoken of above have come into focus. For, by deviating from "normative" conversational patterns, this data has shed a questioning light on some of the conclusions of earlier work. Most notably, it questions the usefulness of sociability for explaining the shape of preference organisation, and the unfortunate preoccupation of CA with the normative usage of discursive devices, rather than with the manner in which such devices accomplish the business at hand (both of which were the concerns of Bilmes (1988)). This focusing dimension of deviation from CA's accepted norms may be related to the status of my own data as interaction within a Jewish family. It has been noted that "argument as sociability" may hold a special place in Jewish culture (Schiffrin, 1984; Tannen, 1989) and thus it may be this subtle shift in normativity that has drawn my attention to the overgeneralisations of traditional CA. Whatever is the case, our interest here does not lie in possible cross-cultural differences, but rather in the simultaneous availability to social actors of a variety of institutionalised forms for the accomplishment of their discursive business.

It is my belief that this same argumentative data that has led me to re-examine some of CA's assumptions, is the very material that is uniquely suited to unpacking them. Indeed, as in the work of Pomerantz (1984), the introduction of a concrete example will ground the investigation in empirical analysis. With this in mind, the examination which follows will centre around a phenomenon which has emerged from my data and which I have named "Check formulations". Thus, in the tradition of CA, disembodied abstract theorising will be put aside in favour of an investigation into the practical application of this shift in theoretical focus.

“Check formulations” are rhetorical moves by first speakers which, as in chess, challenge an opponent to defend their position under threat of its defeat. The key feature of this situation, is that the opponent is forced onto the defensive. Thus, although an immense variety of responses are available, the frame is set for evasive manoeuvres. This “check” situation is achieved in argumentation when a first speaker purposely constructs a characterisation of the second speaker’s argument that renders a simple agreement by the second speaker into a form of surrender of that argument. The design of Check formulations also includes an additional feature, highlighted by the ambiguity of the term “check”. For, the rewording of the second speaker’s argument is displayed not only as a challenge, but also as a verification or checking procedure, with room for the second speaker to confirm or deny this reading of their argument. Furthermore, it is this room for manoeuvre which relates the formulations to the “check” rather than “checkmate” scenario in chess.

The distinctive features of Check formulations are their initiation using “so” and contrastive stress on a single item. Meanwhile, the responses are characterised by accounts, counter-attacks, and a very directed utilisation of “reluctance markers” (Bilmes, 1988). Applying the key insights from existing analysis in the literature to date, along with an in-depth analysis of extracts from my own data, I shall explore both the formulations and their responses.

Check formulations achieve their status as a counter-example for some of the conventional CA conclusions for two main reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, they highlight that the synthesis of what has been taken as a universal apparatus may merely be the product of an overemphasis on the normative usage of the device. Thus, in calling into question the accepted relationship between reluctance markers and accounts, Check formulations require us to see that each feature is independently

available for communicating preference and that the manner in which they are combined is what achieves the desired accomplishments of speakers.

In addition, however, there is a second manner in which Check formulations challenge traditional CA assumptions. As a concrete example of the discursive mode of argument as sociability, they demonstrate that the pursuit of sociability does not constrain speakers to act in a certain way. Instead, it can be seen that an organisational apparatus, such as preference structure, can be deployed by speakers flexibly and skilfully for the accomplishment of their desired interactional ends.

6 CHECK FORMULATIONS AS INFERENCES

Schiffrin (1987) carried out a detailed examination of various "Discourse Markers" in conversation, dedicating one of her chapters to the uses of "so" and *because*. Schiffrin argues that

Once we consider background knowledge as 'warrants', and interpretations which use background knowledge as 'inferences', we can see that the warrant/inference relation creates two shifts in information state (Schiffrin, 1987 p 205).

The first of these, Schiffrin identifies as occurring when previously unshared background knowledge is shared, that is, when a warrant is presented. Schiffrin suggests that *because* is used to mark this first shift. The second, inferences, occurs when "newly shared information is used as a basis for interpretation of topical talk" and is marked, according to Schiffrin, by the use of "so" (Schiffrin, 1987 p 205).

Most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, Schiffrin discusses the outcome of a second speaker displaying their utterances as inferences

warranted by the prior utterances of a first speaker. She uses the following extract to illustrate this:

EXTRACT S1

Zelda: They live in the Northeast.

Debby: Oh okay. **So** you have a lot of family up in the Northeast.

(Schiffrin, 1987 p 215)

Schiffrin argues that, by marking her formulation with “so”, Debby presents it as an inference warranted by Zelda’s information. Schiffrin concludes that, in marking one’s inference thus - as warranted by a first speaker - second speakers can shift (at least some of the) responsibility for its accuracy to first speakers. In addition, the upshot of this shift is to return the floor to the first speaker for confirmation that the inference is legitimate.

Schiffrin then goes on to outline how such a discursive device can be utilised for “challenges in interpersonal arguments” (p 216). For this she uses the following extract of data:

EXTRACT S2

- Freda: a. See we had no men teachers in there.
b. We had somebody come in the - in the assembly,
c. and y’just eh he wore a pair of pants.
d. and everybody was so excited.
Jack: e. Well nobody paid attention t’what was *said* then.
Freda: f. Maybe not! hhhhh
Jack: g. So aca demically wasn’t so hot, was it?
Freda: h. No.
Jack: i. Their mind wasn’t on what uh ... it was all about, then.
j. I mean *this* is the point I was trying t’make.

(Schiffrin, 1987 p 216)

Jack first elicits an agreement from Freda in line f. He then uses "so" to mark his next utterance as an inference warranted by Freda's own admission. This effectively returns the floor to her to legitimate the inference. Indeed, were she to dispute the inference she would risk appearing inconsistent, for the inference has been rendered jointly her responsibility by being displayed as following logically from her own warrant. Schiffrin concludes that

the division of responsibility created by a joint warrant/inference pair can strengthen a challenge by forcing one's opponent either to admit a self-contradiction or concede a point (Schiffrin, 1987 p 216).

It is this "joint warrant/inference pair" that I have labelled a "check formulation" and which I shall explore in the following analysis.

C "CHECK FORMULATIONS": AN ANALYSIS OF SOME EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES

1 A "CHECK FORMULATION" AND ITS RESPONSE

Let us now turn to an example from my own data. This exchange occurs in the midst of the second tape of family interaction. The subject of conversation immediately prior to this extract has been concerned with typical "sides" taken up within the family's arguments.

EXTRACT 1 (2/12/7)

- 45 Ava: usually (.) Mum (.) likes to sort of (.)
46 [Mum agrees with Dad
- 48 Mish: no [well Mum's got much better
49 Mum: [I like being
50 Mish: since she's been doing her college thing
51 Mum's got much=
52 Ava: =so it was bad? [that she agreed with Dad
53 Mish: [more
54 Sue: [much better at what=
55 Mish: =no: yes

56		because she wasn't confident
57		in her <u>own</u> opinion
58	Sue:	yeh [now she is
1	Mish:	[now Mum's confident

In line 52 of this extract, Ava makes the following Check formulation:

52 Ava: =so it was bad? [that she agreed with Dad

As in Extract S2, Ava begins her formulation with "so", thus marking it as an inference warranted by Mish's utterance in line 48. A further observation by Schiffrin (1987) is also pertinent to this utterance. In discussing the use of *oh* in clarification sequences, Schiffrin states that

Clarification is also requested when B either repeats or questions a portion of A's prior utterance with rising intonation and contrastive stress on the repairable (Schiffrin, 1987 p 79).

In line 52 Ava questions a portion of Mish's earlier utterance, using rising intonation and contrastive stress on "bad". However, this does not appear to be a simple case of a request for clarification via the identification of a repairable. It appears more as a request for elaboration via the identification of what might be termed a "problematic premise": in stressing "bad", she identifies "better" (line 48) as questionable. Sacks (1987) pointed out that ongoing disagreement is often portrayed as an issue of misunderstanding. In this light, the more similar a challenge is to a simple matter of repair, the less disruptive will be the conflict of opinion. Thus, while the "so" inference mimics a helpful participation in the joint-construction of an idea, the contrastive stress mimics straightforward repair - a case of mistaken word choice. Put together, these two features display a benign appearance of mere misunderstanding, while accomplishing an adversarial questioning of the underlying validity of Mish's original "warrant". It is in this sense that the dual status of the "check" displays its subtlety, representing not only the challenge of the

chess-player's "check" but also the tentative request for verification associated with the more generalised reading of "checking" behaviour.

In this way, Ava's challenge has two parts: Mish is established as (partially) responsible for Ava's inference (like Freda in Schiffrin's example); meanwhile, the inference in question is explicitly constructed as problematic. Thus, an issue of simple responsibility becomes an issue of accountability for a questionable conclusion. This, in effect, renders any disputation of the inference by Mish a form of self-contradiction. Mish is therefore caught in a double bind: she cannot support the inference without potentially undermining her ongoing argument; and she cannot refute the inference without potentially contradicting that same argument. This, however, is not a "checkmate", it is merely a "check", for Mish has at her disposal a whole army of response designs that can be creatively marshalled into her evasive manoeuvres.

In Extract 1 Mish makes the following response to Ava's Check formulation:

55	Mish:	=no: yes
56		because she wasn't confident
57		in her <u>own</u> opinion

Pomerantz (1984) examined in her analysis utterances in which agreements and disagreements occur within the same turn, despite their obvious contrastive natures. Pomerantz categorised such utterances as dispreferreds which act so as to display reluctance to disagree with a prior speaker. This categorisation was based on two observations. Firstly, focusing only upon examples in which a disagreement is prefaced by an agreement marker, Pomerantz insisted that

such turn shapes are used for disagreeing rather than agreeing (Pomerantz, 1984 p 75).

Secondly, Pomerantz argues that when agreement and disagreement components co-occur in a response, both components are characteristically weak in nature. Although she uses as part of her argument the circular proof that because they occur together they are thus weak forms, she also notes, more helpfully, that strong disagreements are characteristically "an evaluation that is directly contrastive to the prior evaluation" while the weaker types

are formed as partial agreements/disagreements: as qualifications, exceptions, additions, and the like (Pomerantz, 1984 p 74).

In this way she concludes that

The disagreements that occur in the agreement-plus-disagreement turns are not the strong type, that is, same referent-contrastive evaluation construction (Pomerantz, 1984 p 74).

The utterance of lines 55-57 does not appear to fit into the pattern identified by Pomerantz. Firstly, in Mish's response, a disagreement prefaces an agreement, rather than *vice versa*. Secondly, neither the agreement nor the disagreement component are in the weak form Pomerantz identifies. Indeed, in exploring self-deprecations as an exemplar of agreement dispreferred, Pomerantz observes that such negations as "no" and "hm-mh" are often produced as the first component in responses to self-deprecations. She offers these as examples of overt disagreement which attest to their status as preferred next actions. I would suggest, therefore, that the disagreement preface "=no:" provided by Mish, should be viewed as an immediate and strong "same referent-contrastive evaluation construction" (Pomerantz, 1984). It is only after this that the contradictory "yes" is voiced, which again occurs in a strong format.

I suggest that it would be a mistake to view Mish's "=no: yes" as a "reluctance marker" (Bilmes, 1988). Rather, it would seem that the strong

disagreement is used precisely to display the antithesis of reluctance. The point is, that any delay would be read as a display of reluctance. Therefore, when immediate and unconstrained objection to the pejorative implications of the inference is performed along with an extended "o:", its stark contrast to a pause does tangible social business. The message appears to be, that the possibility of being read as reluctant should be avoided at all costs - even if the cost is overt self-contradiction, as occurs here with the forceful negative being countered with an equally adamant "yes". I would therefore suggest that the disagreement preface here acts as a marker to display the impulsively unheeding avoidance of a dangerously implicative pause.

This "no:yes" does not, of course, occupy the entire turn, for it is followed by an account. In traditional CA, accounts are viewed as

a recurrent and routine component of dispreferred seconds (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 p 84).

They figure in both Levinson's (1973) and Heritage's (1984) lists of the characteristics of dispreference. However, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, Bilmes (1988) has reservations about whether or not accounts should be viewed separately from the other components of preference organisation. I believe that this response by Mish exhibits empirical support for this reservation. If the above analysis is correct and the utterance does not include any reluctance markers, but rather displays "not doing" reluctance, then its co-occurrence with an account becomes significant.

I would like to suggest that the particular situation in which second speakers find themselves following Check formulations, has a major effect upon accountability. Knoblauch (1991) suggests that contradictions make conditionally relevant a more extensive treatment of the contradicted item (Knoblauch, 1991 p 173). Conditional relevance is

seen to be created out of the tension between the contradicting and contradicted utterances. This not only problematises them, but requires what Jacobs and Jackson (1981) term an "expansion", in which a second turn converts (part or all of) a prior turn into the topic for a third turn. According to Knoblauch, these expansions take such forms as arguments, backings and warrants.

Further to this, Knoblauch observes that contradiction is not only achieved by overt gainsaying. It is also accomplished via "calling into question" (Knoblauch, 1991 p 174). This he defines as

a question which does more than just require an answer. It requires justification of the preceding utterance (Knoblauch, 1991 p 174).

From these insights we can conclude that "more extensive treatment", "expansion" and "justification" are dimensions of accountability. This means that in Extract 1 the Check formulation, in "calling into question" Mish's prior statement, renders both agreement and disagreement accountable. Indeed, it is only through an account that the argument-undermining threat of either choice can be avoided. In this case, the account is offered as a warrant which recasts agreement with the inference in a morally defensible format.

56 Mish: because she wasn't confident
57 in her own opinion

In this way the "checkmate" of simple agreement or disagreement is evaded.

Before we turn to a second example we should note Sue's contribution in line 58:

58 Sue: yeh [now she is

This is important for the extract which follows because here Sue casts in her lot with Mish in the discussion, a position which she goes on to support. Finally, Mish overlaps this utterance with a very similar conclusion:

1 Mish: [now Mum's confid[ent

As a result, both sisters simultaneously make the same point. This establishes/displays that they are in a relationship of alignment in the argument which follows.

2 A SECOND EXAMPLE

This extract of data is followed by another example of a Check formulation - the talk continues with:

EXTRACT 2

(2/12/8)

2 Ava: [but the fact that
3 we're still a one family
4 and all together
5 is partly because Mum supports Dad (.)
6 so its (.) so this is a good thing
7 that she [now doesn't support
8 Mish: [no they support each other (.)
9 Sue: no well its ok
10 for Mum to disagree with him now
11 [cause we're all individuals

In this extract Ava begins by accounting for her problem with Mish's argument:

2 Ava: [but the fact that
3 we're still a one family
4 and all together
5 is partly because Mum supports Dad (.)

She does this by establishing Mum's responsibility for the family's intactness as a "fact" - and thus irrefutable - brought about by her support of Dad (cf. Potter, 1996). In lines 6-7 Ava then makes a Check formulation marked by the use of "so" and the contrastive stress on "good".

6	so its (.) so this is a <u>good</u> thing
7	that she [now doesn't support

The effect of Ava's prefacing account of lines 2-5, means that her inference in lines 6-7 becomes much more than a mere reiteration of the earlier inference (line 52). This is because, the prefacing account makes the following premise: that Mum's support of Dad in the past was crucial to the family's history of unity. To then follow this premise with a rewording of the earlier Check formulation - with its questioning overtones - implies a counter-inference from the premise: that were Mum's behaviour to change and instead fail to support Dad, family disintegration would follow. The prefacing account can therefore be seen as an alternative warrant that points to exactly the opposite inference to that of the Check formulation - that it is good, not bad, for Mum to agree with Dad. Thus, by following such a counter-warrant with a repeat of the previous inference, Ava adds additional strength to the questionable nature of Mish's original warrant (line 48).

In Pomerantz's (1984) examination of self-deprecations as an example of disagreement preferred, in addition to the use of negations such as "no" and "hm-mh", another example of the "range of forms" in which "self deprecations are overtly disagreed with" are disaffiliations such as "Oh: that's ridiculous" (Pomerantz, 1984 pp 86-7). Pomerantz explains that

A speaker may disaffiliate with a prior critical assessment by proffering an assessment that makes no claim of access, that is, by proffering a critical assessment of the prior talk (Pomerantz, 1984 p 87).

I believe that Mish's response to Ava in line 8 unites both these features.

8 Mish: [no they support each other (.)]

Not only is "no" the first component, but this utterance critically assesses Ava's formulation. By insisting that Mum and Dad mutually support each other, Mish disaffiliates with Ava's suggestion that it is only Mum who supports Dad and not *vice versa*. Thus Mish's response mirrors quite closely the format identified by Pomerantz for disagreement as a preferred second.

Meanwhile, Sue's response exhibits the complimentary format of agreement dispreferred.

9 Sue: no well its ok
10 for Mum to disagree with him now
11 ['cause we're all individuals

Here we find an exact reversal of the heavily documented "yes, but" marker and partial disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984; Maynard, 1985; Schiffrin, 1984, 1985). In this case, a "no" is softened by the discourse marker "well", and then followed by a partial agreement, in lines 9-10, and an account for this in line 11. The "yes, but" phenomenon is acknowledged to display that the disagreement which follows only contradicts another speaker in some minor way that does not signify any real difference of opinion. In this utterance by Sue, the reverse is attempted. Here, the agreement which follows her "no well" is displayed as only agreeing with Ava in some minor way that does not signify any real coincidence of opinion, while the prior bone of contention remains alive. Billig (1989) notes that the "yes, but" mode of disagreeing can be utilised, not only to minimise disagreement, but in other circumstances, to avoid the ending of disagreement in a resolution that concedes one's sovereign opinion. Billig asserts that, in his data, a speaker's use of "but I still maintain..." in response to the opinion of another speaker, signals

"her wish not to let the matter rest in agreement" and therefore "that her own subjectivity remains intact and unpersuaded" (p 213). I would suggest that a similar avoidance of agreement occurs in Sue's utterance. In this way, the discursive mode of argument as sociability can be maintained and Sue can agree without losing her overall position in the dispute.

As explained in the previous example, Check formulations ensure that a simple disagreeing "no" would hazard undermining one's argument, thus creating a self-contradiction. Meanwhile, a simple "yes", or even a softened agreement, as displayed here, would have morally pejorative implications.¹ Both of these responses therefore become accountable. Thus, Sue circumvents the peril of the "check" situation by incorporating an account into her response (line 11).

This account targets the unuttered counter-inference spoken of earlier, in which it is implied that any change in Mum's behaviour from supporting Dad would hazard a dissolution of the family. In her response, Sue does not dispute the premise that equates a history of support with family unity. Instead, by bringing in a new variable, she argues for a qualitative difference between the historic and current situations. She argues that Ava's implied inference does not follow because "now" things are different "cause we're all individuals". In this way she deftly avoids any disruptive implications for the argument she has supported. At the same time, however, she is able to agree with Ava's first premise (lines 2-5) which portrays Mum in a good light. Put another way, the "no well" and partial agreement, followed by an account, allows Sue to temporarily and provisionally agree with Ava, while ensuring that the underlying disagreement continues on.

¹ Note that this argument has become Sue's concern both by her signalling of support for it in line 58, and via her current involvement in the dispute.

As in the first example, therefore, the responses (of both Mish and Sue) to Ava's Check formulation begin with an unmitigated "no". In addition, Sue's response combines this "no" with "well" and an accounted-for agreement which justifies her argument and calls Ava's into question - implying that Ava's inference is based on an outdated premise. Here again, we find unexplicated delay is strenuously avoided following the Check formulation, while the importance of the account is rendered paramount.

Once more therefore, Ava's interlocutors successfully employ the resources of preference organisation to ensure that Ava's "check" fails to achieve a "checkmate". The important observation, which cannot be too much reiterated, is that this success results from the members' minute discernment (however unconscious) as to the relative appropriateness of the various resources available, and the flexibility with which they can be deployed. Thus, institutionalised forms and normative usages do not constrain these actors, but instead open up a mutually accessible space within which complex social business can be enacted.

3 A THIRD EXAMPLE

Ava's ongoing challenge to the views of her sisters takes the form of yet another example of a Check formulation. The exchange continues as follows:

EXTRACT 3

(2/12/8)

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 12 | Dad: | [you feel that it was part |
| 13 | Sue: | and we're <u>old</u> enough to make |
| 14 | | you (.) [she |
| 15 | Ava: | [so you <u>wha</u> |
| 16 | | she wasn't an [individual <u>before</u> |
| 17 | Sue: | [she she |

18 as a parent
 19 the parents should always stick together
 20 and be consistent
 21 Mum: course they should

In line 12 Dad makes his first contribution since the beginning of this interaction between the children, saying:

12 Dad: [you feel that it was part

This would appear to be the first overt display that the exchange is being enacted in front of a significant audience. It is my opinion that the multi-party nature of this discussion is highly consequential for the talk, particularly in terms of alignments and self-presentation. For, when there are a number of participants in an exchange, conflicts of opinion with one member of a multi-party exchange simultaneously represent coinciding opinions, and thus alignments, with other members (cf. Knoblauch, 1991. See also the discussion of line 21 below). In uttering the above, Dad changes from passive observer to participant in the discussion. However, he does not opt to take sides, he instead contributes to the co-construction of the exchange as a presentation for the parents of beliefs about them. He merely probes Sue with "you feel that" and thereby underlines the opinion status of the contributions as opposed to any factual status.

This utterance is not initially taken up by Sue, who continues with:

13 Sue: and we're old enough to make

However, in line 14 Sue changes personal pronoun and pauses:

14 you (.) [she

This may be interpreted as an acknowledgement that her argument is simultaneously directed towards Ava and towards her parents.

In the cut and thrust of the argument, this slight hesitation allows Ava to intercede with her third Check formulation in lines 15-16.

15 Ava: [so you wha
16 she wasn't an [individual before

Again the warrant for the inference is displayed as the words of her interlocutor. In this case the stress on “before” marks Sue’s stressed “now” in line 10 as a “problematic premise”.

Sue’s response represents yet another complex handling of a Check formulation:

17 Sue: [she she
18 as a parent
19 the parents should always stick together
20 and be consistent

There are a number of noteworthy features of this utterance which reveal its skilful accomplishment of a balance of social actions. To begin with we see that the utterance is displayed as a continuation of Sue’s explanation, interrupted from line 14: she connects the “she” of line 14 with a repeat of “she she” in line 17. However, Sue then changes tack a little: converting “she” to “as a parent”. This allows her to continue as if merely progressing with her interrupted point, and yet to integrate into her ongoing account a response both to Dad’s query in line 12 and to Ava’s Check formulation.

By generalising to “parents” Sue achieves a threefold coup. Firstly, she resolves the dilemma of speaking either to Mum and Dad using “you”, as in line 14, or to Ava, as in “she” in lines 14 and 17. Secondly, she addresses some of the problematic status of the discussion as an examination of Mum’s behaviour, by generalising to “parents” as a whole

- thus a personal attack is converted into a general statement on parenting. What is more, in targeting "parents" and saying that they "should always stick together and be consistent" rather than focusing only on the behaviour of "mothers" she echoes Mish's "no they support each other" (line 8), in disaffiliating with Ava's "Mum supports Dad" (line 5). In Mish's disaffiliation, Ava's utterance is cast as suggesting that the support between the parents is only one way and is rejected on this basis. In lines 19-20, Sue affiliates with Mish's orientation to a process of mutual support between their parents. Finally, in emphasising "parent" Sue addresses the moral accusation in Ava's check formulation - that Mum's independent status as an "individual" is being denied. Introducing the equally legitimate social role of "parent", one that is generalised and ungendered, and linking it to an extreme case formulation - "always" - (Pomerantz, 1986), Sue deftly parries the moral slur of suggesting that some of the family were not previously (acting as) individuals. In this way, although this utterance is displayed as the resumption of an ongoing point, it also acts as an account designed to deal with Ava's most recent Check formulation.

Thus, in Sue's response, an orientation to accountability is displayed without the overt employment of an account. Instead, the emphasised "parent", with all the business it accomplishes, along with the extreme case formulation which follows, vindicates the earlier components of her argument from moral objection. Meanwhile, there are in this response no markers of either reluctance to agree or disagree with Ava. If anything, reluctance is shown instead, towards having again to respond to one of Ava's Check formulations - its accusation is attended to but not its formulation. Therefore, although this response is very different from the other two as regards reluctance and accountability, I would suggest that, even more than in those examples, this utterance fails to be adequately accounted for by either a preference for agreement, sociability, or traditional preferred and dispreferred turn shapes. Again the "check"

situation promotes a situationally appropriate employment of available resources, which, for a third time, escapes a checkmate!

At the end of this extract Mum makes her first contribution to the exchange:

21 Mum: course they should

Like Dad in line 13, this overtly displays that the parents have been an audience before (and for) whom the discussion is being performed. Unlike Dad, however, Mum offers her support for one of the points being made and therefore, in a sense, for one of the opposing sides. Indeed, as Knoblauch (1991) asserts, markers of agreement do not merely establish local coalitions between speakers, they also position speakers with regards to one another. In this way, explicit agreement with one speaker brings with it the hazard of being disagreed with by another speaker, where that other has been engaged in disagreement with the first. This leads Knoblauch to conclude that

the series of disagreements establishes a *dialectical relation* of speakers in terms of proponents and opponents. ... the utterances of each speaker are located on one side or the other (Knoblauch, 1991 p 185).

This contribution by Mum is, I believe, pivotal in the exchange, for it heralds a major change in Ava's subsequent turns, as will be discussed in the following section.

4 A COUNTER-EXAMPLE

In the three examples examined above I have identified a phenomenon called Check formulations in which "so" and contrastive stress is utilised to engender the need for a defensive response from an interlocutor. It is exceedingly opportune that not only does the exchange include three Check formulations, but they are in turn followed by a contrasting

example. With the aid of this fourth extract, I would like to demonstrate that an inference using “so” and warranted by information from another conversant, can characterise “confirmation requests” (Schiffrin, 1987) as well as Check formulations. The aim of this will be to establish the unique properties of Check formulations through contrast with a counter-example.

EXTRACT 4

(2/12/8)

- 22 Ava: oh yes [absolutely its wonderful
 23 Sue: [while the children are growing up
 24 and that's what you did
 25 and when now you we're old enough
 26 to make our [own decisions
 27 Ava: [oh I see
 28 Sue: it does[n't matter if she
 29 Dad: [and when you're out of
 30 [s
 31 Ava: [so now it doesn't matter
 32 if they disagree
 33 [and we see them disagree
 34 Sue: [if she has a different opinion (.) yeh
 35 Mum: we yeh anyway we disagreed when
 36 even when you were little
 37 but just not in front of you

In line 22 Ava makes a threefold, extremely strong, and emphasised agreement. What is more, this utterance begins with “oh”:

- 22 Ava: oh yes [absolutely its wonderful

Schiffrin (1987) examined the features associated with utterances employing “oh” as a “Discourse Marker”, suggesting that

Oh occurs as speakers shift their orientation to information (p 74).

It is my belief that this utterance marks a shift in Ava’s orientation to the counter-argument being made and furthermore, that it is not mere

coincidence that this shift occurs immediately after Mum's casting of her support in favour of that counter-argument.

Overlapping with this exclamation by Ava is more of Sue's ongoing point. She continues initially with:

23 Sue: [while the children are growing up

However, her next line marks a change to directly addressing her parents - in the "you" form:

24 and that's what you did

This is also, I believe, a response to Mum's entrance into the discussion in line 21. As in the earlier hesitation and change of person to "you" in line 14, which follows Dad's contribution, the conversion of these key observers into active participants is consequential for the subsequent talk. What is more, the direction of their support is highly influential. In sanctioning Sue's argument with "course they should", Mum clearly gives support to this point. Thus, while Ava's response is to change her orientation to that argument, Sue is able merely to include her parents in her address and then simply to continue on with that favoured proposition. Indeed, without pause or hesitation Sue finally concludes her point²:

25 and when now you we're old enough
26 to make our own decisions

After this, Ava again makes another exclamation using "oh":

27 Ava: [oh I see

² This is only the conclusion of a point retrospectively, because of what follows.

Schiffrin (1987) states that the repair process is accomplished

by first **identifying** a repairable, and then **integrating** the repair into discourse as a basis for further response (Schiffrin, 1987 p 81).

According to Schiffrin, “oh” can be used for both identifying and integrating activities. In Extracts 1, 2 and 3, I argued that Ava identified a “problematic premise” in each case - the Check formulation version of a repairable - by the use of “so” and contrastive stress. If this is the “**identifying**” stage of a problematic premise, then it can be argued that the above instances of “oh” mark a phenomenon similar to the second stage in the repair process - “**integrating**” that information. Indeed, the example Schiffrin uses to illustrate the above point includes one of her participants mirroring Ava’s line 27, and saying “Oh I see” (Schiffrin, 1987 p 81 Extract 17).

Taken together, I would suggest that Ava’s two exclamations using “oh” signal a change in her relationship with the positions presented by the other speakers. For this reason, the inference in lines 31-2 takes on a very different status to that of the earlier Check formulations, despite the fact that it too begins with “so”. However, there is also a more fundamental dissimilarity - a feature of the inference itself that identifies it as different.

Schiffrin (1987) cautions us not to assume that all questionings are “clarification requests”, but that some may be “confirmation requests” (p 80). She distinguishes these on the basis that only the former contain contrastive stress on a repairable item. In Extract 4 Ava’s inference does contain a stressed item, - “see”:

31 Ava: [so now it doesn't matter
32 if they disagree
33 [and we see them disagree

However, “see” is unlikely to be a repairable, or rather a “problematic premise”, in the sense that there is no contrasting counterpart in the counter-argument with which it can be matched - unlike “bad” versus “better”; “good”-plus-negative versus “better”; and “before” versus “now”.

To summarise, Extract 4 shares a number of the features of the Check formulations of the other extracts: it is an inference marked by the use of “so”; it is warranted by information that the second speaker proffers; and confirmation by the second speaker is implicative. However, in this inference, there is no “problematic premise” identified in the second speaker’s prior utterance. As a result, unlike in the Check formulations, the inference does not identify component parts of the second speaker’s argument as morally questionable, thereby undermining that argument. It is my contention that this is the crucial feature of the Check formulation, the feature which makes both agreement and disagreement accountable. We should therefore look to the responses to the inference in Extract 4 in order to see whether accountability is oriented to differently in the absence of a problematised premise.

Let us look at Ava’s confirmation request in the context of the surrounding talk:

- 28 Sue: it does[n’t matter if she
29 Dad: [and when you’re out of
30 [s
31 Ava: [so now it doesn’t matter
32 if they disagree
33 [and we see them disagree
34 Sue: [if she has a different opinion (.) yeh

In line 28 Sue says:

- 28 Sue: it does[n’t matter if she

Meanwhile, Dad begins an utterance which he then leaves half unsaid:

29 Dad: [and when you're out of
30 [s

It appears that these two utterances form the components from which Ava's clarification request is created. She recycles the "it doesn't matter if" from Sue and transforms Dad's "and when you're out of s[ight]" into "and we see them disagree" as a candidate completion of Sue's utterance in line 28.

Sue overlaps the final line of Ava's utterance with:

34 Sue: [if she has a different opinion (.) yeh

Taken side by side the mirrored contributions of the two sisters are the following:

Sue says:

28 Sue: it does[n't matter if she

34 Sue: [if she has a different opinion

Meanwhile, nestled within this is Ava's:

31 Ava: [so now it doesn't matter
32 if they disagree

As I have stated, Ava's line 31 is a rewording of Sue's line 28. Then Ava continues with line 32, which is then reworded immediately by Sue in line 34. Taken alone this appears to be a joint production by Sue and Ava (Edwards and Middleton, 1986) in which Ava displays her transformed alignment - she now signals support of Sue's position. However, in addition, Ava continues her utterance with line 33:

Here, as I have said, she incorporates a new dimension from Dad's contribution - about the observed status of the parents' disagreement. This extra point is then acknowledged by Sue, following a pause, in line 34:

34 Sue: (.) yeh

In this second part of her utterance, Sue makes a short, unembellished, explicit affirmative in response to Ava's "confirmation request". The important feature to note in this utterance is the clear absence of an orientation to accountability. If it were not that the first section of this utterance overlapped the additional component initiated by Dad, one might be tempted to assume that this preface served as an account for the "yeh". However, this overlap and the similarity between Ava's "if they disagree" and Sue's "if she has a different opinion" - indicating a kind of joint completion of the item - would caution against such a reading.

Mum's response also contains an explicit "yeh" with no pause or delay marker:

35 Mum: we yeh anyway we disagreed when
36 even when you were little
37 but just not in front of you

In this case, however, it is embedded between "we" and "anyway" and followed by a continuance of the utterance. An important question to ask here, is whether the remainder of this utterance represents an account for this agreement. I believe it does not and that indeed, the design of the utterance is such that it orients to an avoidance of such a reading.

If the preceding elements of "we" and "anyway" were deleted, Mum's turn at talk would look very much like an account for agreeing with Ava's

inference: "... *yeh ... we disagreed when even when you were little but just not in front of you*". However, I believe that these two elements have a crucial part to play in preventing the utterance from acquiring the status of an account. In my opinion their role is to establish the utterance as independent of an agreement with Ava.

The initiation of the utterance with "we" displays "yeh" as an insertion: as if into a point that had already been constructed prior, not only to its utterance, but to Ava's inference in lines 31-2. Meanwhile, "anyway" appears to act as a discourse marker of the sort examined by Schifffrin (1987) - its role here being to lend emphasis to the establishment of "yeh" as an interruption. Indeed, Levinson (1973) observes that

a term like *anyway* ... seems to imply that an utterance prefaced with it is relevant to the proceedings in some more direct way than an immediately preceding utterance (Levinson, 1973 p 162).

In this way, by using "*anyway*" and presenting "yeh" as an interruption, Mum signals to her audience that her contribution be taken on its own merit, not merely as an account which flows from and justifies her agreement with Ava. What is more, in doing so, it displays that an account for the agreement is unnecessary and thus, that no orientation to accountability is appropriate. How different this is, therefore, to the responses which follow the earlier Check formulations, in which accountability is the most central feature.

D ARGUMENT AS SOCIABILITY REVISITED

Pomerantz (1984) observes that

Though sociability, support, and solidarity often involve the participants' agreeing or at least not overtly disagreeing with one another, there are nonetheless circumstances in which sociability and support are accomplished by disagreeing (Pomerantz, 1984 p 77).

It is my contention that the extracts under examination represent concrete examples of such circumstances. In particular, this data can be seen to contradict the assumption of Heritage (1984) that preference organisation inherently involves the pursuit of harmony and agreement by social actors and their avoidance of conflict and disagreement.

To begin with, we can recall Heritage's position on delay in preference organisation. According to Heritage, agreements are affiliative and disagreements are disaffiliative. In the former case, the likelihood that agreement will occur is maximised by its early production in a turn, while in the latter, delay allows for the possibility of disagreement to be obviated, therefore allowing for the likelihood of its occurrence to be minimised. However, in the responses to Check formulations, disagreement is not delayed and thus the likelihood that disagreement will occur is not minimised. Instead, it is the likeliness of agreements which is minimised by delay. However, I have argued in this chapter that this does not mean that social affiliation and solidarity are thereby minimised. Rather, social affiliation and solidarity can be accomplished precisely via sociable argument of the kind represented by my data.

With regard to the assertions of Heritage concerning accounts, a similar picture emerges. The accounts occasioned by Check formulations do not act so as "to diminish the opportunities for proliferating disagreement or contest" as Heritage suggests (Heritage, 1984 p 272). Quite the contrary - these accounts are precisely the mechanism whereby ongoing disagreement can be pursued and the finality of the "checkmate" can be averted.

From the above discussion we can see that social solidarity, or sociability, is an extremely important factor in the design of utterances, as was concluded by Pomerantz (1984) and Heritage (1984), but that the manner of achieving this social action is not set as that "characteristically"

performed by the "politeness" mode of sociability. Instead, actors have at their disposal alternative modes of speaking which open up rather different pathways towards sociability - exemplified here by argumentation, but humour may be another example. I would also like to caution that anti-sociability should not be forgotten as a social action that can also be accomplished via these same discursive tools. Moreover, although such a deployment of the resources is perhaps not as "normative", it is the very possibility of such a utilisation that gives sociable argumentation its threat-handling status and humour its threat-mimicking one.

I would also like to make one additional explorative excursion into the role of argument in sociability. I believe that it would be helpful to at least tentatively explore the factors which allow "argument as sociability" to take place. Knoblauch (1991) suggests that sociable argument depends on the "conventions" identified by Gumperz (1982), which develop out of social networks. Knoblauch puts forward the sorts of families that cherish "informal discussions" as examples of such networks. Meanwhile, Schiffrin (1984) implies that these "conventions" might be culturally specific phenomena, by suggesting that the deployment of argumentation for the accomplishment of interactional business other than conflict resolution, may be culturally specific. According to Schiffrin, although it is unlikely to be unique to (American) Jews, sociable argument may be more pervasive within their culture. Such conclusions would tend to attribute the argumentation that occurs in my data, which is exemplified in the extracts discussed above, to family "convention" or to Jewishness, depending on the author. However, I believe that other factors may have their influence.

One such factor might be the peculiarity of the research environment. It might be that taking part in this particular research project frees the participants from the more usual dangers that disagreement presents to

sociability (recall the special dispensations available to participants in the research relationship discussed in Chapter 3). Indeed, it could be that the participants are displaying their sociability precisely by going along with Ava's request that they argue for her.

Finally, a further influence upon the relationship between argumentation and sociability may have been the multi-party dimension of the interaction. As discussed earlier, the multi-partedness of the recorded interaction is highly consequential with respect to alignments. For, as explained, when there are many independent actors involved, alignments with one participant represent disalignments with others in a "dialectical relation" composed of two "sides" (Knoblauch, 1991 p 185). Once established, such a dialectical relation will mean that any disagreement with an interlocutor will simultaneously be an agreement with some other or others who make up the "opposing side". At first this observation appears to temper the divisive status of disagreements - lending them dimensions of consensus and harmony. However, it should also be noted that, to the same degree, agreement with a fellow conversationalist within this environment simultaneously accomplishes the disputatious disharmony of disagreement with someone else!

The various factors of convention, culture, research context and multi-partedness discussed here are unlikely to be either mutually exclusive or an exhaustive list of the possible influences on the relationship between argumentation and sociability. The point of this discussion is merely to address some of the potential ingredients in determining when the institution of argument as sociability is called upon and (re-)called into being.

E CONCLUSION

In the above analysis and discussion I hope to have demonstrated that preference organisation exists as a resource for conversationalists in such a way as to allow them to accomplish their interactional business. It is the mechanism by which subtle nuances, of timing and justification, communicate to interlocutors messages that transcend the words used, so as to enact skilful manoeuvres in the management of social life. In this vision of conversational structure, normative uses and expectations do not act as constraints on individuals, but instead allow unarticulated assumptions to enable mutual intelligibility. Speakers can simply utilise the myriad resources available in order to weave whatever tapestry of meaning and action they might desire. What is more, the skill involved in such accomplishments does not require conscious choice. It is only in retrospective analyses such as this one that the social actions performed by talk are rendered so explicit.

CHAPTER 7 "ARGUING 'THE FAMILY' INTO BEING": LOCATING RELATIONSHIPS IN TIME AND SPACE

A INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 3 and 5, two arenas of social interaction were examined for the ways in which the institution of Research can be seen to be "talked into being" (Heritage, 1984). It was observed that contention and rhetoric are central in this process, whereby a space is opened up and explored between competing opposites. The argument developed was that the institution comes to exist ongoingly as this process of exploration progresses and that it is the very irreconcilability of the various contradictions that ensure its continuation. In Chapter 6, meanwhile, a concrete example of disagreement and contention was focused upon, in order to redress an unfortunate imbalance in CA towards overemphasising harmony and agreement in social interaction. In the current chapter, a second social institution - "The Family" - will be examined for how it is constructed in interaction. Again it will be seen that disagreement and rhetorical opposition are the mechanisms by which the institution takes form.

1 *ACCOMPLISHING THE INSTITUTION OF 'FAMILY'*

One of the central interests of this thesis is in the ongoing and local accomplishment of social institutions. Following the teachings of Ethnomethodology and the CA of institutions, the underlying belief is that

institutions arise out of constitutive actions which reflexively produce and reproduce what counts as the institution in question. Within this Chapter, relevant elements of two notable sources of this type of analysis will be isolated. These will then be integrated into the analysis of how the institution of "Family" is brought into being in the extract under scrutiny. The sources in question are, Heritage (1984) and Holstein and Gubrium (1994), each of which adopts a very different approach to this process. I will therefore present a brief idea of each analysis in order to highlight their salient points of distinction.

Holstein and Gubrium (1994) look at members' usage of the discursive category "family", in order to examine how in its very articulation, this institution is brought into being - or, in their own words,

how the abstract entity "family" is locally conditioned, used and interpreted to be a social object - a "thing" in its own right (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994 p 233).

As described in Chapter 2 Section E, the focus of these authors is upon the rhetorical instantiation of social objects. They claim that institutions such as the "family" are brought into being as a result of argumentation and dispute. This conclusion arises from their belief that it is the accounts, definitions and justifications produced in response to challenges that create and perpetuate institutional realities.

Heritage (1984), meanwhile, was engaged in an attempt to identify

the steps whereby the society hides from its members its activities of organization and thus leads them to see its features as determinate and independent objects (quoted from Garfinkel, 1967 p 182, in Heritage, 1984 p 197).

The most relevant analysis within Heritage's work, in terms of my own current concern, consists of an examination of the local production of the institution of education. This analysis is very different to that of Holstein

and Gubrium ten years later, because, not only is there no mention of the institutional category "school" in his data, but the analysis is concerned precisely with how competent members, including the reader, are able to infer such an institution from the available discourse - without it being explicitly referenced. Heritage bases his theoretical position on the tenet that

the production and recognition of actions is dependent upon the parties supplying, and trusting one another to supply, an array of unstated assumptions so as to establish the recognizable sense of an action (p 180).

In this case, the 'unstated assumptions', or "background assumptions" (Garfinkel, 1963) concern how the institution of education is conducted.

2 THE CHALLENGED AND THE ASSUMED

In this chapter, I will attempt to amalgamate these two enterprises. As in Holstein and Gubrium's (1994) analysis, one of the central claims of this chapter will be that it is the environment of contention and dispute that leads to the co-construction of the argumentative behaviour and role relationships of the family members. At the same time, following Heritage (1984) I aim to catalogue how the institution of "family" is brought into being in my extract, despite the absence of any reference to the category "family" itself.

In this chapter it will be seen that, while the nature of the arguments, category entitlements, interrelationships, activities etc. of the members are rhetorically constructed within the argumentative arena of the interaction, the entity "family", in contrast, takes form in the very absence of challenge. It is the unarticulated consensus as to the existence of the institution that forms a common foundation for the discourse itself. Furthermore, it is in this way that the interaction is at one and the same

time, talk within the institution of family and talk which brings that institution into being.

It is in this endeavour that my analysis most fundamentally makes a departure from that of Holstein and Gubrium (1994). For, these authors extend their examination to include members' use of the category "family" to describe relationships other than those of biological lineage. Giving examples such as the use of the terms "brother" and "sister" by fraternities/sororities, prison inmates and street gangs, these authors conclude that in

connecting family, domesticity, responsibility, caring, sharing and the like, family discourse articulates a configuration of concern that relates what we think, know and feel about our social relations (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994 p 235).

What is implicit in this observation, is that members utilise what is commonly understood about "family" in order to accomplish connections between it and the social relationship in question (e.g. between prison inmates). Indeed, it is only by drawing upon such cultural resources that these authors are able to compile the listing that begins the quotation above. In contrast, I am interested in looking at a collective oriented to as "family" to see how such common understandings are produced and sustained. Within this framework, it is the project of this chapter to highlight the ways that "family" is brought into being without it being articulated - the ways in which its implicit assumption can be inferred through what is vocalised.

3 THE EMERGENCE OF FAMILY: ACCUMULATIVE EVIDENCE

Heritage (1984), in summarising Garfinkel's (1967) "Agnes study" and its reflections upon the social construction of gender, commented that,

it is surprising to realize the extent to which gender differentiation consists of a filigree of small-scale, socially organized behaviours which are

unceasingly iterated. Together these - individually insignificant - behaviours interlock to constitute the great public institution of gender as a morally-organized-as-natural fact of life (Heritage, 1984 p 197).

It is by appropriating a similar warrant, (see also Smith, 1978) that I argue in this chapter for the underlying efficacy of the category "family". As with the institution of gender, I believe that it is the accumulation of individually unremarkable actions that, when added one to another, make up the instantiation of the institution of "family" in my data. On the strength of this argument for the cumulative effect of interlocking instances, I will treat each individual example as evidence for my position, even though, taken in isolation, each may be underminable. This strong line on the issue appears to me the only way to avoid unnecessary apology and repetition of the premises on which my analysis is based.

In the identification of these multiple examples I will draw fundamentally upon the work of two theorists. Firstly, the work by Sacks (1972) on Membership Categorisation Devices. Secondly, that of Schegloff (1972), on indexical expressions, in particular, locational formulations and their systematic co-selection with other types of formulation. In addition, attention will be drawn to the use and interpretation of pronouns for the articulation of implicit and explicit alignments and delineations (cf. Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990; Fowler, 1993). With the aid of these analyses, I hope to show how the category (or device) "family" becomes inferred (by competent members of a discursive community) from the categories, actions, formulations, pronouns etc. that speakers employ.

One could liken the process by which "family" emerges out of these mechanisms, to the actions of a mime artist creating a box around themselves with the gesticulations of their arms. In every gesture which maps the boundary between free movement and immobility, the mime artist describes the dimensions of their containment and brings that form into being. In the case of my data, we can conceive how rhetorical

opposition functions in the place of muscular opposition as the mechanism for the artist's movements: as a "joint" enterprise on the part of all the participating members. With this analogy we can then observe how, just as the path of the artist's limbs describes the form of the unseen enclosure, so do the sub-categories, pronouns and related formulations map by inference, the form of the unarticulated, yet fundamentally assumed, institution of "family".

Meanwhile, in the ongoing analysis of the extract, the mechanism of contention and dispute (the rhetorical opposition mentioned above) will be shown to motivate the description of the behaviour, roles and interrelationships of the family members. Amongst the issues that come into dispute in the extract and, as a result, come to be explored, described and thereby brought into focus are: the question of continuity and change in the family's behaviour and role relationships; challenges to the possible illegitimacy of certain behaviours within the interaction; and questions of generalisability from one member to another that trace the dimensions of their interrelationships.

In this way, the analysis of this chapter will attempt to catalogue the way in which the concrete articulation of social objects arises out of disagreement, while tacit agreement allows abstract, unstated assumptions to operate for the promotion of mutual understanding.

B THE FULL EXTRACT

This chapter will concentrate upon an extended extract of data in a sequential manner, similar to Chapters 5 and 6. The extract in question is the following:

(Tape 1 Side A Section 2)

1 Ava: does that still continue are we still=
2 Sue: =the arguments don't continue
3 Ava: some of the arguments
4 are arguments that go on and on and on
5 Mum: no
6 Ava: that there are always [the same arguments
7 Sue: [well tho yeh
8 but you're not at home
9 so they don't (.)
10 Sue: so they don't continue=
11 Mum: =we DON'T AR[gue
12 Sue: [we don't argue
13 [very much
14 Dad: [so they must have been you then
15 Mum: we discuss [things (.)
16 Ava: [its all my? fault
17 Mum: but we don't ar[gue
18 Dad: [must have been
19 Mum: yes it was all your fault=
20 Dad: ='cause [we don't have those arguments now
21 Ava: [you wouldn't [you wouldn't
22 Mum: [that's right
23 Sue: no [that's right
24 Ava: [(was) that then
25 Sue: we don't ar[gue very much do we
26 Mum: [fly in the ointment
27 Sue: we have a ve-few occasional arguments
28 when we get a bit ratty with each other (.)
29 and somebody says something like (.)
30 that the other person takes exception to
31 they said it in the wrong way or something
32 don't we (.)
33 but that's about it we don't actually (.)
34 we don't argue like we used to argue
35 when we were children
36 Ava: yeh I suppose [so
37 Sue: [when they argued with us
38 'cause we're adults [now
39 Ava: [so WHEN DO YOU THINK=
40 Mum: [yeh
41 Ava: [=you stopped arguing like that
42 Sue: when you two [left
43 Mum: [when you two left
44 All: ((laughter))
45 Ava: or could it be that (.)
46 just after we reached [about the age of=
47 Mum: [Michelle comes home (.)
48 Ava: =about 18
49 Mum: mind you=
50 Ava: [()
51 Mum: [=when Michelle comes home
52 she has a good old argument doesn't she.
53 Sue: Mish always starts arguments when she comes home=
54 Mum: =oh yes [she always does

55 Ava: [it's not fair to ar (.)
 56 to say t she does things like [that 'cause she can't=
 57 Mum: [oh she DOES
 58 Ava: =hold her own part
 59 Mum: she still does
 60 Ava: well she'll (.) ((laughs))
 61 °she won't be very pleased°
 62 Mum: it's true [though
 63 Dad: [well phone her up and tell her
 64 [((coughs))
 65 Mum: [and she comes home
 66 and then she then she says
 67 oh sorry afterwards (.)
 68 °she didn't mean it°
 69 Ava: and I don't? (.)
 70 Sue: no you do as well
 71 Mum: yeh you do as well
 72 Ava: oh thanks
 73 Sue: I think it's just a question of
 74 more people being around (.)
 75 Mum: yeh
 76 Sue: and the fact that
 77 you two are more independent [now
 78 Mum: [that's right (.)
 79 [you're used to a bit=
 80 Sue: [you've got your own way of living
 81 Mum: =I li li leading your own lives
 82 Sue: and that when you come back here
 83 it's difficult to fit in (.)
 84 Mum: and then you have to fit into
 85 the parent-child role
 86 and it doesn't [sort of suit
 87 Sue: [yeh
 88 we've discussed this already me and Mum
 89 we've got our own theories haven't we
 90 Mum: yeh
 91 Ava: so you Sue do fit in 'cause you were here
 92 Sue: 'cause [I live here all the time=
 93 Mum: [well SHE'S NEVER
 94 Sue: [=I never go out
 95 Mum: [she's aDJUSTED we've adjusted to each other
 96 I accept that Suzanne's an adult (.)
 97 Ava: don't you accept I'm an adult then
 98 Mum: (0.4) yes I think I do
 99 but you don't accept
 100 that I accept that you're an adult
 101 Ava: ((laughs))
 102 Sue: yeh that's that's what we were saying isn't it (.)
 103 Ava: do you think even now?
 104 Mum: yes
 105 Sue: well maybe you more than [Michelle (.)
 106 Mum: [PERHAPS more
 107 Sue: Michelle doesn't (.)
 108 Michelle doesn't think that
 109 Mum and Dad think of her as an adult (.)
 110 Mum: mmm (.) definitely not (.)
 111 [but the WAY SHE ca
 112 Sue: [I don't even know

113 I don't even know whether
 114 Dad thinks I'm an adult or not (.)
 115 I think Mum does
 116 but I don't know whether Dad does
 117 do you?
 118 Dad: you have your moments
 119 Sue: see
 120 All: ((laughter))
 121 Sue: just as well I don't think that
 122 'cause I'd be wrong

C THE ARGUMENTS

1 ARGUMENTS AND 'US'

Prior to this extract, the members have been discussing some of the topics that they "used to argue about", variously presented as what happened "when you were young" or "when I was at school". At this point Ava asks:

1 Ava: does that still continue are we still=

In this utterance, Ava questions the actions of a collective of actors referred to as "we". Terms such as these are known amongst logicians, linguists and conversation analysis as "indexical expressions", that is, as terms whose referent alters according to context (Levinson, 1983 p 45-96). The linguists Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) lament that

English is poorly equipped with indexical expressions for people (p 32).

However, they also note that

One of the most striking finds has been the general flexibility and multifunctionality of English we ... Given the right functional and contextual factors, we can be used to encode any of the six persons that are distinguished in English as in:

28 1st: We are not interested in the possibility of defeat.
 sg. 2nd: We want to eat our dindins now
 3rd: We had damp panties again at playgroup

 1st: We are underpaid and overworked

- pl. 2nd: We will hear in this lecture ...
3rd: We won the First World War
(Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990 p 177)

In their search for a “common core” meaning of “we”, Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) find great difficulty with this flexibility, which leads them to conclude that only given the “functional context” of a particular usage can its meaning be divined (p 172).

Amongst Discourse Analysts, however, this flexibility and the ambiguity that it produces, is something to be celebrated as one of the strengths of indexical expressions for the accomplishment of rhetorical business. Although, in any given case, “background assumptions” (Garfinkel, 1963), or common knowledge, renders most of the near infinite number of possible referents inapplicable, the flexibility of the indexical expression remains paramount. This flexibility means that speakers retain the option to deny the appropriateness of any referent featured in the subsequent uptake by others, thus enabling them to deploy that very ambiguity for the accomplishment of rhetorical business.

In investigating indexical expressions, Schegloff (1972) took a special interest in a sub-category of such terms, which he called “locational proterms”: for example “here” or “there”. Schegloff postulated that when a locational proterm is used, members are required to perform a “locational analysis” in order to make sense of them. In the case of personal pronouns, it would follow that members are required to carry out a “membership analysis” (Schegloff, 1972) in order to discover to whom the speaker is referring. Within the data under examination, we find numerous uses of indexical expressions, which require the other interlocutors to discover who or what is referenced. Here, I believe, is one way in which the implicit category of “family” can be discovered to be operational in the extract. What I hope to show within my analysis, is that the maximal set from which subsets of “we”; “you”; “they”; somebody”;

"people" etc. are drawn, is that of the nuclear family - Mum, Dad, Sue, Ava and Mish. This will become apparent from the interlocking accumulation of the "filigree of ... individually insignificant" instances in the data (Heritage, 1984 p 197: See Section A3), whereby: all of the individuals from this set are explicitly named; explicit reference to others outside this limited group are absent; and, who is being referred to via such indexical expressions is displayed as understood without problem, questioning or uncertainty. It should be noted in particular that the alternative maximal set made up of only the current interlocutors - i.e. Mum, Dad, Sue and Ava, but not Mish - although feasible in the first 40 lines of extract, must be rejected in view of later developments. This is not to say that the referents of the various indexical expressions of the extract are concretely fixed by the implicit mobilisation of "family" and thus shorn of their rhetorical advantage in terms of ambiguity. What I am suggesting, rather, is that the flexibility they afford for the accomplishment of discursive business depends as much upon the "background assumption" of a maximal set of "family", as on the ambiguity over which sub-set of family is being utilised.

Narrowing the focus again to the specific indexical expression "we", it is useful to consider what kind of "membership analysis" (Schegloff, 1972), speakers need to carry out in order to determine a concrete referent. Within the current analysis, one of the most significant distinctions that hearers must make is between what linguists call the "inclusive" and "exclusive" "we" (Leech and Svartvik, 1978; Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990; Fowler, 1993). The "inclusive we" includes the addressee as well as the speaker, along with any number of other individuals. The "exclusive we", meanwhile, includes the speaker and one or more other individuals, but not the addressee. The next problem for the hearer is to determine who else (if anyone) is included in the reference, and on what basis.

One of the “most prominent features of *we*” identified by Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990 p 178), was its usage in signalling solidarity. These writers posit that the use of “*we*”, as opposed to other alternatives, “introduces a bond with his/her interlocutors” and that, as a result of this, “other persons are brought into an obligation pattern” (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990 p 178). Mühlhäusler and Harré conclude from this that the speaker’s responsibility is reduced by this means. However, I would suggest that this is not necessarily the case, as speakers might actually take on a greater responsibility with the use of “*we*” - for example, when using “*we*” in the place of “*you*”. Despite this point of disagreement, we will see in this analysis how this bond of solidarity, made available by the use of “*we*”, is ubiquitously applied to align and disalign family members as part of the many gestures in which “family” is given form.

Let us return to the first utterance of the extract:

1 Ava: does that still continue are we still=

We see here that Ava presents “*we*” as a self-evident category of persons. The unproblematic status of such an assignment is then ratified by the uptake which follows - in displaying no concern with that choice of expression. However, Ava’s question concerns whether there is a temporal continuity in a given element in the behaviour of this “*we*”. Here again she utilises an indexical expression, in this case “*that*”. In contrast to the unproblematic standing of “*we*”, “*that*” is treated by Sue as inadequately referential. This treatment is accomplished in the following:

2 Sue: =the arguments don’t continue

It should be noted that Sue’s contribution is initiated before Ava has finished her question. It is thus a misprojection in response to the TRP after “continue” (Sacks et al, 1978). In emphasising that “the arguments don’t continue”, Sue not only makes explicit what was ambiguous in

Ava's indexical use of "that", she also draws attention to that ambiguity. As a result, she hints at the existence of other, unspecified, aspects of shared behaviour amongst the unproblematised entity "we".

I would suggest that the contrastive treatment of these two indexical expressions draws upon and works up the "background assumptions" (Garfinkel, 1963) "which speakers trust one another to implement" (Heritage, 1984 p 154) during interaction. While "that" is represented as in need of clarification, "we" simultaneously gains stature as a referent shared by the participants. As I proposed in the introduction to this analysis, I take this shared understanding, unneeded of explicit elaboration, to involve the referent "family". Given this premise, I would suggest that Sue's attention to the delimitation of what does not continue, engenders a space for other aspects of "family" to endure. In this way, I believe that Sue's utterance is one that contributes to the accomplishment of "family" in two ways.

On the one hand, the concrete specification of "the arguments" as discontinued, rejects the appropriateness of any universal claim about the discontinuity of family practice, thereby establishing "family" as an enduring entity. In other words, Sue takes care to clarify the "background assumptions" that Ava trusts her hearers to implement, so as to ensure that continuity is not rejected on a general basis, with regards to the family. On the other hand, the redundancy of making any specification as to the referent of "we", confirms Ava's trust that, as competent members, the hearers will implement the implicit and necessary "background assumption" that "family" is operative in her utterance. This, I would suggest, is the first example of "family" being accomplished in the data - without being explicitly referenced and because it is not explicitly referenced.

Ava's next utterance, is as follows:

3 Ava: some of the arguments
4 are arguments that go on and on and on

Here, Ava provides an uptake of Sue's explicit reference to "the arguments" as the activity under examination and thereby ratifies Sue's choice of this behaviour as appropriate for her (Ava's) reference to "that" in line 1. However, this utterance does much more. It initiates an exploration of the nature the family's arguments which characterises most of this extract.

A central concern of this chapter, along with examining the implicit operativeness of the institution of "family", is the detailed cataloguing of how the environment of argumentation is the medium in which social objects take form. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this is the key insight to be taken from the work of Holstein and Gubrium (1994). Talking specifically about the entity "family", these authors postulate that

Challenge and response bring family into focus, producing an object to be claimed, contested and interpretatively reconstructed (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994 p 239).

In this section of the data, "arguments" are the matter that is brought into focus via challenge and dispute, rather than "family". As pointed out above, "family" is not itself contested. In the analysis of the first part of the extract, I aim to highlight how the nature of the family's "arguments" is fleshed out as a result of the contentiousness of the interaction.

In lines 2 and 3, Ava offers a characterisation of arguments. This definition does not merely arise out of the blue but, rather, is contributed as a contrasting opinion to that given by Sue. Sue asserts that "the arguments don't continue", while Ava's description presents "some of the arguments" as occurring persistently over time. This persistence is articulated through the repetition of "on" in "on and on and on". Again this

emphasis on continuity highlights the shared and ongoing history of the interrelationships between the actors in question. As will be seen, what comes under dispute does not concern the existence of a shared history amongst the referenced parties. It concerns the existence of changes in the interrelationships between them. What then gets fleshed out in the argumentative arena is the ongoing and enduring identity of the entity to which they all belong - that is, the "family".

At this point Mum contributes a "no" in line 5, which denies the applicability of Ava's description to the matter at hand. This leads Ava to further formulate her version of the family's arguments with the following:

6 Ava: that there are always [the same arguments

What has been established, therefore, in these first few lines of the extract, is a disagreement with regards the continuity of arguments within the family. Ava appears to be looking for agreement that such a continuity exists. However, this is not forthcoming from either Sue or Mum.

2 WHO'S AT HOME?: THE FORMULATION OF PLACE

In line 7, Sue displays dispreference by way of an agreement preface (cf. Pomerantz, 1984; see Chapter 6):

7 Sue: [well tho yeh

After this, Sue goes on to expand her denial of continuity in arguments, by describing a juncture which divides the historical and current situations:

8 Sue: but you're not at home
9 so they don't (.)
10 so they don't continue=

In this utterance the entity "home" is made relevant as a locational formulation which separates the past and present configurations. This further formulation of "the arguments" merits a detailed examination:

Schegloff (1972) examined in detail some of the mechanisms by which place is formulated in conversational practice. His primary observation was that, when reference is made to a location, although numerous ways exist to refer to it, not all of these may be considered "right". This led him to examine on what grounds particular terms are selected.

One of Schegloff's main observations was that, in a piece of discourse, numbers of terms are often "co-selected" so as to "go together". The key point of such "co-selections" is that they should not be viewed merely as fitting the topic at hand, but as the tools which actually constitute that topic. In addition, Schegloff pointed out that the use of locational terms is not restricted to the formulation of place but, rather, that place terms are often used to accomplish formulations such as occupation, "stage of life" and activities. In illustrating the second of these, Schegloff utilised the following extract:

A: When did this happen?

B: When I was in Junior High School. (2)
(GTS II, 23)

(Schegloff, 1972 p 313).

Furthermore, when examining the relationship between selections of location and membership identifications, Schegloff concluded that "co-selection" could be seen to take place between these two types of formulation as well as within them. To illustrate his conclusion, he again drew upon the above example, suggesting that

It may be in the light of this co-selection that we should appreciate that the use of "Junior High School" to answer "When did this happen" in (2) above

is followed by the introduction into the story of characters formulated as "principal" and "teacher" (Schegloff, 1972 p 337).

Let us now apply these insights to the utterance in question. In line 8 of our extract, Sue formulates place using the term "home", in order to mark the temporal juncture at which "the arguments" discontinued. Just as "When I was in Junior High School" was used to answer "When did this happen" in Schegloff's example, "you're not at home" is used by Sue to explain why "the arguments don't continue". This utilisation of a locational index to delineate both a temporal juncture and a mode of activity (the arguments), is neither accidental nor irrelevant. Instead, it is a highly consequential rhetorical move. It "creates the relevance" (Schegloff, 1972 p 337) of a whole set of attributions that can be (and, as we shall see below, some of which are) subsequently used to link the location of members "at home" (or not) and the continuation or discontinuation of arguments.

Amongst the business that Sue's "you're not at home" accomplishes are two different, but not mutually exclusive messages. Firstly, the one that is picked up most extensively in the talk which follows, concerns Ava's part in those arguments. That is to say, without her "at home" there are no arguments of the nature being delineated. We shall go on to see the uptake on this message later. In addition, however, there is also a second potential message concerning what Edwards and Potter (1992) termed "category entitlements". Potter (1996) explained that "category entitlements" occur when

Certain categories of actors are treated as entitled to know particular sorts of things, and their reports and descriptions may thus be given credence (Potter, 1996 p 28).

In Sue's reference to Ava's not being at home, I believe that there is a denial of Ava's "category entitlement" to make claims about the family's

arguments, on the basis that she cannot know what behaviour still continues "at home", because she is not now there.

In both of these messages the centrality of "home" to family practice is made paramount. In the first message, the absence of a family member from home is presented as transforming the nature of the family's interaction. Meanwhile, in the second, a family member's absence from home revokes their category entitlement to assess that interaction. I would suggest that this is an example of the local accomplishment of what Holstein and Gubrium (1994) posit to be one of the most "prominent" of the many "signs from which family is constructed", to wit:

the use of aspects of family's household location to signify the domestic order assumed to reside within (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994 p 241).

Here again, then, we find, in the tracing of the entity "home" a simultaneous, but implicit delineation of "family".

3 *"WE DON'T ARGUE" - YOU DO*

Agreement to Sue's statement that "the arguments don't continue" is forthcoming from Mum in the definitive

11 Mum: =we DON'T AR[gue

In this utterance, Mum utilises the indexical pronoun "we" to describe the collective of actors who "don't argue". Again, as in line 1, the hearer is expected to discover to whom "we" refers. What parties are thereby referenced is intricately interlinked to the discursive action of the utterance. This statement disagrees with Ava. Therefore, in order not to contradict itself, "we" must, at the very least, exclude Ava. At the same time, Mum is agreeing with Sue's assessment that "the arguments don't continue", thus making relevant the assumption that Sue is included in

the referent "we". Given this, the extrapolation follows that Mum supports Sue's implicit formulation of a collective within the family of those who are still "at home" - a group which includes Mum, Sue and Dad, but which excludes Ava and Mish. All this is, however, left inexplicit and therefore unconstraining in terms of opportunities for its subsequent deployment in the unfolding rhetorical arena.

Interestingly, Sue verifies this agreement by echoing Mum's words, but, significantly, she tags on a mediating clause in line 13:

12 Sue: [we don't argue
13 [very much

At this point, Dad offers the following contribution:

14 Dad: [so they must have been you then

In this statement we find Dad making explicit the very distinction that was so flexibly ambiguous in Mum and Sue's utterances discussed above. By emphasising "you", and addressing this directly to Ava, Dad specifies, that "we" who "don't argue" must, at the very least, exclude her (however, ambiguity still persists as to whether Mish is included - see the discussion of lines 42-3 in Section 5 below). Furthermore, taken as a whole, Dad's utterance represents an example of where the relevancy (discussed above) created by Sue's "you're not at home", is subsequently deployed further along in the conversation. In this case, Dad draws upon the message in Sue's utterance, that Ava's leaving home caused a difference in the family's interaction. He does this by using that implication to make relevant a causal attribution for the arguments - that they "must have been" her fault. What is again significant here, is that this extrapolation of "you" from the established category "we", once more requires the assumption of the "family" as the set from which all sub-sets must be composed.

Ratification also figures highly amongst the accomplishments of this utterance. To begin with, the utterance provides a ratification of Sue's original assessment that the juncture "you're not at home", when applied to Ava, appropriately explains the change in the family's behaviour. At the same time, it ratifies Mum and Sue's claim that those still "at home" no longer argue, through an uptake of the previous talk, which attributes the initiation of arguments to Ava. In doing so Dad aligns himself as a third voice in the collectivity of those who "don't argue" (and, not incidentally, of those who have remained "at home"). This means that, as in Mum's utterance of line 11, by forming just the sort of agreement being attested, it exemplifies that claim.

However, Dad's utterance is not only active in its uptake and ratification of what has gone before. It is also responsible for introducing agency into the discussion. For, Dad is directly attributing to Ava (and possibly Mish - again see page 228) personal responsibility for causing these "arguments". Drawing once more upon the work of Drew (1987), as discussed in Chapter 5, I would suggest that this attribution amounts to a tease of Ava, on the grounds that it is formulated as such an extreme attribution. Drew (1987) and later Mulkay (1988), observe that teases are often extreme formulations of another's actions, and here we have a conclusion displayed as rejecting all possibility of doubt and all other alternative representations of the link between being "at home" and the continuation of arguments. As with the majority of humorous discursive actions, it is important to recognise that the tongue-in-cheek quality of the tease in no way detracts from the serious business of the utterance, but on the contrary, is more likely to enhance such business by permitting the safe introduction of problematic material (Mulkay, 1988; see Chapter 5).

Mum, meanwhile, expands the meaning of her intimation that the relevant collective "don't argue", by explaining that:

15 Mum: we discuss [things (.)]

17 Mum: but we don't ar[gue]

This is not the first time within the data, that a distinction is made between "argument" and "discussion"¹. Once more, the delineation of arguments as social objects involves the staking of a contrary claim and accomplishes delicate business in the presentation of self and ingroup.

Around this contribution, Ava engages with Dad's attribution of line 14, by reformulating it into an accusation that she is entirely and uniquely at "fault":

16 Ava: [its all my? fault

What is particularly interesting here is that Ava does not outrightly dispute the attribution of blame to her. For, to do this would be to exemplify all too clearly the accusation being established - if she were to argue overtly at this point this would count as *in situ* evidence that she is the cause of arguments. Instead, she uses the format of what looks on one level to be an avowal of blame. However, by incorporating a questioning tone, Ava sets up a challenge to the elements of accusation and personal attack associated with the attribution, perhaps implying that such behaviour is in violation of the family's norms. I would suggest that here we have an example of Holstein and Gubrium's (1994) element of "caring" being drawn upon as one of the parameters of family practice. One might say that Ava's response to the tease is to highlight how close the others are getting to the implicit boundary within which family should be enacted - whereby the "caring" relationship of "family" becomes jeopardised by

¹ Almost the first subject discussed on Tape 1 of the data concerns this very question, which is subsequently taken up at various points in the ensuing discussion (See Appendix 1).

accusatory behaviour. It is important to see, however, that this boundary is one that Ava brings into being as she speaks, rather than being something pre-existing and 'out there'. Furthermore, it is a boundary whose subsequent status depends upon confirmation or rejection by the other participants.

It is also notable that, in characterising the attribution as an illegitimate move, Ava does not attend to the humorous element of the tease. In Drew's (1987) terms, this is a response which attends only to the hostile, serious element of a tease, while ignoring its humour. Furthermore, it is only via Ava's use of "my" that Dad's "you" is explicitly fixed in the singular. The effect of this is to exclude, at this point, the option of including Mish in the reference. This, I believe is all part of Ava's representation of the tease as extreme, and therefore potentially dangerous and illegitimate.

Dad's response to this provides an uptake of Ava's questioning tone:

18 Dad: [must] have been

At the same time, however, by reiterating the message of the earlier conclusion, it continues the tease. This response to Ava is then agreed to by Mum in the form of an almost exact echo of Ava's words:

19 Mum: yes it was all your fault=

Mum's wholehearted embrace of Ava's extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) signals even more clearly that a tease is taking place and displays her collaboration in this endeavour. By emphasising the humorous nature of this exchange, Mum thus ensures that no boundaries have been violated, and furthermore, that none will be (see below).

The whole position is then further reinforced with the follow-up reasoning by Dad

20 Dad: ='cause [we don't have those arguments now

In all, the contributions of Dad and Mum in the above exchange accomplish, through their teasing format, both a humorous and a serious message. As with many applications of humour in conversation, they utilise the ambiguity as to the true seriousness of their message, in order to successfully occupy the borderland between lighthearted fun and the serious introduction of hazardous topics of interaction (Mulkay, 1988; see also Chapter 5). What is more, the teasing exaggeratedness of their treatment of individual responsibility for arguments, actually closes down the avenues by which that issue might be considered seriously. Paradoxically, I would suggest that Dad and Mum accomplish the evasion of a potentially contentious and disruptive issue by their very use of exaggeratedly contentious and disruptive formulations.

In the next few lines of data, the collective contributions of the interactants continue on with the alignments that have been locally produced:

21 Ava: [you wouldn't [you wouldn't
22 Mum: [that's right
23 Sue: no [that's right
24 Ava: [(was) that then
25 Sue: we don't ar[gue very much do we
26 Mum: [ffly in the qintment

Here we find a display of solidarity between "we" who "don't argue" - not only in form and content but also via collaboration in the tease - and the contrasting disagreement of that ingroup with the (teased) outgroup of "you" who "must", logically, bear the "fault". In line 21, Ava begins an utterance overlapping with Dad's of line 20, and when repeated, also overlapped by Mum's "that's right". The uptake by the others on this

abandoned start, treats it as a defence or protest. For, not only does Mum further corroborate the assessment in line 22, but Sue's echo is prefaced by a "no" of disagreement with Ava. Ava's unclear contribution of line 24 can be seen as a change of tack towards explicitly questioning the attribution, but there is no specific uptake to this utterance. Instead, Sue reiterates her earlier formulation with:

25 Sue: we don't argue very much do we

This, Mum overlaps, with a summary metaphor of the situation within the family, and continuation of the tease, whereby Ava is the "fly in the ointment". In this representation, Ava is cast as the single disruptive element in an otherwise harmonious environment. As in the earlier contributions towards the tease, it is precisely by excessively overstating Ava's responsibility that serious entry into the matter can be precluded.

4 MINIMISING ARGUMENTS: ACCOMPLISHING ALIGNMENT

Following the above, Sue offers a description of the arguments to which she has been referring:

27 Sue: we have a ve-few occasional arguments
28 when we get a bit ratty with each other (.)
29 and somebody says something like (.)
30 that the other person takes exception to
31 they said it in the wrong way or something

Within this explanation, Sue does a lot of work to bring her mediated formulation, "we don't argue *very much*" (my emphasis), into line with the definitive conclusions made earlier by Mum and Dad. Namely, "we don't argue" (Mum, line 11) and "we don't have those arguments now" (Dad, line 20). In doing so she is able to explain away any apparent misalignment with Mum and Dad that might interfere with the united front being talked about and brought into being. She does this, as we shall see, by presenting the arguments in question as infrequent, trivial and

One of the first things to be noted in this description, is its accomplishment of minimisation. In line 27, the infrequency of the arguments is worked up with the use of "a ve-few occasional". The choice of "a bit" to describe "ratty" in line 28, is similarly minimising. However, "ratty" has additional rhetorical effectiveness, in the following sense: to describe "somebody" as "ratty" is to utilise a mundane, colloquial term with no overtones of extraordinariness or major significance. What is more, this term is a hearer's descriptor. Thus, unlike alternatives such as angry or malicious, it explains nothing about internal states or intentional harm, being restricted to describing how a speaker comes across to an audience. In this way, no profound reason is being established for the behaviour, delivery is the only variable being formulated, and in this way, delivery is formulated as the significant variable.

8 there was an episode, with (.) a bloke, (.)
9 in a pub, y'know?
10 And me: having a few drinks and messin'
(Potter, 1996 p 37).

In his analysis, Potter alerts the reader to the speaker's use of the causality-neutral term "episode"; minimal particulars, as in "pub" and "bloke"; the colloquial idiom "messin"; and the mitigating adverbial "a few". He then goes on to highlight the subtlety with which the discursive business of this description is accomplished, by pointing out the extent to which such global formulations are "robust against undermining" (p 39). I would suggest, however, that there is an additional element to such examples of "systematic vagueness". It appears to me, that systematic vagueness also carries implications of exemplification. Despite the specificity of this unique occurrence, the choice of global formulations projects the feeling that it could have been any "bloke" in any "pub", after any number of "drinks" of any description and any one of a variety of innocent forms of "messin". Thus, while to give details implies that those details matter, these global formulations equally imply that the details of the case are immaterial.

We can now apply these insights to Sue's description. While her "systematic vagueness" is effectively "robust against undermining", even more significantly, it both plays down the significance of the behaviour at issue and minimises the opportunity for negative causal attributions about actors. In line 29, the speaker in question is "somebody", while what they said is "something like", followed by a pause and change of tack, which displays the unimportance of actually supplying examples of what that "something" might be "like".

Line 30 then expresses the change of tack mentioned above, which represents a shift of focus to the recipient of the "something" being said. This recipient is described as "the other person", again a vague and unspecified individual, who "takes exception to", not what is being said, but the way "something" is said (line 29). How it is said is also presented - being "the wrong way or something". Once more, systematic vagueness

is employed in the use of “or something”, but in addition an unspecified sense of “wrong” in the behaviour is established.

Looking at the description in an overall way, we see that Sue formulates the manner in which a verbal contribution is made and/or heard, as the causal factor in arguments. The subject matter, meanwhile, is presented as a subordinate and largely irrelevant concern. Furthermore, when each individual choice of term and modifier is added together, the picture produced is the very opposite of dramatic: the arguments are “few” and “occasional”; the participants are “somebody” who gets a “bit ratty” and “the other person” who “takes exception”; the issue under contention is “something like” something else which is never gone into; and the offending manner of delivery is nothing more harmful than saying something “the wrong way or something”. Thus, minor upset is being displayed as infrequently occurring, between indefinite actors, on inexplicit subjects, as a result of unremarkable fluctuations in mood and sensitivity of delivery. Moreover, the disharmony that this causes is also presented as “wrong” and accidental, thus indicating that harmony is the successfully prevailing norm accomplished by the actors in question.

In the above, I have emphasised that Sue establishes in her description an indefiniteness about who are the actors involved in the arguments. However, as I have suggested previously, the set from which this “somebody” and “the other person” are to be drawn is severely delimited by the “we” established earlier in the extract – the subset from the collectivity of “family” who are still “at home”: that is, Mum, Dad and Sue.

Despite all of the careful work performed by Sue in this description, one of its effects could be considered as rather ironic under the circumstances. As discussed above, the teasing nature of the extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) employed by Dad and Mum, evade serious examination of the issue of responsibility. In contrast, Sue’s

solicitous representation of the family's current manner of arguing, turns the question of whether or not it is "all" Ava's "fault" into a defensible position. In this way, Sue's earnest construction of a low-key, no-fault mode of arguing, actually opens up the closing accomplished by the exaggeratedly disruptive and contentious formulations of the tease. It is this then, that paves the way for the serious, difficult and disputed deliberations about responsibility that characterise the middle section of the extract.

5 *CHILDISH ARGUMENTS AND THE TIME FACTOR*

After characterising arguments in the above manner, Sue goes on to introduce an alternative formulation of the temporal juncture in the description of arguments. This is achieved by contrasting the description she has established of the current make-up of arguments, with its historical counter, on the basis of what Sacks (1972) called "stage of life". Sue says:

33 but that's about it we don't actually (.)
34 we don't argue like we used to argue
35 when we were children

37 Sue: [when they argued with us
38 'cause we're adults [now

At this point, I believe that the analysis undertaken by Sacks (1972) provides an excellent insight into what is being accomplished in this utterance. Therefore, I feel that a detailed and extended summary of the relevant aspects of his analysis is worth undertaking here. Furthermore, once outlined, later references to this project of Sacks's will become intelligible.

One of Sack's most famous examinations was that of the two sentences produced by a child under three:

The baby cried. The mommy picked it up (Sacks, 1972 p 216).

Sacks undertakes to explain how and why he, and the majority of his readers, hear in this that the "mommy" in the second sentence is the mommy of the "baby" in the first.

In order to do this he introduces the concept of a "membership categorisation device" (henceforth MC-device). Which he defines as

any collection of membership categories ... which may be applied to a population ... so as to provide, by the use of some rules of application, for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorization device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application (Sacks, 1972 pp 218-9).

He then goes on to observe that the terms "baby" and "mommy" are categories in a collection whose MC-device is "family", a device which also includes an undefined, but by no means infinite, number of other terms (e.g. children, child, parent). Following this observation, Sacks sets out two rules of application for these devices:

Firstly, his **Economy rule** states that a single category from an MC-device is recognisably an "*adequate reference*" (for example, the use of "baby" or "children"). A second **Consistency rule** holds that, if an individual in a population is described using a category from a certain MC-device, then that or other categories from the same MC-device may be applied for subsequent individuals. For example, the use of "baby" or "children" makes relevant such categories as "mommy" "daddy" or "parent".

Sacks then observes that a term may exist as a category within several different MC-devices - for example, "baby" belongs both to the MC-device of "family" and what Sacks calls "stage of life" - and that although any two

or more categories might be “combinably” referential, they are not necessarily so. Thus a “baby” might fit the categories of both “family” and “stage of life” but a person may still be referred to as someone’s “baby” and yet might occupy the category of “adult” within the “stage of life” MC-device. At this point Sacks introduces a “hearer’s maxim” to explain that, if two or more population members are described using different categories (e.g. “baby” and “mommy”) that can be heard as coming from the same MC-device (e.g. family), then “hear them that way” (Sacks, 1972 p 220).

A further step in unpicking the reading of these two sentences, involves identifying that some MC-devices are what Sacks calls “duplicatively organized”. This means that the categories in some devices can be partitioned into units, so that multiple instances of appropriate categories tend to be grouped according to units, rather than simply according to category. His example is that

one counts not numbers of daddies, numbers of mommies, and numbers of babies but numbers of families (Sacks, 1972 p 220-1).

In this way, individuals who are partitioned into such units can be seen as ‘coincumbents’ of that unit. This observation leads him to formulate another hearer’s maxim: given a population that has been categorised so as to form an MC-device with “duplicative organisation”, if that population “*can be heard*” as forming a unit of ‘coincumbents’ - “Hear it that way” (Sacks, 1972 p 221). Sacks’s proviso is that some patterns of categories cannot be heard as forming a unit - where, for example, only a set number of incumbents from a certain category applies, and yet that number is superseded. For example, regarding the device “family”, many “children” “*can be heard*” as ‘coincumbents’ of a unit. However, if many “mommies” are presented, they will not be heard as members of the same unit.

At this point, Sacks goes on to explain his concept of “category-bound activities”. By this he means that there are some activities that are taken as being done by certain categories within an MC-device. Sacks gives the example of the activity of crying and its boundedness to the “baby” of the “stage of life” MC-device. An additional observation that is important here, is that some MC-devices consist of “positioned” categories. “Stage of life” can be seen to be one of these, having “baby”, “child”, “adult” etc. as hierarchically organised categories within it. The combination of category-bound activities and positioned categories, renders certain activities degrading when applied to categories that are “up” the hierarchy from the category to which they are bound (e.g. an older child accused of crying on no valid provocation). Meanwhile, others are seen as praising when applied to categories that are “down” the hierarchy (e.g. a “baby” being observed not to cry on provocation).

Following this, Sacks postulates another hearer’s maxim: that if an individual is categorised by an ambiguous category - one pertaining to two or more MC-devices - and is described as carrying out an activity that is category-bound to one of those devices, then *hear at least* that device’s category to apply.

It is therefore, via this maxim combined with the first hearer’s maxim presented above, that we understand in “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.” that the “baby” refers to both the category in the MC-device of “family” and that of “stage of life”.

With the aid of this extensive analysis by Sacks, we can return to our current extract of data. At this point, the utterance under our scrutiny is the following:

34	we don't argue like <u>we</u> used to argue
35	when we were <u>children</u>

37 Sue: [when they argued with us
38 'cause we're adults [now

In line 35 we find the category "children" being applied by Sue to a group of individuals referred to as "we". Again, the hearer is presented with the problem of identifying to whom this refers. As with Sacks's example of "baby", the term "children" can fit into both the MC-device of "family" and that of "stage of life". However, in this utterance, the construction is "when we were children", which uses the past tense. Regarding this, one thing we know for certain is that Sue, the only referent of "we" that is unambiguous because she is the speaker, still occupies the category of "child" from the MC-device of "family", (i.e. she is still Mum and Dad's "child") so that she would not refer to herself in the past tense, if employing this understanding of the term. We can conclude from this that her use of "children", here, is employing the "stage of life" MC-device.

Furthermore, going back to the work of Schegloff (1972), in this utterance a "stage of life" construction is being used to formulate an activity. Thus, the "stage of life" "when we were children" is used to distinguish a particular configuration of the activity to "argue". Meanwhile, in Sacks's (1972) terms, what we have here is a category-bound activity.

In his article, Sacks's attention is primarily focused on already existing shared understandings of activities. For example, he points out that in some cases, identifying an activity as pertaining to an individual can mobilise such cultural understandings so as to "hint at" the category to which they belong (Sacks, 1972 p 223). In the notes relating to this section of his discussion, Sacks quotes Fischer and Fischer (1963), who remark on the frequency with which parents make

remarks like 'only *babies* do that. You're not a *baby*' (Fischer and Fischer, 1963 p [undocumented]. Quoted in Sacks, 1972 p 223).

However, I believe that Sacks has omitted from this examination the proactive use of activities, so as to bind them to categories for discursive ends. Such a perspective allows us to see that the parents in Fischer and Fischer's study are rhetorically binding certain activities to the category "baby" so as to discourage their children from displaying them beyond a certain age. Thus, Sack's example of the activity "crying", although biologically speaking, equally available at all "stages of life", becomes category-bound to the category of "baby" as a cultural accomplishment. In other words, this category-binding occurs through an accumulation of individual instances in which speakers bind "crying" to the category "baby", in similar ways to the Fischer and Fischer quotation above.

With this extension of Sacks's reasoning at hand, if we return to the utterance "we don't argue like we used to argue when we were children", we see that it is in the very utterance itself that the construction of category-boundedness is accomplished. Within this utterance, a unique understanding of "argue" is being established as bound to a particular category ("children") in the MC-device "stage of life". What is more, it is the explicit contrast of these "childish" arguments with the family's current arguments, that defines the features of this category-bound variety. In other words, to the extent that the family's current arguments have been presented as infrequent, minimal and accidental, "childish" arguments are characterisable, by inference, as (antithetically) frequent, extensive and intentional. It is also notable, that a great deal of work is put into explicating a definitive set of circumstances that uniquely allow arguments to currently occur. In contrast, the historical arguments are describable simply as "when we were children" - establishing that merely being children was enough to precipitate argumentation. Furthermore, the absence of any subsequent query or problem with this lack of account by the others, ratifies that what is addressed here is a piece of common knowledge about the behaviour of children.

One question that arises, however, is how we understand the term "we" not to refer to Mum and Dad in this utterance. The first important factor is the emphasis on "we", which marks a change in the configuration of the category - a shuffling of personnel to which the category "we" applies. Prior to this utterance the "we" thus far established, consists of those who "don't have those arguments now" because "you're not at home". This configuration therefore excludes Ava as the addressee "you" - it is therefore an "exclusive 'we'" (Leech and Svartvik, 1978; Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990; Fowler, 1993) - and includes only those still "at home" - i.e. Mum, Dad and Sue. In marking the shift in referents, I would suggest that a new "inclusive" configuration of "we" comes into being, which includes, at the very least, Sue, as the addresser, and "you" - Ava - the addressee. What is more, I would suggest that the collection of these two parties in the reference "when we were children", then allows for that formulation to represent a common temporal descriptor as well as one of "stage of life". By this I mean that, being of a similar age and having shared very closely the "stage of life" called "childhood", "when we were children" can represent for Sue and Ava the same period of time. This means that, while Mish may possibly be included in the formulation, also having been a child within the referenced time period, (see page 228), Mum and Dad are excluded, being of a different generation. One might even hazard the postulation of a Sacksian "hearer's maxim" to the effect that: if a "stage of life" *can be heard* as a common time period then, hear it that way.

Moreover, Sue follows the above reference with the utterance:

37 Sue: [when they argued with us

Here, she introduces a category of "they" in contrast to "we". Drawing on Sacks's (1972) consistency rule, we can conclude that this second group, by being contrastive to "children", is heard to refer to some group occupying a different "stage of life" during that time period - e.g. "adults".

It is at this point, I would suggest, that the exclusion of Mum and Dad from "we" is made concrete, as they are brought in as the most logical referents for the contrastive category "they". Again, what makes Mum and Dad the most logical referents here is, I would suggest, the implicit mobilisation of the category "family" to delineate the maximal set from which the categories "we" and "they" are drawn.

Sue then completes her description with:

38 'cause we're adults [now

In this utterance, the same group who "were" categorised as "children" are clearly heard to be referenced again to be "adults now". Again, those who were adults throughout the time period from then until now are excluded from the reference.

To summarise the above, the characterisation that results from Sue's utterance involves a temporal juncture that is worked up on the basis of the contrasting meanings of what it is to "argue", depending on whether the parties involved are "children" or "adults". Significantly, verification of this characterisation is requested, both in the "do we" of line 25 and the "don't we" of line 31, and is forthcoming from Mum in line 40, with a

40 Mum: [yeh

In its very agreement, this again supports the earlier declaration that "we don't argue very much". In doing so it establishes that what might have been seen as a point of disagreement - Sue's "very much" mediation of "we don't argue" - has been successfully brought into a status of agreement. Again, therefore, this is no incidental description of the world, but, as with all formulations, it is designed to do discursive business. In this case, at least a part of such business is the working up of a rhetorical alliance with Mum and Dad.

Ava's response to this extended description is the following:

39 Ava: [so WHEN DO YOU THINK=

41 Ava: [=you stopped arguing like that

One point of note in this utterance is that the question is asked of "you" rather than "we". As a result, Ava adds her own participation to the construction of a "we" from which she is excluded. However, even more significant is the manner in which this utterance picks up on a version of the story being told about changes in argumentative styles. This utterance of Ava's responds to Sue's explanation that changes in "stage of life" - going from being "children" to being "adults" - are responsible for the temporal juncture under discussion. As will be seen from the utterances which follow, this is a clear alternative to the earlier locational explanation, regarding being or not being "at home".

Mum and Sue reply to Ava with,

42 Sue: when you two left

43 Mum: [when you two left

In these two utterances we see the very clear use of another indexical expression - "you two". Once more, no problems arise regarding what this expression refers to. On the contrary, Mum's exact echo of Sue's words gives the impression that their meanings are entirely correspondent. This, I would suggest, is again because of the mobilisation of the underlying assumption of "family". For, while the indexical expressions identified earlier could feasibly be interpreted as drawn from the limited set of conversationalists, namely Mum, Dad, Sue and Ava - for the first time here, the absent family member - Mish - is the only possible candidate for inclusion. It is my belief that this sudden inclusion of Mish into the discussion, and later examples of a similar phenomenon, highlights the

fact that Mish has been available for inclusion in many of the indexical expressions of the previous 40 lines. In other words, the unchallenged, unqueried inclusion of Mish at this point reveals that the category "family" has continually been at least potentially operative throughout the discussion so far. Thus, the bracketed observations that I have made about the possible inclusion of Mish into earlier references, such as "so they must have been you then" (line 14), and "like we used to argue when we were children" (lines 34-5), can be seen as similarly available for the participants all along. On this basis, I conclude that the maximal set for indexical pronouns in the extract is the nuclear family, as opposed to the participants in the current interaction.

"You two" is, however, not the only indexical expression utilised in these utterances, for we also have the term "left". In this case, the indexical expression comes from the sub-category, mentioned earlier, which Schegloff (1972) called "locational proterms" (p 318). Schegloff concludes that, because such terms refer to a location which shifts according to its context of use, members are required to perform a "locational analysis" in order to make sense of them. In this case, hearers are expected to locate what is "left" as the family "home" of the earlier discussion (e.g. line 8 "but you're not at home"). In this way, despite the recent construction of the change in family arguments as a "stage of life" phenomenon, these tandemed utterances reformulate the juncture back to Sue's earlier explanation, recharacterising it as a locational phenomenon. There are, however, three additional elements of note in this formulation. Firstly, while "but you're not at home" (line 8) formulates home as a place one can be in or not, "when you two left" depicts home as a focal reference point that can be "left" (and later, in lines 47 and 51, can be returned to). Secondly, the explicit inclusion of Mish in the reference. Thirdly, this deployment of a locational formulation to explain the change in arguments reinvokes its previous usage. In doing so, I

would suggest that it reintroduces the earlier conclusions about responsibility and blame (see Section 3).

In line 44 there is general laughter. For an explanation of this we need to contrast the attribution of responsibility achieved in the above responses (by Sue and Mum) with that implied in the question (by Ava) which elicited them. As mentioned above, Ava's question, "so when do you think you stopped arguing like that" (lines 39 and 41), actively participates in working up the attribution of responsibility to "stage of life". However, the responses it provokes, re-introduce the attribution of responsibility to Ava's (and this time, also Mish's) absence from home. In a reflexive manner, the laughter which then ensues, both establishes the significance of the blame-avoiding element in Ava's question and, at the same time, responds to the humorous way in which it backfires.

In the manner described by Drew (1987) and discussed at length in Chapter 5, despite acknowledging the humour by joining in the laughter in line 44, Ava then goes on to address the serious matter at hand, in trying to reinstate Sue's "stage of life" explanation of lines 33-5 and 37-38:

45 Ava: or could it be: that (.)
46 just after we reached [about the age of=

48 Ava: =about 18

6 MICHELLE'S GOOD OLD ARGUMENTS: ACCUSATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Around and overlapping with the above utterance Mum begins a new point with

47 Mum: [Michelle comes home (.)

She then interrupts herself, in order to establish the positioning of this contribution in terms of the former talk. Thus she inserts the marker:

49 Mum: mind you=

Following this, she reiterates her previous phrase, with the addition of "when", in line 51 and then continues in line 52:

51 Mum: [=when Michelle comes home
52 she has a good old argument doesn't she.

It would appear that the insertion of "mind you" acts as a proviso. However, the point being made by Mum does not undermine the united stand being taken. Indeed, without refuting that the "home dwellers" "don't argue", Mum is able to postulate that although they "stopped arguing like that" when Mish and Ava "left", this type of argument occurs again "when Michelle comes home".

This utterance by Mum merits detailed discussion. To begin with, the theme of responsibility appears again as in lines 14, 16, and 18-24. This time, however, the blame is apportioned to Michelle. This is the first time in the extract that Mish is explicitly named, rather than inferred from a pronoun. Even more clearly, we see how Mish has been available as a candidate referent for any assessments made about home, arguing, children etc., because of the implicit assumption of "family" by the interlocutors. Secondly, the relevance of the locational index of "home" is reiterated. Again, as in the formulation "when you two left", the reference is not merely to being "at home" but to when Mish "comes home". As mentioned before, home is here firmly located, not only as the current location of the talk, but also as the unmoving, focal point which "family" members may leave, and come back to.

A third point of note is the way that these two factors combine in relation to the earlier tease of Ava. On the one hand, this focus on Mish as responsible for arguments exonerates Ava from the sole blame established by the tease. On the other hand, the description is of what occurs "when Michelle comes home" and is inextricably linked to the perpetrator not living "at home" – a status also attributable to Ava. By inference then, Ava remains somewhat implicated in this description.

Another significant factor is the manner in which the utterance constructs only Mish as having "a good old argument". The action is thus displayed as performed by a single individual, rather than resulting from a multi-party exchange. Such a representation of these arguments, in obscuring any involvement in them by the "home dwellers", avoids any contradiction with the earlier construction that they "don't argue". A further point of note is the characterisation of the arguments in question as "good old" arguments. I would suggest that this adjectival phrase accomplishes a great deal of business. Not only does it work up the arguments as *bona fide*, rather than spurious, but it implies that Mish is both dedicated to, and in receipt of pleasure from, arguing. What is more, the phrase "good old" carries the connotation that the arguments in question are non-threatening and familiar, rather than in any way dangerous to the family. Thus, the message is not one of conflict or threat, but of potentially threatening conduct made manageable and almost traditional within the family (see also Chapter 1). Finally, Mum's use of a question tag, as with Sue's earlier ones (lines 25 and 32), attempts to co-opt agreement and solidarity from the others.

Sue's response to this is to offer a second assessment of strong agreement:

53 Sue: Mish always starts arguments when she comes home=

In line with the work of Pomerantz (1984), Sue displays strong agreement via a more extreme formulation of Mum's assessment. By using "always" to strengthen Mum's reference to regularity, "arguments" and Michelle's homecoming are not merely displayed as linked, but as universally concurrent. Meanwhile, she strengthens the dimension of responsibility by saying Michelle actively "starts arguments", as opposed to merely having them. This agreeing second assessment is then further affirmed and emphasised by a reciprocal agreeing second assessment from Mum, enthusiastically initiated at the instant Sue completes hers.

54 Mum: =oh yes [she always does

Ava overlaps this utterance with an objection as to the legitimacy of these assessments of Mish's behaviour:

55 Ava: [it's not fair to ar (.)
56 to say t she does things like [that 'cause she can't=

58 Ava: =hold her own part

An important observation about this challenge is that it in no way disputes the relevant parties' "category entitlement" (Edwards and Potter, 1992) to make such assessments. Ava does not say that it is unfair to judge Mish because Mum, Dad and Sue are unqualified to make such judgements. In fact, it is the absence of this line of dispute which helps to work up the category entitlements of these speakers to make such assessments.

What Ava instead bases her objection upon, is Mish's absence from the current interaction. In this way, the locational index is again made relevant to the family's interaction. Ironically, Ava's representation implies that, by Michelle not being at home, the remaining family members are free to establish a full agreement that Mish starts arguments when she does return home. The implication is that, were she to be present for the discussion of this topic, she would be in a position to "hold her own part".

The significance of Ava's challenge to the legitimacy of making assessments of a person in their absence does not, however, end here. Instead it represents an excellent example of the manner in which an utterance acquires meaning through the subsequent uptake of other interlocutors. In this utterance and that of lines 60-1:

Ava posits, firstly, the unfairness of not being present to defend oneself, and latterly, displeasure, as indices on which the ongoing assessment procedure should be considered illegitimate. The discursive action which this performs is then retrospectively formulated via Mum's uptake in lines 57, 59 and 62:

62 Mum: it's true [though

233

this way, as in the "empiricist repertoire" identified by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), Mum's formulation implies that

The reporter becomes a passive responder to the requirements of the facts (Potter, 1996 p 34).

The message, it would appear, is that such behaviour is very much within the remit of family practice, within which it is only one's duty to make truthful assessments of other members, however unflattering they might be.

However, Mum accomplishes more than this. By initiating this uptake of the challenge, Mum frames Ava's objection - on the basis of Mish not being able to "hold her own part" - as a stand against the validity of the assessment. In doing so, Mum establishes that the assessment is so undeniably true as to be robust against the rigours of any defence against it - making Mish's presence to "hold her own part" irrelevant. However, in addition, this response treats Ava's objection as a challenge to the truth of the assessment. In doing so, it treats Ava as actually "holding Michelle's part", as it were, and mounting a defence on her behalf, rather than merely acting as a neutral adjudicator of the legitimacy of assessment-making behaviour. Knoblauch (1991) warns that "mediators ... run the risk of being disagreed with" (p 185), and from one perspective, this is what occurs in this exchange. Ava can be seen to be setting herself up as a neutral mediator by challenging the legitimacy of Mum's accusation of Mish. Mum, however, does not let her get away with such a move, and instead treats Ava's utterance as a partisan defence of Mish.

In this way, the alignments of "home dwellers" and "home leavers" are again being established - Ava is positioned by this exchange as aligned with Mish in challenging the assessment, while Sue and Mum's co-produced assessment equally aligns them in opposition. Furthermore, the

contribution by Dad which follows, completes the accomplishment of alignment amongst the "home dwellers":

63 Dad: [well phone her up and tell her

This works by furthering Mum's argument and extending the counter to Ava's challenge. What is more, by suggesting that Ava phone up Mish rather than anyone else, it aligns these two objectors with one another and as outsiders to the ingroup of assessors.

Aside from signalling his alignment with Sue and Mum, Dad's contribution in line 63 represents the first direct uptake on Ava's challenge to the legitimacy of their assessment procedure. In this utterance, Dad suggests that a report of the current interaction should be communicated to Mish via a phonecall. In doing so, he displays himself as openly welcoming such an occurrence and any input from Mish which might ensue. In this formulation therefore, Dad displays that things would be no different if Mish were available to "hold her own part". Meanwhile, by displaying his comfortableness with such a scenario, he signals that the current behaviour is no reason for guilt and that he is happy for Mish to learn of the assessments being made about her. Thus, both the suggestion of secrecy - which Ava has implied is illegitimate as a family practice - and that of unwillingness to face a defence, are attended to and rejected. Dad's contribution also lends a kind of support to Mum's identification of the importance of truth to the ongoing behaviour. This is in the sense that Dad does not instruct Ava to "ask" Mish about the proceedings, but rather to "tell her". In other words to report these words of truth as opposed to calling for Mish to comment upon a matter of opinion. What is more, this construction of the transcendental status of truth reinforces Mum and Dad's fundamental and indisputable "category entitlement" (Potter, 1996) to make such assessments.

Mum's description in lines 65-8 further establishes Mish as the perpetrator of arguments on her return home:

65	Mum:	[and she comes home
66		and then she then she says
67		oh sorry afterwards (.)
68		°she didn't mean it°

In line 65 Mum begins her utterance by reiterating that Mish "comes home". She then follows on immediately to describe the process of apology which then occurs. The effect of this discursive organisation is to create a significant absence of any reference to the arguments that presumably elicit the said apology. This absence is significant in that it suggests that Mish's homecoming and the instigation of arguments are co-constitutive, so that the mention of only one - Mish's homecoming - counts as an establishment of the other. This ellipsis of any mention of the arguments, treats the exchange just prior to it as having resolved all contention about the link between them and Mish's homecoming. In doing so without provoking further dispute it thereby accomplishes that resolution of dispute.

Of equal rhetorical importance in this utterance, is the establishment that what does occur "afterwards" is that Mish says "oh sorry" and that "she didn't mean it". In this way, Mum uses Mish's own words in reported speech to ratify a position of responsibility or blame (cf. Wooffitt, 1992). Mum presents Mish as admitting responsibility herself in a pseudo-quotation of apology and denial of any intention to harm. It is also notable that no apologies or intentions are expressed on behalf of others. In this way, the apology takes on the status of an acknowledgement of sole responsibility for the arguments in question.

7 **AND WHAT ABOUT AVA?: RESPONSIBILITY SHARED**

At this point Ava challenges this description of sole responsibility by asking/stating

69 Ava: and I don't? (.)

I believe that this discursive action reveals much about the manner in which the relationships between the family members are produced and reproduced. This utterance represents a form of implicativeness that is accomplished within the family. It appears from this action, that when assessments and formulations are made about one family member, their relevance to other family members can be rendered implicative. This should not be seen as an automatic occurrence, but as one that can be worked up by members for the purposes of both enacting “family” and making an argumentative case. With regards to the former, the establishment of parameters of comparison and contrast between the various family roles represents a part of the mechanism by which those roles are brought into being, along with the relationships between them. Meanwhile, in relation to the latter, the implicativeness of the assessment of one family member for the description of another can be seen to arise out of the argumentative context. In this instance, the discussion of Mish’s blame for arguments is marshalled by Ava as a warrant in her own case, and a counter to that being made against her. In other words, the implication which Ava derives from the assessment of Mish accomplishes rhetorical business.

In this example, Ava draws a conclusion from the establishment of sole blame on Michelle accomplished by Mum. This conclusion is that: if Mish is solely responsible for the arguments, then she herself cannot also be responsible. This would mark a point of difference between the two parties, who, as discussed above, have been actively aligned together in

the interaction both in its content (e.g. "you two" in lines 42-43) and its pattern (the blaming of Ava for arguments in lines 14-20, followed by the blaming of Mish in lines 49-68). Although Ava phrases her utterance as the statement of a conclusion, its intonation marks it as a question. I would suggest that the alignment that has been worked up earlier is made implicative in this utterance in the form of a "calling into question" (Knoblauch, 1991 p 174; see Chapter 6). What is highlighted is the contradictory status of Mish's sole responsibility as a case of contrastive behaviour between the aligned pair. In other words, what has been worked up in the interaction is a basis of comparison between Mish and Ava - the "home leavers" - and of contrast with the "home dwellers". The sole responsibility of Mish for arguments then becomes an issue that can undermine the sameness of Mish and Ava's behaviour.

The response to this "calling into question", which firmly reinstates the alignment of Ava and Mish, is then forthcoming from Sue and echoed by Mum in full agreement:

70 Sue: no you do as well
71 Mum: yeh you do as well

An additional consequence of this question and answer sequence is to further ratify the establishment of Mum and Sue as adjudicators of the behaviour of Ava and Mish. This is because Ava's "calling into question" requests an additional assessment from them, thereby attesting to the saliency of such assessments and their "category entitlement" to make them (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

Ava's response to this assessment is

72 Ava: oh thanks

This utterance communicates a great deal about the manner in which the assessment is received by Ava. Firstly, the use of "oh" signals a change of state (Schiffrin, 1987: see Chapter 6) indicating some element of surprise, as though such a response were unexpected in some way. One could hypothesise that, due to the ongoing production of a similarity between Mish and Ava, the surprise does not come from having that similarity reaffirmed here. Instead, if one looks to the nature of the rest of the utterance, a more valid reason for the surprise could be hazarded. In this utterance, Ava thanks Sue and Mum for making this assessment of her. However, the tone of voice in which this show of gratitude is delivered is one of irony. Thus, Ava is parodying a show of gratitude in order to communicate that she is neither happy, nor grateful for being accused of the responsibility for starting arguments. Given this interpretation, the surprise communicated by the "oh" marker becomes intelligible as signalling the unexpectedness of an accusation which promotes displeasure in its recipient. I would suggest that this communication of surprise and displeasure again represents a delineation by Ava of legitimate family practice, once more mobilising Holstein and Gubrium's (1994) "caring" dimension to call into question accusatory behaviour against her. Support for this interpretation may be found in the nature of the utterance which follows it.

It is my belief that the next utterance demonstrates some of the mechanism by which the family avoid conflict and disharmony in their interaction. In the preceding segment of talk, an apportioning of responsibility and blame is carried out, firstly in the semi-humorous exchange of lines 14-23 and later in the more serious accusations of lines 42-72. During these exchanges, the feelings of unfair judgement and displeasure are talked of by Ava in

16 Ava: [its all my? fault

55 Ava: [it's not fair to ar (.)

56 to say t she does things like [that 'cause she can't=

58 Ava: =hold her own part

60 Ava: well she'll (.) ((laughs))
61 °she won't be very pleased°

They are also displayed by her, as explained above, in

72 Ava: oh thanks

D LOCATIONS, ROLES AND STAGES

1 "BEING AROUND"

At this point in the data, the story of personalised blame is abandoned by Sue. In its place, and significant for its contrast with the former product, Sue works up an alternative formulation that is highly generalised and depersonalised, situationally based, and privileges no particular subgroup within the family. This shift away from responsibility also heralds a change in topic, from the question of arguments, to that of changing roles and behaviours.

The utterance in question is as follows, and merits detailed discussion:

73 Sue: I think it's just a question of
74 more people being around (.)

Firstly, Sue initiates the utterance with "I think", which characterises her contribution as an opinion. This can be contrasted with the work that has been performed earlier using unqualified statements of fact and an insistence on objective truth. Secondly, Sue utilises the term "just". I would suggest that this term has a dual action. Most importantly, in the sense of 'solely', it offers itself as the only valid explanation, providing a candidate replacement for the earlier explanation involving responsibility

and blame. However, because "just" also contains resonances of the term 'merely', it can be seen to play down the significance of this whole matter on the scale of things.

A third point of note concerns the use of "more people", which accomplishes in its "systematic vagueness" (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996), an absence of targeted blame on individuals. Finally, the invoking of "being around" again brings the spatial relationship between the parties into focus. However, in contrast to the home-centredness of earlier invocations, this description does not explicitly locate "people" in relation to the specificity of "home". Instead, what they are "around" is left "systematically vague" and thus implicit. According to the context, this reference must be to a bounded location within which five people become a crowd. As a result, this choice of term does not entail the privileging of certain statuses that the earlier uses of "home" promoted for example: the privileging of home-dwellers/owners over others who "left", and subsequently "come back". This formulation of affairs is then agreed to by Mum, again establishing a consensus of opinion between her and Sue.

The rhetorical organisation of this utterance is designed to halt the accusatory thrust of the discussion that Ava's "oh thanks" has called into question, and to re-establish deliberations within the "caring" confines of familial harmony. In this way, Sue's words can be seen as a strategic retreat from one of the boundaries of family practice and therefore, as participation in the construction of that boundary. Unlike Ava's earlier attempts to delineate legitimate assessment procedures about family members, it appears that this time, her identification of a boundary has been corroborated.

What is more, this contribution by Sue completes the transition in the topic of the discussion which began with the explicit connection of Mish with the practice of argumentation. As we have seen, the first part of the

extract is centered around the nature of arguments, with the interrelationships of the family members playing a subsidiary role. In the remainder of the extract, the question of family roles and relationships becomes the topic of the conversation, and that of argumentation recedes into a less central issue. We will see therefore, that it is the roles and relationships of the family members that is now fleshed out and brought into focus within the cut and thrust of disputation (cf. Holstein and Gubrium, 1994).

2 *A PROBLEM WITH ROLES*

Following this carefully managed diffusion of conflict, Sue contributes the continuation of her point, whose content does not possess quite the neutrality of the above. However, for a different reason, it can also be seen as conciliatory. Sue continues with

76 Sue: and the fact that
77 you two are more independent [now

I read this utterance as conciliatory because it is a public attribution of independence to Ava and Mish. This is contrastive to the earlier establishment of the two as responsible for "childish" arguments, on the grounds that it represents another "category-bound activity" (Sacks, 1972) - this time hinting at the category of adulthood. Notice that the said independence is presented as a point of indisputable "fact" rather than a belief. This is an important detail within the atmosphere of alignment and agreement that has been established between the "home dwellers". For, if this accord is to be kept up, neither Mum nor Dad can voice overt disagreement with this "fact". Thus, Sue can act almost as a spokesperson for her aligned group and can use this status to balance the more negative attributions about the outgroup with something akin to "praise". This is very similar to the "praise" that Sacks (1972) spoke of when observing the effect of attributing a category-bound activity to

members of a category, hierarchically positioned beneath the category to which that activity is bound. In the current case, the hint at adult categorisation serves to support the earlier assertion that Ava and Mish are "adults now" (line 38) and to counterbalance the derogatory import of constructing their argumentativeness as category-bound to "children".

Sue is successful in co-opting agreement from at least one member of her established alignment group - i.e. Mum. For, with this utterance begins the joint establishment by the two of a description of Ava and Mish's predicament in relation to the matter under discussion. Firstly the general situation of their "independence" is more fully detailed:

- 78 Mum: [that's right (.)
79 [you're used to a bit=
80 Sue: [you've got your own way of living
81 Mum: =I li li leading your own lives

Mum begins by overt agreement with Sue in line 78. She then goes on in line 79 to reword the point (overlapping with a similar reiteration by Sue in line 80) which she completes in line 81. Following this, "home" is again formulated as a significant factor in family life.

- 82 Sue: and that when you come back here
83 it's difficult to fit in (.)
84 Mum: and then you have to fit into
85 the parent-child role
86 and it doesn't [sort of suit

To begin with, Sue's line 82, by bringing in "when you come back here", establishes retrospectively that the independent lives being described must refer to what occurs outside of "back here" (at "home"). It should be noted that the term "back here" in this utterance is another example of the sort of "locational proterms" which Schegloff (1972 p 318) talks of. Also crucial in this utterance, however, is the way in which line 83 establishes that the requirement for Ava and Mish is to "fit in", and that their outside lives make this "difficult". The notable factor in this choice of

phraseology is that the necessity to "fit in" is set up as a given. This impression is supported and strengthened in Mum's reiteration, in this case that they "have to" fit in. Mum also furthers the point by describing what Mish and Ava "have to fit into" - "the parent-child role" - before explaining the difficulty expressed by Sue as the fact that this role "doesn't sort of suit".

This formulation of the "parent-child role" is highly significant. It implies that there is a type of "category-bound activity" related to the interactive behaviour between two categories of an MC-device. This suggests that there is a whole group of activities undertaken by each category which occur when the two interact with one another. In addition, Mum is stating that independent lives and the "parent-child role" do not "suit" each other. This presumably implies that the activities involved in leading independent lives are in some way irreconcilable with the "category-bound activities" related to the "parent-child role". Furthermore, this reference to the "parent-child role" invokes these categories, from the MC-device "family", as pertinent to the discussion at hand. Again, therefore, we find the implicit mobilisation of "family" as a fundamental resource for making sense of the interaction.

Following this, Sue makes an agreement with Mum:

87 Sue: [yeh

She then goes on to explain that:

88 we've discussed this already me and Mum
89 we've got our own theories haven't we

Here we have another case of alignment being accomplished in the interaction. In this case, a new formulation of "we" is introduced - an exclusive "we" that explicitly references Sue and Mum. This first line

therefore accomplishes an exclusion of the original addressee (Ava), while the second ends with the question tag "haven't we", which switches to an inclusive "we" and thus addresses Mum. The content of the utterance, meanwhile, displays the existence of preestablished theories arising out of prior discussion between Sue and Mum. The implication here also relates to the broader content of the current conversation, hinting that a special availability for discussion and the formulation of unified theories is made possible by the fact that these two members are still "at home" and thus "around" each other. In line 90, Mum produces the solicited agreement to Sue's question tag.

At this point, Ava draws a conclusion about Sue's comparative status in relation to those of Ava and Mish. From the ongoing discussion, perhaps from the implications analysed above, as much as the explicit allusions to Ava and Mish's independent lives, Ava offers the following conclusion for comment

91 Ava: so you Sue do fit in 'cause you were here

This is affirmed by Sue, with Mum's help

92 Sue: 'cause [I live here all the time=
93 Mum: [well SHE'S NEVER
94 Sue: [=I never go out

Furthermore, Mum goes on to explain how this fitting in has been maintained, by stating that

95 Mum: [she's aDJUSTED we've adjusted to each other
96 I accept that Suzanne's an adult (.)

This utterance is notable for the changes it displays in who is the active party in the adjustment. Mum begins by saying that Sue has adjusted, but repairs this into the statement that "we've adjusted to each other". Then,

however, Mum makes another change, this time giving herself the active status in her claim to "accept that Suzanne's an adult".

3 ***BEING AN ADULT: A MATTER OF ACCEPTANCE***

Ava immediately seizes on this second transformation, to ask

97 Ava: don't you accept I'm an adult then

The importance of this question is twofold. Most straightforwardly, the prior discussion has established both a unique position for Sue and an avowal that Mum accepts her as an adult. This then prompts Ava to question whether being accepted as an adult is also unique to Sue. Again we find the implicit mobilisation of assumptions about the relationship between the subjects under discussion. In this case, it would appear from Ava's question that the assessment of Sue's adulthood has implications for Ava's adult status. Put another way, Ava's utterance brings such an implication into being. As with her question of line 69, Ava draws an implication from the assessment of a sister so as to carry out rhetorical business in terms of her disputed, potentially "childish" behaviour.

At a more fundamental level however, this question addresses the active status of Mum in the avowal. The point is that attention has moved to Mum's agency, and thus responsibility. Significantly, the talk is of accepting others as adults, rather than of whether others are in fact adults. Mum says that she accepts that Sue is an adult, thus closing off any debate about that fact. In asking the same question of herself, and notably using the negative, Ava claims the status of also objectively being an adult, but of questioning whether Mum accepts her as such. The result of this is to imply responsibility to Mum for the established difficulties in fitting in, as a result of her not accepting the "fact" that Ava is an adult.

Yet again we see that the detailed organisation of an utterance has significant rhetorical import.

This move is however, turned directly on its head by Mum in the following response

98	Mum:	(0.2) yes I think I do
99		but <u>you</u> don't accept
100		that I accept that you're an adult

After a pause in line 98, attributable to Mum because of the direct address to her (Sacks et al, 1978) and possibly used to display consideration of the point, Mum says "yes" and then signals some deliberation with "I think". This openness to the possibility of doubt is not then extended to Mum's representation of Ava's thought processes. For, appropriating the entitlement to inform Ava of her own inner states, in lines 99-100 Mum proclaims that Ava is the one responsible for a failure to accept a reality. In doing so, Mum deftly avoids the implied blame imputed to actions of hers and places that blame directly back on Ava.

Ava's response here is interesting - she laughs (line 101). As noted by Drew (1987), spending an entire turn in laughter prevents a speaker from addressing the serious business of a prior utterance. This means that by only laughing, Ava misses (or possibly forgoes) the opportunity to respond to Mum's counter-blaming, effectively abandoning her attempt at holding Mum responsible. Indeed, we shall see below how her next response adopts a very different position to that of blaming Mum.

Prior to the utterance in question, Sue contributes with the following agreement with Mum

102	Sue:	yeh that's that's what we were <u>saying</u> isn't it (.)
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Within this utterance, Sue supports Mum's reversal of the finger of blame. Sue reformulates the issue under discussion as involving Ava's failure to accept Mum's categorisation. In this way it is reiterated that Ava, rather than Mum, has created the problem. Ava then makes the reply alluded to above:

103 Ava: do you think even now?

This response verifies Mum's status of judge over her thought processes. It does not challenge Mum's reversal of responsibility but, rather, accepts that point seriously. What it does do, however, is something very subtle in the management-through-disagreement of the relationship between them. Within this question, what exactly the indexical expression "now" refers to is ambiguous: whether just the part of the exchange within this extract; the "now" established by the novel experience of the research relationship; the generalised "now" of current maturity, rather than, for example, a year or so ago; or some other configuration. One possible reading, is that the "now" refers to the very moment of speaking, in which the lack of petulance and disagreement with Mum's representation of affairs may be seen to display "adult" behaviour. Ironically, it could also be said that the acceptance of Mum's legitimacy to judge what the speaker is thinking represents a slipping into the "parent-child role". It is not the analyst's task here, however, to make a decision about the meaning of "now", which DA would emphasise, is just as ambiguous for participants as analysts and therefore "does" ambiguity as part of its discursive action. What we can see, however, is a "calling into question" (Knoblauch, 1991) of Mum's conclusion but in a non-confrontational and ambiguous manner.

In the above analysis I have represented Ava's utterance of line 103 as a "calling into question". However, Mum's reply makes no uptake of this:

104 Mum: yes

Instead, it retrospectively constructs the utterance as a simple question and (without hesitation, mediation or account) affirms her conclusion of lines 99-100. In this way Mum further solidifies her "category entitlement" to assess the thought processes of her daughter: she has made an assessment; she is given the opportunity to amend that assessment in connection with the possible affects of an ambiguous "now"; and she chooses instead, to strongly reaffirm that assessment in its entirety.

Sue, however, responds to the "calling into question" of Ava's utterance, with

105 Sue: well maybe you more than Michelle (.)

Here, Sue marks her response with "well" and mediates it with "maybe", before making a comparative, rather than absolute judgement. In my opinion, these aspects combine in order to display an only minimal disagreement with Mum, while at the same time an acknowledgement that Ava's behaviour "now" has at least some bearing on Mum's assessment. Furthermore, the comparative dimension of this utterance accomplishes two additional discursive moves. On the one hand, it converts the action of accepting adult status from being something that is an all or nothing, to something that one can exhibit "more" or less of. While at the same time it represents the re-emergence of the difference being constructed between the behaviour of Ava and that of Mish. This latter accomplishment is highly consequential for what follows after Mum's line 106, as we shall see. First, however, we observe that the agreement by Mum which follows again reinforces the strong alignment between herself and Sue:

106 Mum: [PERHAPS more

This is because it represents a mediation of her former "yes" in view of Sue's response to the same question. It is significant that this agreeing second assessment displays the opposite of those elements identified by Pomerantz (1984) that indicate strong agreement. Rather than producing a more extreme assessment, Mum emphasises the "perhaps", thus accomplishing an agreement with Sue but an only partial reversal of her earlier assessment.

Looking back on the pattern of the interaction, we see that the first part of this extract focuses on Ava's responsibility for arguments. The brief mention of "you two" (lines 42 and 43) shifts the focus to Mish's behaviour. This is then followed, in response to Ava's "and I don't?" (line 69), by an analysis of the two sisters as one. At this point, as mentioned above, Sue's utterance of line 105 reintroduces the distinction between the behaviour of Ava and Mish, by making a comparative statement. This is then followed up with the reinforcing explanation that

107 Sue: Michelle doesn't (.)
108 Michelle doesn't think that
109 Mum and Dad think of her as an adult (.)

In line 107 Sue declares categorically that "Michelle doesn't". After a pause, what "Michelle doesn't" do is then clarified, in lines 108-9: she gives no credence to the fact that both Mum, and now also Dad, "think of her as an adult". Again the positioning of the emphasis in the utterance highlights its contrastive status, in this case "her" as contrasted either with what Sue does or Ava "perhaps" does.

Of particular significance in this utterance is the potentiality for realignment it offers. This display of contrastive behaviour by Mish may be seen to shift the boundary that has been locally established between Sue and the other two, so as to realign Sue and Ava together and separately from Mish. Meanwhile, Dad is reintroduced, following the

temporary narrowing of focus on Mum and Sue - "we" - versus Ava and Mish - "you two". Here, an alternative alignment is formulated between Mum and Dad.

Mum's agreement with this assessment begins with a simple "mmm" and is then reinforced:

110 Mum: mmm (.) deinitely not (.)

This latter part of the utterance is an example of the strong agreeing second assessments observed by Pomerantz (1984). Mum then continues with:

111 Mum: [but the WAY SHE ca

However, she is interrupted at this point and does not go on to complete this utterance.

4 WHAT ABOUT DAD?: A QUERY/CHALLENGE

The interruption mentioned above comes from Sue in the following form

112 Sue: [I don't even know
113 I don't even know whether
114 Dad thinks I'm an adult or not (.)
115 I think Mum does
116 but I don't know whether Dad does
117 do you?

Sue begins her contribution in line 112 with "I don't even know", which she then repeats but with a change of emphasis so that "I" is stressed, before continuing with "Dad thinks I'm an adult or not". Here, Sue is highlighting a possible point of difference between Mum and Dad. What has been constructed previously is that Mum thinks of her as an adult and that she, unlike Ava, "accepts" that Mum thinks this. Here, Sue points out that the case of Dad is not so clear. Indeed, she reiterates

even further the point she is making, by stressing that she thinks "Mum does" but repeats again that she doesn't know "whether Dad does". I believe that this restatement of the point may arise out of Dad's failure to respond after the TRP of line 114 (Sacks, et al, 1978), neither does he come in at any point during that reiteration, which I believe, elicits the direct tag question of line 117

117 do you?

In other words, I would suggest that Sue's utterance is not merely a statement about her beliefs, but rather, represents an inquiry into Dad's assessment of her, that begins indirectly. In the absence of an appropriate response it is then converted into a direct query. This does produce a response from Dad, as follows

118 Dad: you have your moments

This reply is one that merits detailed examination. First of all it is important to understand the context in which this query is pressed. Sue's adult status has been extensively established over the course of the preceding talk: in self-declaration ("we're adults now", line 38); as a given in Mum's pronouncement of her acceptance of this fact ("I accept that Suzanne's an adult", line 96); her ongoing joint analysis with Mum of the behaviour of her siblings during much of this extract; and as a contrast to the working up of doubt about the entitlement of those siblings to such a category assignment (lines 98 to 111). The consequence of this clearly established membership of the category "adult", is that it places the responsibility upon Dad to produce further ratification of it. After such a strong working up of Sue's adulthood, were Dad to acknowledge an opposing opinion, this might be seen as a shortcoming of his judgement, rather than a threat to Sue's status.

Despite the above, Dad's response does not fill the slot neatly prepared for it by Sue. Instead he employs humour to accomplish some alternative discursive actions. The reply of "you have your moments" is highly ambiguous, as befits a humorous quip (Mulkay, 1988). At its least derogatory, this comment communicates that Sue has moments during which adult status is not merited. In such a reading of the comment, Dad largely goes along with the locally established assessment of Sue as an adult, but communicates some reservations about this. On the other hand, equally communicated is a more derogatory reading which says that Sue only has occasional moments during which she merits the status of adult, this presumably means that the rest of the time she still acts like a "child". In this reading, Dad is disagreeing with what has been previously established.

An important factor in understanding this utterance is that Sue has asked for an assessment from Dad. If we combine the insights of Edwards and Potter (1992) and Sacks (1972) we can conclude that this request from Sue addresses Dad's "category entitlement" (Edwards and Potter, 1992) to make assessments, according to his membership of a category that is hierarchically "positioned" above her own within the family. The implication is that Dad's "category entitlement" permits him the option to warrantably contradict the local establishment of Sue's adult status. This however, would entail a disagreement with Mum, with whom much verbal construction has gone into building an alignment. Furthermore, such a contradiction between those parties qualified to judge would undermine their "entitlement" to do so. For, only one of them could be correct, meaning that the other would be in error of judgement. Such a situation is exploitable by Sue. It means that she can be virtually assured that Dad will ratify the assessment that she is an adult, for she has set him up.

However, Dad utilises the momentum of the “category entitlement” that Sue has conveniently introduced, and with the nifty side step and left hook of the humorous counter, Dad launches his *coup de grace*.

Let us consider briefly how it is that this move functions. I would suggest that its effectiveness resides in the strength of the expectation of a positive reply and the ambiguity of whether the “moments” refer to the presence or absence of the attribute. Thus, for example, in a scenario where a young child asked “Do I act like an adult?” the response “you have your moments” would not carry the same humorous overtones. This is because, being considered to have moments of adulthood, is praise for a young child, while only having moments of childishness would be unrealistic praise. The question “Am I an adult?” from an ambiguously positioned teenager would also be less humorous. A positive reply would count as praise, while a negative one would be merely neutral, - the partial response of this extract would then become a bit of both. In the case of this extract, however, after the strength with which Sue’s adult status has been established, a positive response becomes expected, and a negative one would be derogatory. Furthermore, a derogation might be particularly unexpected after the strong alignment that has been accomplished between Sue and Dad over the course of the extract. Here is where the ambiguity of humour operates, in the form of a potential but deniable insult delivered against expectancy. Similar opportunities for humour can be seen to arise in situations with alternative attributes under like conditions - where there was a strong expectancy for a positive reply and a negative response would be derogatory. Given an appropriate context, examples include such questions as “Do you think I’m faithful/tactful/reasonable?” coupled with Dad’s reply of “You have your moments”.

Sue's immediate response to Dad is:

This would appear to formulate Dad's reply as evidence to support her earlier expression of doubt as to Dad's acceptance of her status as adult. I would suggest that there is an element of accusation in this response, which draws on her locally established entitlement to the category and Dad's requirement to support this (as discussed on the previous page).

Following this, all, including Sue, break into laughter. This would appear to represent acknowledgement both of the joke itself and of the skill with which Sue's move was countered and neutralised by Dad. Yet again, we also find the phenomenon discussed by Drew (1987) in which the interlocutor who bears the brunt of a joke or tease, responds to the serious matter at hand as well as the humour. In this case, Sue responds not only with "see", which precedes the laughter, but also with lines 121-3 below, which follows it:

121 Sue: just as well I don't think that
122 'cause I'd be wrong

On the face of it, this utterance reiterates Sue's attempt with "see" to establish that Dad's response justifies her reservations about whether or not he thinks of her as an adult. However, it does much more than this from an analyst's perspective. This utterance is one that I believe displays great insights into how "family" is accomplished.

In lines 112-117 we see Sue expressing doubt about Dad's perception of her "stage of life", and as discussed above, although she twice displays doubt, this does not elicit a response until she asks the direct question "do you". The indirect framing of the original question is then drawn upon in this final utterance of the extract under examination. That framing was as a thought process already existing inside Sue's head, which is then constructed as justified: while Sue is able to say that Mum considers her

an adult, she is unable to be so sure of Dad. As a result of Dad's reply, she is shown to be correct in taking care over generalising Mum's viewpoint to Dad. In declaring her earlier doubts as justified, however, Sue transforms them into a more definite form. In the original presentation, Sue contrasts what she thinks about Mum with what she "doesn't know" about Dad, but in this utterance what she "doesn't know" becomes something she "doesn't think" about Dad -because, if she did, she would be "wrong".

The manner in which Sue presents this final conclusion (in terms of the current analysis) provides us with one of the clearest displays in the extract of the ongoing process by which the relationships within the family are constructed. The presentation of this utterance is as of a mere voicing and verification of pre-existing doubts and conclusions. However, it is at the same time an *in vivo* demonstration of the very process by which doubts arise, circumstances are tested, and conclusions are drawn. What is happening in the moment by moment unfolding of the interaction is the very process being discussed as if already existing. On the one hand, Sue's deduction is presented as a reified entity, that Dad has verified. On the other hand, however, Sue is actually, at the precise moment of speaking, initiating a deductive process by questioning Dad about his thoughts. In this sense, Dad's communication is not merely a verification, but an imparting of new knowledge. Equally, therefore, Sue's final response is not merely a warranting of her original conclusion in the light of verification, it accomplishes the act of concluding.

In this view, the communications occurring in current time are actually affecting the entities that are presented as intransigent. Status positions are actively being changed during the interaction but are referred to as if unchangeable and pre-set. It is this ongoing construction that I believe also takes place earlier in the exchange between Mum, Ava and Sue in lines 97-106. Thus, while Ava's "do you think even now" in line 103 is, as

discussed above, ambiguous, one possible interpretation is that the ongoing construction of family is causing changes in current time. If so, then the "now" may refer to the utterance in which it is actually spoken. In this case it can be seen to point to the handling of, not merely the current interaction, but the precise communicative exchange, as evidence of Ava's "competent membership" of the category "adult" (cf. Schegloff, 1972 p 325). This idea would rest on the choice by Ava to respond with such a question rather than make some form of denial which might be considered petulant, and therefore "childish". In both of these examples, we can see the ongoing process by which family is accomplished, yet we also see that part of that accomplishment is its treatment by members as a stable and unchanging entity at any one time, which nonetheless can be contrasted strongly with what it used to be like "when we were children".

E CONCLUSION

Within this analysis I hope to have shown how the instantiation of family takes place in an environment of disagreement and dispute. What count as arguments, what causes them, who thinks what of whom, are issues that are all addressed within an atmosphere of accusation and defence in the first part of the extract. Later in the extract, the same atmosphere promotes a detailed exploration of the interrelationships, roles and theories about one another that are characteristic of the family members. Meanwhile, this atmosphere is continually saved from degenerating into conflict by the use of warning, mediation and humour. What counts as family *per se*, does not come into question in this extract (or indeed, within any part of the data). Yet, I hope to have demonstrated some of the mechanisms which rely on an implicit assumption by the speakers that they, and Mish, are part of a delimitable entity which I have continuously referred to as "family" in this analysis. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the operativeness of "family" is an elusive

matter to demonstrate. This is precisely because the argument being espoused here is that "family" is one of those assumptions that the speakers trust one another to apply to the discussion and, therefore, its very inarticulateness is an essential part of its operation. As asserted in the introduction, I hope that this chapter has highlighted the contrasting effects of explicit disagreement and implicit agreement in the organisation of social life. In the case of the former, social objects are brought into focus but never definitively captured, while the latter allows assumptions to remain unfocused and yet imputable for the accomplishment of social business.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

A THE ARGUMENT SO FAR

1 *ARGUMENT, FAMILY AND RESEARCH: AN INTEGRATION*

The main thrust of this thesis has been to advocate an argumentative perspective to the discursive analysis of social life. In this enterprise, the research process and, to some extent, the thesis itself, have been highlighted as rhetorical arenas, in addition to the interactions of the family from which data were collected. This reflexive emphasis draws attention to the argumentative dimension of the research process and integrates such observations with the analysis of argumentation in the family.

In some senses, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 might be considered to focus more on the academic enterprise, while Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the family. However, Chapter 4 is both a forum for the discussion of the rhetoric of methodology and a presentation of the method adopted in dealing with argumentation in the family (as well as the research debate over power). Chapter 5 also bridges the two arenas, in providing a discussion of the relationship between the two institutions - a discussion which is the topic of the data extract as well as the topic of the analysis. Similarly, Chapter 6 not only stands as an analysis of an argumentative device in family interaction, but also takes part in an argument between academics over the preference for agreement in conversation. Meanwhile, the

examination of “family” as an institution in Chapter 7, participates in the academic debates over institutionality as locally constituted and again, over the importance of argumentation in social interaction. In this way, it should be evident that the argument of this thesis and the argumentation of the family and academic community are intricately interwoven and ongoingly constructed as the text unfolds.

2 *ARGUMENTATIVE STRANDS: A SUMMARY*

In Chapter 3, the academic debate over the research relationship was presented. However, rather than join in with the members and search for a solution to the management of the contradictory social norms of egalitarianism and authoritarianism, the debate itself is offered as its own solution. The irreconcilability of the two norms was seen to provide the flexibility for the roles of researcher and researched to be accomplished in the cut and thrust of the rhetorical arena in which they must be managed. This solution therefore rejects the reconciliation of the two counter-norms and instead recommends that the debate go on as one of the creative forces behind the research enterprise itself.

In Chapter 4, the question of methodology was tackled. It was found expedient to relegate the usual business of such a chapter to a “non-reflexive box” and to dedicate the main body of the text to a reflexive examination of methodological questions. This entailed a point-by-point examination of the elements which make up Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) “contingent repertoire”, relating how each of these is manifest in my own case. It was concluded that such an abandonment of the “empiricist repertoire” would be hazardous to the rhetorical requirements of my thesis. As a result the empiricist repertoire was duly reinstated as the mode in which the majority of the remaining text would be presented. Nevertheless, I hope that the reader has remained reflexively alert to the

rhetorical concerns of the text without, thereby, preventing their successful accomplishment.

Chapter 5 presented the analysis of how social roles and identities are produced out of the rhetorical requirements of the particular local context in which they are topicalised. In this Chapter, therefore, an extended extract of data was analysed in which the roles of researcher, researched and family member were discussed. The concern here was to present the research encounter as a rhetorical arena in which competing concerns, such as authoritarianism versus egalitarianism, independence versus guidance, researcher/researched versus family member, are ongoingly brought into being through a process of negotiation amongst the parties to the interaction. The locally occasioned status of pronouncements was highlighted, as was the inability of any one member to dictate the nature of the interaction or the social objects created.

One of the key elements identified in this analysis was the operativeness of humour. Theoretical claims about the ability of humour to handle potential conflict, problematic topics and reproof were addressed via the anchor of a concrete empirical analysis. This analysis of one of the data sections, not only offered an expansion of the work by Mulkay (1988), Drew (1987) and Emerson (1973), but its embeddedness within an ongoing analysis revealed how the humorous mode functions as a deployable resource in family interaction. In a similar way, an extensive analysis of the discretion of the researched as a gift to the researcher emerged out of the ongoing analysis. The implications of this formulation of the research relationship were also dealt with in relation to the academic debate over the same issue. As with the treatment of the academic debate on power in research, this handling of the formulation was presented as a propitious subversion of the usual protocols recommending the differential treatment of data and literature in the research write-up. It was via this subversion that a missing dimension in

the academic story was identified, and its absence highlighted as rhetorically effective.

Over the course of the analysis, disagreement was encountered and potential conflict was seen to be handled through humour. However, it was the rhetorical, rather than the overtly argumentative dimension, which was the focus of this chapter. Indeed, to some extent, the chapter is more of an argument in itself, than an examination of argumentation *per se*. This is because it provided the empirical investigation recommended in Chapter 3, where it was concluded that the only access to the paradox of power in the research encounter, is via a discursive and rhetorical analysis of the interaction which actually takes place in that arena.

The focus for Chapter 6, was upon a phenomenon called "Check formulations". Through concrete empirical investigation, this was identified as a mechanism used in the family interaction for accomplishing contention and for perpetuating disagreement in a sociable manner. This analysis provided evidence for a theory about the accomplishment of sociability in interaction.

This theory challenged the overgeneralised assumption in social science as a whole, and conversation analysis in particular, that sociability rests on agreement and harmony. In rejecting this assumption, a call was made to acknowledge that there are multiple potential paths towards sociability available to the interlocutor, politeness-as-sociability being only one of these. Argumentation and the humorous parody of unsociability were offered as alternatives. It was also noted that unsociability is an accomplishment in itself, rather than merely a mistake in the doing of sociability, as seems to have been assumed. Over the course of the chapter the particular example of the "Check formulation" was used to ground this theoretical assertion in empirical analysis. It was intended

that the in-depth explication of argumentation as a form of sociability captured in the deployment of a single rhetorical device, would provoke the reader into a serious re-analysis of the taken for granted assumptions in the CA literature. Although this is by no means the first attempt to highlight the sociability of argumentation, it is hoped that the identification and explication of "Check formulations", and the overt engagement with how this phenomenon challenges the assumptions of mainstream CA, will offer a persuasive addition to the growing case for argumentation as a sociable phenomenon.

Chapter 7 was an extension of the CA work which has attempted to capture the inexplicit, shared assumptions which make social interaction accomplishable (Sacks, 1972; Heritage, 1984). Over the course of an in-depth empirical analysis of a lengthy extract of family data, I try to apply the writings of a variety of conversation analysts to provide an explication of the inexplicit, shared assumption of "family" as a social entity.

In some ways this is a very uphill struggle, for CA is a tool very much more suited to the analysis of that which appears overtly in a text, than to the exploration of that which is not made overt. The approach adopted here to deal with the problem of analysing unstated assumptions was to simultaneously examine the way in which disagreement makes social objects concrete (e.g. roles, identities and behaviours). This was done in the hope of counterbalancing and thereby clarifying the inexplicitness of the agreed and the agreedness of the inexplicit. In this way, the relationships between explicit topicalisation and disagreement, and that between untopicalised assumption and agreement, were identified as two sides of the same coin.

B DEVELOPING THE ARGUMENT

1 ARGUMENTATION

In championing the efficacy of argumentation in social life, this thesis recommends that, in the future, this dimension of social interaction should be accorded greater attention. The in-depth empirical investigation into the discursive accomplishment of sociable argument contained within these pages has focused upon interaction in only two social institutions - family and research. This suggests that a corresponding analysis of other arenas in which sociable argumentation might take place would be a profitable endeavour. In particular, it would be highly beneficial to the persuasiveness of the pro-argumentation perspective, if numerous social arenas could be demonstrated to involve argumentation as a fundamental constituent.

Areas where it would appear that argumentation plays a particularly important role would, I suggest, include: parliament; law; newspaper letters to the editor; debates; industrial relations; panel chat shows; and confrontational job interviews. It should also be noted, that the examination of the research write-up and research encounter have by no means exhausted the potential arenas in which the argumentative dimension of the institution of academia might be manifest. Additional arenas might include: the conference, the tutorial, the class discussion and the viva.

2 UNSOCIABILITY

The analysis of how argumentation accomplishes sociability and how humour avoids unsociable consequences by parodying them, suggests the utility of investigation into the accomplishment of unsociability as a

phenomenon in itself. Although conflict talk has indeed been investigated (e.g. Grimshaw, 1990b), it might be beneficial to the pro-argumentation perspective for a comparison to be made between sociable forms of argument and the pursuit of disruptive and anti-social ends through discourse. Examples of such accomplishments might include harassment, prejudice, officiousness and the intentional initiation of physical fights, for example, in night-clubs or on the football stands.

3 *"SOCIOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCE"*

In addition to the identification of "sociological ambivalence" in the role of the researcher, the treatment of other paradoxes, contradictions and ambiguities in the management of social life could be profitably addressed as means by which complex social roles and identities can be managed in the face of rhetorical contingency. The contradictions and ambivalences involved in authoritarianism versus egalitarianism and neutrality versus concern, have been addressed for the accomplishment of roles such as the physician, the expert and, here, the researcher. Other examples that might provide interesting insights might be: parents as love-givers and teachers; teachers as educators and disciplinarians; prison officers as punishers and rehabilitators; social security officers as service providers and adjudicators of entitlement to benefit; etc.

4 *DOING DISAGREEMENT*

The identification of the "Check formulation" as a rhetorical device for promoting ongoing disagreement, represents a single example of such a phenomenon. It would be highly informative to identify other such devices which assist in the accomplishment of social relations through argumentation.

5 *SOCIAL OBJECTS*

The argumentative construction of social roles, identities and behaviours within the family, which this thesis examines, is also limited to a few examples. This leaves an innumerable variety of social objects open to future exploration, whose constitution could be the subject of empirical analysis, both within the family and in alternative arenas such as those discussed in Section 1 above. One interesting example, from within the family, would be the constitution of emotions as social objects within the rhetorical context of family interaction. The deployment of references to emotional states in the self and in others is, I would imagine, an important rhetorical device in accomplishment of interactional business in such a site of social intimacy. Again, the argumentative deployment of emotion discourse is unlikely to be confined to interaction within the family and could profitably be investigated in alternative arenas.

6 *THE MUNDANE AND THE INSTITUTIONAL*

Finally, I would suggest that the analysis of Chapter 7 represents a challenge to “mundane conversation” as a meaningful category of discourse. The family talk analysed within these pages would be treated by traditional CA as a prime example of this category. However, within this analysis, the particularised and occasioned elements of family talk are highlighted, especially with reference to the effects of its dimensions of argumentation, institutionality and multi-partedness. In this way, assumptions as to the homogeneity of the category of “mundane conversation” become compromised. Further work emphasising the particularity of familial conversation would clarify this point.

Meanwhile, questions are simultaneously raised regarding the institutional, or otherwise unique, dimensions of further examples of

discourse that have also been grouped under the heading of mundane conversation by traditional CA. Analysis might therefore profitably be made into friendship or the extended family. Similarly, other particularised features subsumed into this category might be investigated for their consequentiality. For example, the effects of different configurations of multi-partedness - dyads versus triads etc.. Indeed, the ethnomethodological studies into the effects of undertaking a particular task while communicating in the workplace (cf. Suchman, 1987; Drew and Heritage, 1992) might be usefully extended to look at how task accomplishment in less formal settings might affect interaction. The old question of the unique properties of telephone conversations might even be worth re-evaluating, now that examples of so many different interactional contexts can be used as the basis for comparison.

C HAVING THE LAST WORD

It seemed appropriate to conclude this thesis with the words of the participants. To give them, as it were, "the last word" (cf. Billig, 1987) within this text¹. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, giving the participants their "voice" in this way is highly suspect. This extract has been chosen by the researcher to do the rhetorical job of bringing the thesis to an end - the family are not asked in advance if they want the final impression of them to come in this form. Indeed, I very much suspect that they will have something to say on the matter! It should also be noted, that even for the reader this is not really the last word - the Appendices and the Bibliography are yet to come.

¹ Although not necessarily the "last word" in the argument. Indeed, it is hoped that features such as those discussed in the previous section will open up future debate and generate the sort of disagreement that will establish this perspective within the social scientific community.

Despite the above, please accept the following extract, taken from about halfway through the second recording, as the “last word”:

EXTRACT 1

(2/4/2 4-23 and 33-49)

4 Dad: as I've mentioned about
5 this puts a completely different slant on arguing
6 Mum: yes () arguments
7 [since Ava's been doing her (.) a (people a fir)
8 Sue: [yeh
9 Dad: I can't really get into a good argument now
10 without thinking
11 Mum: ((laughs))
12 Dad: well t em should I [be saying
13 Ava: [so what is
14 a good argument then
15 (.)
16 Mish: when [it wasn't exaggerated
17 Dad: [what is em
18 Sue: when you don't think about what you're doing
19 Mum: we analyse everything
20 when Dad starts saying something to me
21 I say to him there you are [()
22 Sue: [Ava should be here
23 Mum goes

33 Dad: [it breaks down
34 and just we start thinking it
35 thinking of it as an argument
36 that can be dissected (.) [by Ava
37 Sue: [and analysed
38 Dad: and analysed (.) and er the whole (.)
39 Mum: I must tell phone Ava up
40 tell her [to put the tape on I say
41 Dad: [and the whole emphasis is miss[ing
42 [((laughs))
43 Dad: the whole emphasis breaks down
44 Ava: so have [I spoil it for everybody
45 Mish: [this is (.) a good argument is
46 Sue: yep
47 Dad: we're never going to argue again
48 Mish: [well I think the
49 Sue: [no never

APPENDIX 1

ARGUING VERSUS DISCUSSING

(1/1/3 40-49)

40 Sue : are we talking ab[out ARGUING OR=
41 Ava : [but THAT'S NOT
42 Sue : =Discussing [though
43 Mum: [ah we're talking aBOUT (.)
44 Ava : BUT IT'S arguing and discussing
45 Mum: and dis[cussing right
46 Sue : [both
47 Ava : anything [it doesn't HAVE TO BE
48 Mum: [what do you think you ARGUE ABout
49 Dad: you when does one [stop and the other start

(2/17/7 19-33)

19 Ava: [but you would you call this an argument
20 Sue: no
21 Mum: [no
22 Mish: [no
23 Ava: [((sighs))
24 Sue: [((sighs))
25 ((laughter))
26 Sue: we're [back to the same thing again=
27 Dad: [well at times
28 Sue: =aren't we
29 Mish: yes Mum
30 Dad: at times it is and at times it isn't
31 Mum: yeh
32 Ava: [this is (the person to speak)
33 Dad: [sometimes its just a dis[cussion

APPENDIX 2 A GUIDE TO THE TRANSCRIPT NOTATION USED
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[overlapping speech
=	utterances continue without any delay
<u>underlining</u>	emphasised syllables or words
CAPITALS	delivered in a louder than normal voice
°speech°	delivered in a quieter than normal voice
(single brackets)	utterance unclear, best guess presented
((double brackets))	some non-verbal action performed
(.)	a pause (untimed)
?	rising intonation
:	vowel sound extended

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